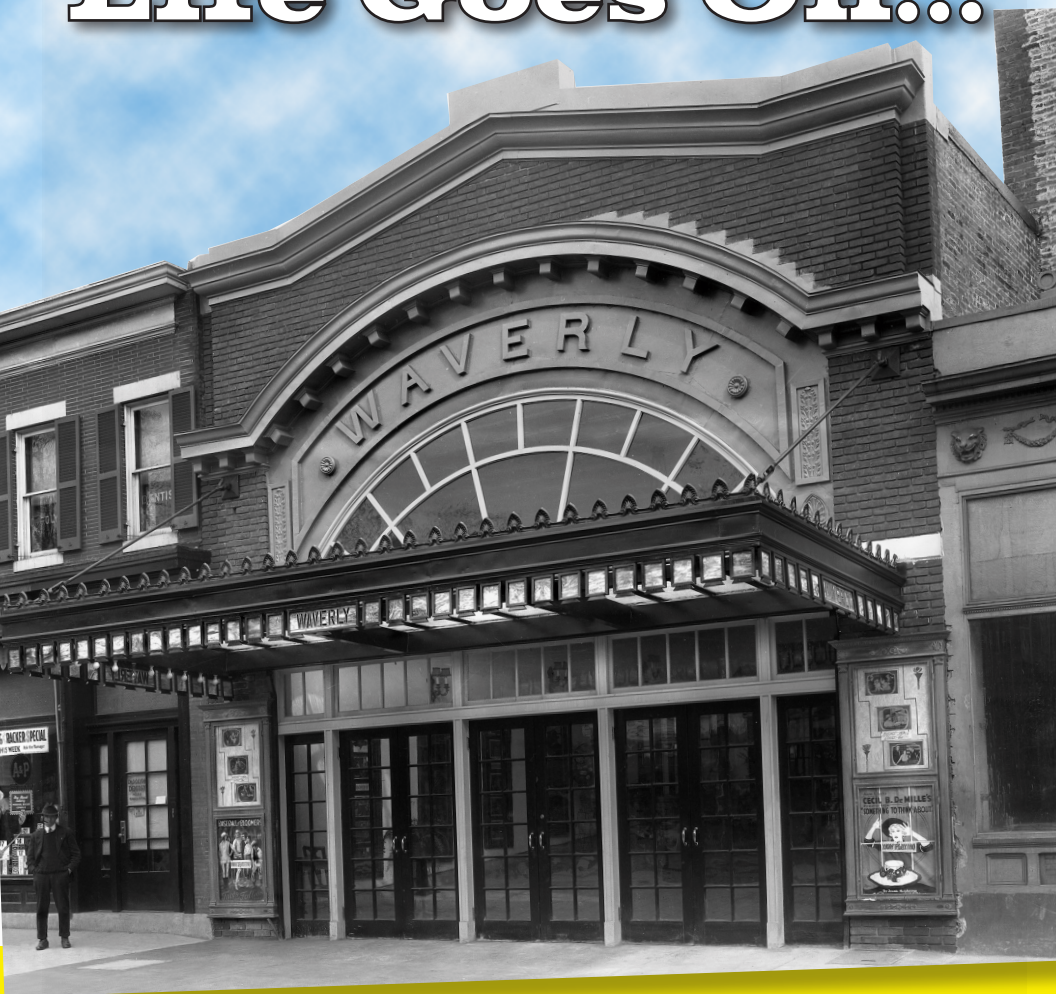


Village Life Goes On...



**Along
Old York Road**
❖ **WALKING TOUR** ❖

Village Life Goes On Along Old York Road

Self-guided historic walking tour of Waverly Village's Commercial Corridor was produced in August 2010 by Better Waverly Community Organization, Abell Improvement Association and Waverly Main Street with a grant from Baltimore Community Foundation.

Long before there was a "Greenmount Avenue" or "York Road Turnpike" - indeed before Captain John Smith sailed up Chesapeake Bay to find the Patapsco River and before European settlers colonized Maryland - Piscataway and Susquehannock tribes beat down a path along this route to hunt and trade. In 1688

England's Lord Baltimore granted estates in this area known as Huntingdon and Merryman and in 1736 a settler named Thomas Gorsuch built a house here, calling it Homestead. York Road Turnpike followed a wooded highpoint known as "Britain's Ridge" where water drained into Jones Falls on the west and Herring Run on the east.

The turnpike was linked to Falls Road Turnpike on the south at Vineyard Lane and on the north at Merryman Lane, now University Parkway, except for a block behind the present day Waverly Farmers Market. The York Road connected with Baltimore & Harford Turnpike at Quaker Lane, now Loch Raven Road. Society of Friends members used to ride to town stopping near 30th Street at a Quaker Lot to board and feed their horses for free. Settlement of Quakers led to this area being called Friendship.

Revolutions in transportation led to removal of toll gates along the road in 1894. The Turnpike had been straightened out into Old and New York Roads. Horse-drawn double-decker cars moved on a rail line in the center of York Road until replaced with electric cars beginning in 1893. The twentieth century heralded the arrival of automobiles, buses, gasoline filling stations and trucks along what became Greenmount Avenue, named for an estate near the cemetery at North Avenue.

In 1886 heirs of the Gorsuch estate subdivided and developed their land into small cottages and country residences featuring Victorian architecture. The development drove away one estate holder named Tinges, but the lane named after him survived until the twenty-first century. Street names were added and changed. Jefferson Street became Homestead, Madison became Montpelier, Brady became 30th and Waverly became 31st. Republic became Frisby allowing folks to remember the vanishing Frisby Woods down by 25th Street. Villagers spent holidays picnicking in the woods and also gathered berries, nuts, holly and pine. Gypsies camped there and brought the babies up to St. John's to be baptized.

In the late nineteenth century Huff and Bateman's general stores and Livingston's drug store became the heart of a business district. Huff had a free feed



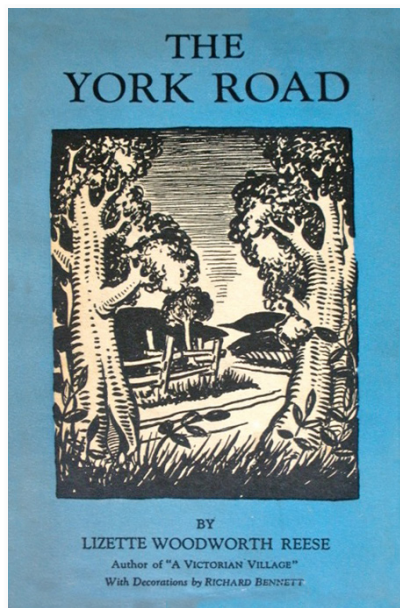
trough in front of his store to attract travelers on the horse-drawn double-decker cars. Business was conducted at a Town Hall where the Order of the Golden Eagle also held social events.

The 1878 Maryland Directory described Waverly as “on the York Road, 2 miles from Baltimore. The location is pleasant and the surroundings picturesque and healthy. The land is fertile, highly improved, and is dotted with many handsome residences...The cars of the York Road Railway, which pass here, afford cheap and quick travel to Baltimore and Towsontown.” The directory goes on to list “Postmistress, Blacksmith, Carpenter, Carriagemaker, Confectionery, Constable, Druggists, Dry Goods, Florists, General Merchandise and Grocers, Hotels, Justices of the Peace, Physicians, Plumber, Saloons, Shoemaker, Tinner.”

Lizette Woodworth Reese, Waverly poet and author, offered this to say about the two village general stores:

“A short, squat, paunchy man was the proprietor of one of the stores in the village, a lank, dark, black-haired man that of the other. One was German, the other of English extraction. These two gentlemen were masters of the entire situation. Town was too distant for casual errands; you bought from them or did without your pound of crackers or ounce of cinnamon or whatever small article was lacking on your kitchen shelves. Each shop was the stereotyped one of the suburban settlement. Each held the same odors. All the spice and sugar, and meal, and vinegar and gin, and bundles of rope, and stacks of brooms, and painted buckets which had been handed over the counters, had made themselves into a smell which became a fixed atmosphere. Each shop had a bar, and in the first there was an extension containing a back room, where a thirsty farmer might sit at a whitely scrubbed table, and drink a glass of frothing ale or beer. As to the proprietors themselves, their conduct was all that goes into the making of wise and successful shopkeeping. They were impeccably neutral. Confederate and Federal men, statesrighters and black Republicans might froth and rave about them, but these two were of that stripe of politics which belongs to each and all--the desire to make an honest living and keep away from disaster. Every rag of gossip in the county fluttered to their wide porches and fastened there for the special gratification of the buyers and loungers...”

When the area was annexed by the city in 1888, Henry Tyson, President of York Road and City Passenger Railway, selected the name Waverly for the new post office because Huntington was already taken. By the turn of the 20th century, public transportation and development brought the



country closer and closer to the city. More and more folks were commuting into town and Waverly was becoming known as a suburb and thriving community.

BEGIN this historic walking tour on the west side of Greenmount Avenue, north of 30th Street and south of 31st Street, at Vineyard Lane.

TAKE a stroll down Vineyard and notice how it still looks like an old country lane on one side with homes and gardens. The other commercial side is a source of comings and goings by folks far and near, keen on visiting The Book Thing in a warehouse where all the books are free.

COME back to where you began. Here was Waverly toll gate. Users of the toll road paid fees here beginning in 1810 to finance upkeep of York Road Turnpike, laid out in 1741 as Baltimore's main overland connection to the north. It was used to deliver Pennsylvania farm goods and drive livestock to Belair Market in Old Town while stage coaches carried travelers. When Baltimore became a world port, it was a "rolling road" used to move barrels of tobacco down to shore for shipping. Waverly toll gate and house served as a hub of commerce and communications. An ad book from the 1940s shows this side of "the road" - as locals called Greenmount Avenue - between 30th and 31st Streets as featuring Coney Island Lunch, Zeppe's Photo Supplies, Dunk N' Donuts, John Spellman Plumber and a wallpaper business where now there is Darker Than Blue Cafe.

WALK down to 29th Street and Greenmount Avenue. Here there was one of the Oriole Parks and the Brady Mansion. Professional baseball came to town in 1889. Oriole Parks were built and rebuilt. Babe Ruth began his professional career here in 1914. A wooden stadium served Baltimore fans from 1914 until 1944, when it was destroyed in a great 4th of July weekend fire. Local residents worked there renting cushions for fans to sit on for a quarter to be returned at games' end and climbing under the stands to make sure cigarette and cigar butts were extinguished. After the fire, the field was left vacant as a playground except for some commercial warehouses. In 1959 Barclay School #54 was built on part of the field. Baseball moved up to 33rd Street where football was already being played. 33rd Street had been opened in 1919, a tree-lined boulevard designed by the Olmstead Brothers. It would come to be synonymous with Colts and Orioles sports legends and world champions. Hundreds of thousands of fans passed through the Waverly commercial corridor to attend games at Venable, Municipal, and then Memorial Stadiums. Before the days of multi-million dollar contracts, professional ballplayers lived near where they worked.

CROSS over Greenmount to the east side. Walk north of Exeter Hall. To the south is Waverly Towers Shopping Center, built in 1957. Today it features Ashley Stewart designs for women. Further south was a Greenmount Bicycle and Toy Repair Shop. At 29th Billy Sunday drew crowds to revivals at his long gone evangelical tabernacle. Later there was Jordan's Confectionary at 29th where today sits Yau Bros. Chinese Carryout.

CONTINUE

north to where Old York Road meets Greenmount Avenue. During the American Revolutionary Wars, a stone building once stood there. The “Barracks” was a powder magazine, a relay station for soldiers moving south and a spot where soldiers from Fort McHenry came up during summers to escape malaria. Here at the present location of St. John’s in the Village, Baptists and Episcopalians began to congregate in 1836 and 1843, respectively. In 1846 Huntingdon Baptists moved to Barclay and 31st Street where they built a chapel and later an exquisite new church featuring beautiful stained glass windows.

St John’s Huntingdon was built where you stand in 1847. Fire destroyed this structure and a new church was built in 1858. Lizette Woodworth Reese prayed, taught school and was buried here - but not before making Waverly famous with her acclaimed poetry and two novels “A Victorian Village” and “The York Road”. Bells were installed in 1910 and have been ringing ever since. They were made by the Mc Shane Foundry in Baltimore and consist of eleven bronze bells. They have called the village to prayer, celebrations, weddings, funerals, state occasions, and victory for 100 years.

Methodists first built a block up Greenmount Avenue on the site of today’s Goodwill before moving to their present location on 33rd Street. Catholics built St. Bernard’s a few blocks northeast on Gorsuch Avenue where villagers of all faiths came to see their May Processions.

GO

north up Greenmount, cross the fork with Old York Road which is on the right and stop at the corner site of a People’s Community Health Center. Forty years ago, the Black Panthers, the Coalition of Women’s Liberation and the Baltimore Defense Committee established a medical clinic in a row house on the other side of Greenmount – the first of its kind – as a sister facility to the Free Clinic in Berkeley, California. The organizers shared a vision that access to medical care shouldn’t be limited to the wealthy. They called it People’s Free Medical Clinic and it has expanded beyond Waverly, while keeping a presence on both sides of Greenmount Avenue today. While standing here, step back in time to picture what this corner may have looked like almost 200 years ago before the Civil War and you will see the hamlet of Huntingdon in the 1830s featuring Jacob Aull’s shoemaker shop, a corn husk depot, a blacksmith and three stone houses. The closest place for York Road travelers to stay overnight was up at Cold Spring Hotel in Govanstown. Lizette Woodworth Reese described its beloved pasture and woodland in her writing. These were what attracted wealthy merchants escaping the heat and stench of the port during the summers in their Guilford, Huntington, Brady, Tinges and Patterson estates. By the 1880s estate life required and supported a village. Sidewalks were constructed of wood and streets were paved with oyster shells.

CONTINUE

up Greenmount, pass Next Level where once was Arundel Ice Cream below Waverly Billiards. Admire the window displays in Goodwill which was the first Waverly Methodist Church. The building later featured a miniature golf course on its

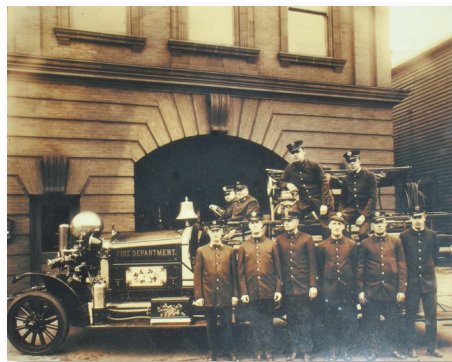
second floor. Further up at Kids Go Round was Crown 5 and 10 Cent Store. Waverly was a popular entertainment venue with a bowling alley, pool hall, nightclubs, fancy restaurants, ice cream parlors, juke boxes and taverns. Discretion and space don't permit the sharing of many memories of what took place behind Green Door, Northside, Judge's, Sweeney's, Schuman's, Donohue's, Dutchman's or the ways drinkers got around enforcement of the 1919 Volstead Act known as Prohibition. Note the engraving above Waverly Grill, which in 1936 was "Provident Savings Bank."

MOVE on to Waverly Fire House #31 built in 1901 and serving Abell, Better Waverly, Charles Village, Coldstream-Homestead-Montebello, Ednor Gardens/Lakeside, Guilford, Harwood, Homewood, Oakenshawe, Pen Lucy, Tuscany-Canterbury and Waverly for more than a century. It temporarily closed in 2009 when found to be uninhabitable; but villagers rallied to save #31. After fundraising and renovations, it reopened May 2010 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and community barbecue celebration.

WALK up to 32nd Street and turn right at Rite-Aid, formerly Read's Drug store, above which was Esther Adams Beauty Shoppe specializing in lash and brow dying. Go one block, cross Old York Road, and see the engraving above Waverly Ace Hardware for "Baltimore Post Office Waverly Station." In the 1980s this building housed a Swedish Laundromat and, more recently a Blockbuster video store.

GO back to 32nd and Greenmount, where the current snow ball stand and urban hip line of clothing on the northeast corner was formerly a newsstand, where fresh flowers and fruit were sold and at holiday time Christmas trees could be bought. Continue north up Greenmount to Shoe City where with imagination you can look up to see the former marquee for the Waverly, the first theatre in the village, with silent films and then talkies.

In the days before air conditioning, theaters often closed during the summer. But Waverly manager, Harry Kahn, created open-air theater out back in an open lot with a bed sheet, wooden folding chairs and the piano-player. The Waverly remained open from 1909 to 1969.



Maryland Historical Society

LOOK to the right as you cross Gorsuch Avenue. From 1901 until the 1950s there was a trolley that ran along a single track here on Gorsuch Avenue between Greenmount and Harford Road. The trolley had wicker seats that swung back and forth in either direction for east-west bound rides. Along Gorsuch was a Boulevard Restaurant. That building later served as a gay nightclub called The Porthole. At Gorsuch and Old York was a Stadium Shoe Shine Parlor. Just south of Mr. Nifty was an Art Deco bakery called Rabai's which opened in 1937. The bakery later became a Butter Crisp before closing in 1987, one of many store closings in the 1980s which triggered community concern. In 1981, The Charles Villager reported on meetings by a coalition of Waverly business and community representatives and a proposed City Council Ordinance to address deterioration of "The Avenue."



The Villager described Waverly's commercial corridor this way:

"To a Midwesterner there is something familiar about Greenmount Avenue between 29th and 35th Streets. It resembles those small prairie towns that appear at the end of the horizon, where the highway becomes Main Street and for a few minutes, the space of a couple of stoplights, you have entered the life of small town America. That stretch of Greenmount Avenue is like that."

MOVE on up to 33rd Street, turn right and stop after crossing Old York Road at one of the community murals painted on Waverly Crossroads Giant Food, a recent development in a village which has known many markets, from the mom n' pop corner stores to Acme, A&P, Butcher's, Food Fair, Knowblock's, Wagner's. This mural symbolizes some sacred Waverly memories, including those associated with Memorial Stadium which was torn down in 2001 and replaced with a YMCA and senior housing.



Rick Dempsey, the former Orioles' catcher, wrote of the old Memorial Stadium:

She's gray now and tired and goes to lay down
With the pennants God gave her to wear as her crown.
Glory and honor will sleep at her feet
For the miracles she gave us on 33rd Street.

Slightly further east but outside this walk you will find Johns Hopkins at Eastern, formerly Eastern High built with Works Progress Administration (WPA) funding during the Great Depression. On its hill, stands the Good Shepherd statue of Grace Hill Turnbull erected in memory of Lizette Woodworth Reese.

The inscription, from one of Reese's poems exhorting "come every helplessness and every dread...a shepherd is at hand..." prompted 14th



District City Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke to call it the Waverly "Statue of Liberty." Below this hill in 1991 over 100,000 people attended Baltimore's City Fair which was relocated to Waverly from downtown with an emphasis on community participation. Across the street from Hopkins at Eastern is Stadium Place, affordable retirement community for low-income senior citizens, the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Family Center YMCA (the first built in the city in nearly 100 years), the Community Built Playground, Thanksgiving Place meditation space and a field of dreams taking shape for today's youth to play ball sponsored by the Cal Ripken Foundation.

GO back to Greenmount, walk north across the tree-lined boulevard which is East 33rd Street and see the newly painted Tom Chalkley mural he calls "The Great Wall of Waverly." The mural celebrates a parade of time through the village and illustrates recent parades down Greenmount Avenue with marching bands, floats and celebrities joining neighbors while pledging to "take back the street."

CONTINUE up Greenmount to Venable, named for City Council member, Parks President and prominent attorney, Richard Venable. Also named after him was the park upon which the Memorial Stadium and Eastern High school were built. Pass the corner Community Mediation Center building, opened with support from Johns Hopkins Center for Social Concerns and recent winner of a national HGTV contest which funded a Rebuilding Together facelift. This building began as a bank, then became a nightclub famous for an upside down Christmas tree and then was a restaurant. As the "Safe and Smart Center" it housed a community police substation, GED classes, a computer literacy program and an after school homework club.

TURN east onto Venable to see the colorful "A Little Help From Our Friends" mural recreating Memorial Stadium and Waverly Farmers Market.

WALK east along Venable to Old York Road, cross and go north to 34th Street where Waverly Presbyterian Church was built in 1888. It merged with Govans Presbyterian in the 1980s. Further east on 34th Street is the field where a new Waverly Elementary and Middle School #51 is being built.

TAKE 34th Street west returning to Greenmount. Before crossing Greenmount, try to imagine the streetcar barn located on this corner before it burned down in 1906.

WALK south on Greenmount Avenue on the west side of the road. Stop here when you reach 33rd Street. You have just passed the closed, formerly very grand Boulevard Theatre. It operated between 1921 and the 1980s, seated a thousand or more according to differing accounts and featured a pipe organ and orchestra pit. Next door was Schwaab's soda fountain, which advertised having "sugar and spice and all things nice" and Burris & Kemp. Their "Rx" can still be seen on the 33rd Street side of the building. Looking south above the corner Mama Lucia's, notice "Bakers Block" painted above the old façade. This market shared the block with the art deco building featuring Michael's Persian Rugs, now home to Harding Consulting. One block west of this intersection is the Waverly Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library opened in 1970. Across University Boulevard remains the triangular building which opened as Parisian Tailors. Further west is Union Memorial Hospital, where former patient Al Capone's donated cherry tree blooms in spring. Beyond that is Johns Hopkins Homewood campus, Wyman Park and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Southwest is 32nd Street Farmers Market, the only year-round open-air farmer's market in the city which every Saturday brings together hundreds of shoppers and strollers who socialize and visit in a weekly ritual of recreating the village commons.



In her poem "The Strange Peddler", Lizette Woodworth Reese reminds of us an earlier village market experience:

I have cloth as white As the apricot
Of the kind that blows in Camelot
Silver and white it is,
Silver and white,
Like the seven hounds
That race through the night.

Three black candlesticks
Wrought for a shelf;
A cool, crooked bowl
Of pear-green delf.
Orange neckerchiefs;
Gilt bands for curls;
Little fine books,
Full of dancing girls.

Come and buy,
come and buy,
Come and buy again: -
York Road, Merryman's, Tinges Lane!

CROSS Greenmount and walk south to Merryman and 32nd Street. On this side of the avenue you could get "scientifically raised" and "Penna. State certified" College Hill cut-up chickens or Brandau's men's wear in "Down Town Styles at Up Town Prices." At one time Merryman Lane extended all the way to the Falls Road Turnpike along Jones Falls River. Sea Blue was once the Little Tavern and a fine example of Early Diner architecture. On the south side of 32nd is Pete's Grill. You will see its "1925" marker but no reference to its former use as Baltimore Trust Company which failed in 1933. During the Great Depression a city van delivered free potatoes to the hungry in Waverly while children wandered down to the railroad tracks along 27th Street searching for coal.

KEEP going south and cross 32nd Street toward toward 31st Street. On this block from the 1880s to 1910 was an earlier Waverly School which later served as Woolworth Five and Dime. Greenmount Loan & Jewelry was Radio Center with the iconic dog and victrola, now in a museum downtown. Herman's Discount - which now proudly pleases everyone with many colorful seasonal window displays - was once Becker's whose ad noted, "way back when the York Road was a dirt thoroughfare and horseless carriages puffed noisily by, Becker's had already established itself as a business devoted to quality men's wear...charge accounts invited." In the 1960s the most fashion conscious preppy men shopped along this block at Frank Leonard, The Oxford Shop and Red Shed Sample Store.

GO to the northwest corner of Greenmount and 31st street where Waverly Town Hall still stands. Villagers met above Livingston's Drug Store and an adjoining cigar store and factory where "Waverly" was a brand name for hand-rolled stogies.

In an old news article under the heading "Merchants Thrive" (date unknown) this is noted, "a dozen drug stores have succeeded Livingston's. A dozen solid blocks of merchants thrive where old man Huff weighed out his nails. They offer fishhooks, fur coats, jewelry, jelly roll, puppies, popcorn, shoes, sewing machines, bicycles, bathtubs, automobiles, egg beaters, radios, refrigerators, grass seed, garden hose, carpet, tacks, cameras...You can have your wash done at a Chinese laundry. You can lounge in a cocktail bar, go to the movies, buy a seafood dinner."

The Maryland Senate commemorated Waverly Town Hall centennial in a 1973 Resolution pointing out that Waverly was important for providing many of the city's firsts, including organized baseball, electric streetcars and modern elementary school construction. Noted was a United States Commerce Department rating of Waverly as the most progressive shopping center in the country.

The Resolution quoted former Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro's tribute to Waverly, "the greatness of this country began in its separate communities...Waverly...has added that priceless something to our community life that can only be brought by progressive minded citizens who take pride in their locality."

GO west onto 31st Street between Greenmount and Barclay where a lively counter-culture flourished from the 1960s to the 1980s with Sam's Belly Food Co-op, Bread & Roses Coffee House and the 31st Street Women's Bookstore, whose space is now occupied by Normal's Books. Normal's continues the counter-culture tradition as a collective and center for experimental music, film and publications. This block hosted the first



Baltimore Gay Pride Day Celebration. Long before MS magazine came on the national scene, local women published the international Women: A Journal of Liberation as a collective which ran from 1968 to 1983.

The old Aull residence at the corner of Brentwood and East 31st is now the Thir-Tea-First Street Café & Tea. In front of the tea room sits a fish out of water called “See What You Sea” proclaiming “we all swim in the same sea.” It was sponsored by Waverly Main Street Business. Back in the 1950s businesses sponsored annual Halloween parades up and down Greenmount Avenue.



Brentwood Street, formerly called Talbot, was an African American enclave as was Barclay. Relatives of Thurgood Marshall lived here and had a concrete contracting business. There's still a Marshall imprint on the south side of 32nd near Abell on the sidewalk. Children from these blocks went to a segregated school - # 115 in the “Colored District” on the site of the farmers market - until after the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawed segregation in public education. Its students called it “the chicken coop, because that is exactly what it looked like.” Segregation persisted in housing and public accommodations also until they were banned.

Around the corner at Barclay and 32nd Street is the old Mt. Zion Baptist Church where a cornerstone notes it was organized in 1887 and the present structure built in 1924. This was the place of worship for African Americans, while white folks went to Huntingdon Baptist. If you visit Huntingdon Baptist at 31st and Barclay and go inside to view the photos of former pastors, you will note its evolution from a white church to a present day integrated one with a primarily African American congregation. For a number of years the church provided space for an Asian congregation to meet.

Baltimore was once a primary entry point in the country for immigrants in a nation of immigrants. Waverly Main Street reflects this international melting pot tradition in its shops. There are many Korean business owners today, while the past shop owners names were often German, Irish or Italian. Regardless of the owners' ethnic origin or race, small shop owners have always struggled for survival in a brutal economic world. Their willingness to open shop and carry on takes true grit. Waverly Main Street is proud to work with merchants to enhance the appearance of the commercial corridor and to partner with private and public institutions to promote historic restoration efforts.

Bigotry, crime, depression, disease, drug addiction, fire, plague, prohibition, wars and zealotry have taken their toll as have the loss of trees, the pouring of more and more concrete and the increasing pollution of our air; but stroll along Waverly Main Street and take in its hundreds of years of continuously evolving, surviving village life!



Map Artwork by Laura Kindseth

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Visit BWCO, AIA, & WMS online:

<http://betterwaverly.org> www.abellimprovement.org

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