

HISTORICAL SURVEY □ BRENTWOOD, MARYLAND



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THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

## ABSTRACT

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**ABSTRACT.** This report summarizes the findings of an historical/architectural survey of Brentwood, requested by the Mayor and Council of the Town. The goals of the project were to document the earliest of the historic buildings still standing in the Town, and to prepare a written history of the community's development with emphasis on the early residents.

The Town of Brentwood is located in Prince George's County, just outside the northeast boundary of the District of Columbia. Development of the community began in the 1890s in areas platted by the Holladay and Brentwood Companies. The first residents were families attracted to the area by the easily accessible transportation to and from work in Washington, D. C., offered by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the City and Suburban streetcar line. The residents of this community incorporated in 1922 as the Town of Brentwood.

The report is divided into seven major sections: Pre-Subdivision History, The First Subdivision, The Second Subdivision, Growth and Development of the two Subdivisions, Continued Development, The Development of Community Institutions, and the Period of Incorporation. The report includes background history on the earliest development of the community, and on Captain Wallace A. Bartlett, the principal figure in the development of the first two subdivisions. It describes the expansion of the original subdivision, and the settling of the first families in the newly built homes. It describes and compares the first dwellings erected in the community; it analyzes by building type a representative group of dwellings which survive from the first building period. The report also outlines the establishment of community institutions such as school, church, citizens' association and firemen's organization, and describes the community's development as it approached incorporation in 1922. The report is supplemented by photographs, plats and maps.

**HISTORICAL SURVEY □ BRENTWOOD, MARYLAND**



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**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
14741 GOVERNOR ODEN BOWIE DRIVE  
UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND 20772**

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The Commission has three major functions:

- the preparation, adoption, and from time to time amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District;
- the acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- in Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire County public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board, appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

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- Performs technical analyses and offers advice and recommendations regarding most matters related to existing and future...  
...use of land including the enhancement of the physical environment, and  
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- Works under the direction of the Prince George's County Planning Board.
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The County Council has three main responsibilities in the planning process: 1) setting policy, 2) plan approval, and 3) plan implementation. Applicable policies are incorporated into area plans, functional plans, and the general plan. The Council, after holding a hearing on the plan adopted by the Planning Board, may approve the plan as adopted, approve the plan with amendments based on the public record, or disapprove the plan and return it to the Planning Board for revision. Implementation is primarily through adoption of the annual Capital Improvement Program, the annual Budget, the Ten-Year Water and Sewerage Plan, and adoption of zoning map amendments.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the findings of an historical/architectural survey of the oldest sections of the Town of Brentwood; this survey was conducted by the Historic Preservation Section of the Prince George's County Planning Department/M-NCPPC from July 1991 to June 1992 (FY92). The survey was requested by the Brentwood Town Council and the Honorable George D. Denny, Jr., Mayor. The goal of the project was to document the earliest of the historic buildings still standing in the Town, and to prepare a written history of the community development from the time of the first subdivision in 1891.

The Town of Brentwood is located just outside of the northeast boundary of the District of Columbia; it lies on the northwest side of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, bounded by Mount Rainier, North Brentwood and Cottage City. Development of the community began in the 1890s in areas platted by the Holladay and Brentwood Companies; the first residents were families attracted to the area by the easily accessible transportation to and from work in Washington, D.C., offered by the B&O Railroad and the City and Suburban streetcar line. The residents of this community would eventually incorporate as the Town of Brentwood.

This report includes background history on the earliest development of the community, and on Wallace A. Bartlett, the principal figure in the development of the first two subdivisions. It describes the expansion of the original subdivision, the reclaiming of land formerly flooded by the Northwest Branch and the mill race, and the settling of the first families in the newly platted subdivision. It describes and compares the first dwellings erected in the community; it describes also, and analyzes by building type, a representative group of dwellings which survive from the first building period. The report also outlines the establishment of community institutions such as school, church, citizens' association and firemen's organization, and describes the community's development as it approached incorporation in 1922. The report is supplemented by photographs, plats and maps.

No individual buildings in the Town of Brentwood are currently listed as Historic Resources in the Prince George's County Historic Sites and Districts Plan, and therefore none is protected by the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance. However, a significant number of the early dwellings deserve consideration for Historic Resource or Historic Site status. It is hoped that as a result of this study, the owners, with the support of the Town, will request further analysis either individually or as a group, and evaluation by the Historic Preservation Commission.

## PRE-SUBDIVISION HISTORY

Brentwood is one of the late 19th-century subdivisions platted along the railroad and trolley lines running northeast out of Washington, D.C. Much of the land that is now incorporated in the Town of Brentwood was platted for subdivision in the 1890s, following closely behind Hyattsville, Riverdale, College Park and Mount Rainier. Families were attracted to the area because of the easily accessible transportation in and out of the District of Columbia. Individuals who worked in Washington began buying lots from the developers, and within a few years of the first subdivision, began to build family homes in the new community.

The 1880s represented a period of tremendous residential development in areas outside of major cities. Like New York City, where suburban communities were rapidly developing in Long Island and New Jersey, Washington, D.C., was also experiencing expansion. In Prince George's County, in the area north and east of the Federal City, suburban development clustered along the lines of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. This railroad line had been completed between Washington and Baltimore in the summer of 1835, and within a generation, Hyattsville and Beltsville had become well established communities. Hyattsville especially, only two miles outside of the District boundary, was highly regarded as a summer or suburban residence for people who worked in the Federal City. Bladensburg had been bypassed by the line of the railroad, a fact which led to the decline of its earlier commercial status. By the period of the Civil War, the area immediately northeast of the District boundary was still principally rural and agricultural in character, with Hyattsville becoming the main commercial center (Figure 1).

By the mid 1880s, land speculators and developers began looking for ways of duplicating Hyattsville's success. One of the first was Edward Graves, who in 1887 purchased 383 acres east of the railroad and south of the old Branchville Road; the subdivision of Charlton Heights was platted in 1888 and the community which developed at this location is known today as Berwyn Heights. Fox and Lutz's subdivision of the Calvert estate (Riversdale) into Riverdale Park, John O. Johnson's establishment of College Park out of the northernmost section of the Calvert estate adjoining the Maryland Agricultural College, and Francis Shanabrook's Central Heights (now called Berwyn) were all laid out along the B&O Railroad in 1889. In 1891, subdivision began on part of the Thomas G. Clemson estate, a short distance west of the railroad and near the District boundary; spurred by the opening of the streetcar line, several syndicates platted further subdivisions, and development of what was to become Mount Rainier had begun by the end of that decade. By the end of the 19th

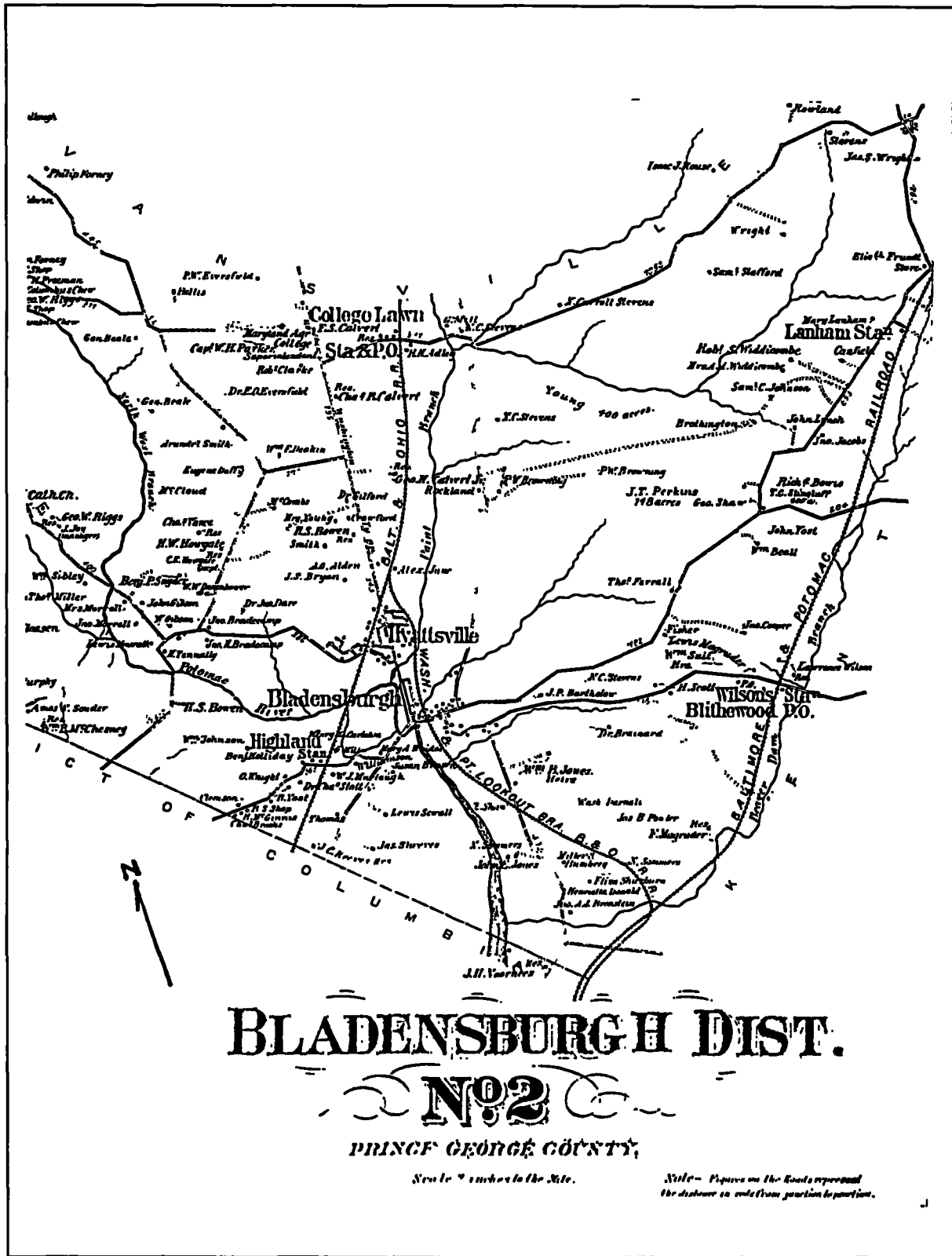


Figure 1 - 1878 Map of Bladensburg-Hyattsville area (G. M. Hopkins Atlas).

century, the area which had a generation earlier been essentially rural, was developing rapidly into residential subdivisions (Figure 2).

It was in this situation that the Brentwood community had its beginning. Between 1891 and 1899, two farms located close to the railroad between Hyattsville and the District of Columbia boundary were subdivided into residential building lots. It was in these two subdivisions, developed by the Holladay Company and the Brentwood Company, that the first houses were built in what was to become the Town of Brentwood. And it is the early development of these two subdivisions which will be the focus of this report.

The first subdivision in what was to become Brentwood was "The Holladay Company's Addition to Highland", surveyed and platted in 1891, but not recorded until 1896. The owners of the land, and trustees of the Holladay Company, were Captain Wallace A. Bartlett, J. Lee Adams, and Samuel J. Mills. In 1899, the Brentwood Company platted an adjoining subdivision, known at first as Clemson (or Clempton) Place, but more commonly as Brentwood; the owners of this land, and trustees of the Brentwood Company, were Wallace A. Bartlett, Ira J. Baker, and Sigmund A. Czarra. The principal figure in this early period was Wallace A. Bartlett.

### **Captain Wallace A. Bartlett**

Wallace A. Bartlett (Figure 3) was born in Warsaw, New York, 5 November 1844. In 1862, he volunteered to serve in the New York State Sharpshooters; he was wounded and hospitalized in 1864, and later that year was captured and imprisoned for seven months. Released after the cessation of hostilities, he was again mustered into service, in Brownsville, Texas, where he was commissioned Captain of Company I of the Nineteenth U.S. Regiment of Colored Troops.<sup>1</sup> The Nineteenth Regiment was one of six regiments of black volunteers from Maryland; the others were the Fourth, Seventh, Ninth, Thirtieth and Thirty-ninth. For the most part these Regiments were closely related in their training and in their service both before and after the War. Black men from Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties served in all six Maryland Regiments of the United States Colored Troops.

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1 Bartlett, Wallace A., Pension file, National Archives; U.S. Service Record, National Archives; Obituary, Washington Evening Star, 26 May 1908; Prince George's Enquirer, 29 May 1908; Wilmer, L. A., Jarrett, J. H., and Vernon, G. W. F., History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-5, Baltimore, Md., 1899.

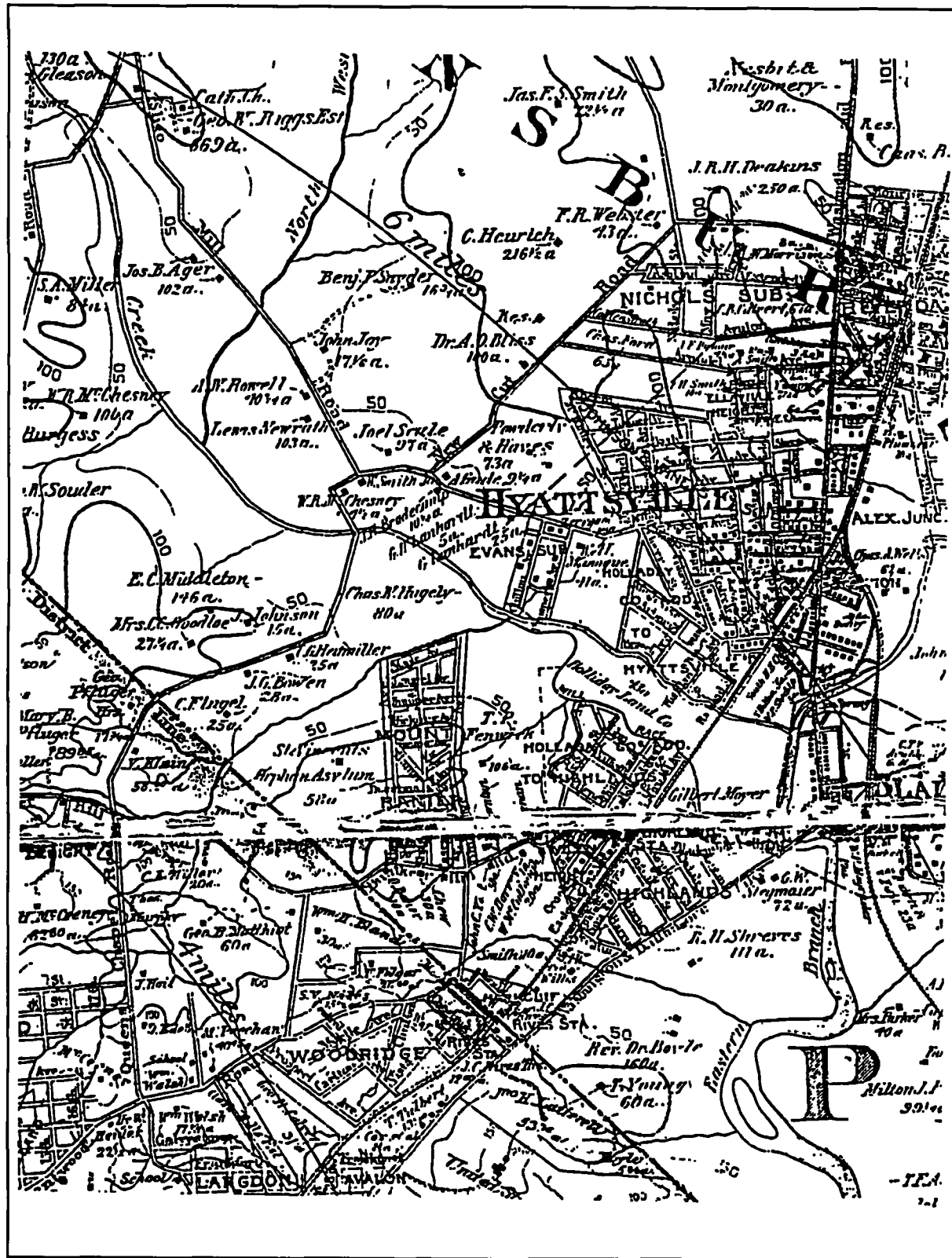


Figure 2 - 1894 map of Holladay Company subdivision area (G. M. Hopkins Map of Vicinity of Washington, D. C.).



**Figure 3- Captain Wallace A. Bartlett, Enoch Pratt Library, Baltimore, Md. (from Virta, Prince George's County Pictorial History, p. 197).**

The Nineteenth Regiment was made up of black volunteers largely from Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. These soldiers took an active part in the siege of Petersburg and the capture of Richmond. Losses were severe both among the black soldiers and the white officers who commanded the individual Companies. After the surrender at Appomattox, the Companies of the Nineteenth Regiment were transferred to Brownsville, Texas; the Seventh and Ninth Regiments also spent their last years of service in Texas.

From the beginning of the term of service in Texas, Wallace A. Bartlett served as one of the officers of the Nineteenth Regiment. He was commissioned Second Lieutenant in June 1865, and was later brevetted Captain. The Regiment remained in training in Brownsville, Texas, until the expiration of the term of service; the troops were mustered out in Texas, 15 January 1867<sup>2</sup>

Bartlett came to Washington, D.C., soon after he was mustered out of the army. Partially disabled from wounds received during the War, he was unable to make his living as a printer, and therefore entered the Government Printing Office as foreman of the specification division. He returned to Warsaw, New York, in 1869 to marry

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2 Wilmer, Jarrett and Vernon, op.cit.

Jemima Brown, and then settled with his bride in Washington. In 1873 he entered the Patent Office as an examiner, a post he held until 1887. He was the inventor, jointly with Lieutenant Zalinsky, of the dynamite gun, and also the author of several books.<sup>3</sup>

Until 1887, the Bartlett family lived in the District of Columbia, but in that year, Captain Bartlett purchased 206 acres of farmland just outside of the northeast boundary of Washington and adjoining The Highlands.

## The Highlands Subdivision

Development of the suburb of The Highlands had begun in 1870. One hundred acres of a tract known as Yarrow had been purchased in that year by C. Eaton Creecy of Washington, D.C., and subdivided into lots which were presented to the public in an 1870 promotional publication, "The Highlands". In this publication, potential buyers were offered homes convenient to but removed from the city; the local newspaper was quoted as naming this site "one of the finest if not the very best pieces of property in the state of Maryland." Extensive orchards covered much of the town site, and apple, peach, pear and plum trees were offered on individual building sites. Three dwellings stood already on the property: a mid-19th-century Greek Revival style house with outbuildings, a new villa-type residence, and a rural cottage (Figure 4). Other nearby amenities advertised by the developer were churches, schools, stores and a grist mill (the old Digges family mill at this time owned and operated by Henry Carleton). Tagged "the future ne plus ultra of suburban places about Washington", The Highlands was advertised for the healthfulness of the area and for the convenience to the Federal City afforded by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. In spite of the substantial promotional effort, The Highlands subdivision did not meet with success, and the area was still relatively undeveloped in 1887 when Captain Bartlett purchased a tract of farmland immediately to its northeast.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Bartlett, Wallace A., Pension file and U.S. Service Record, National Archives; Obituary, Washington Evening Star, 26 May 1908.

4 The City of The Highlands, Prince George's County, Maryland, Washington, D.C., 1870, promotional brochure, available at the Library of Congress.

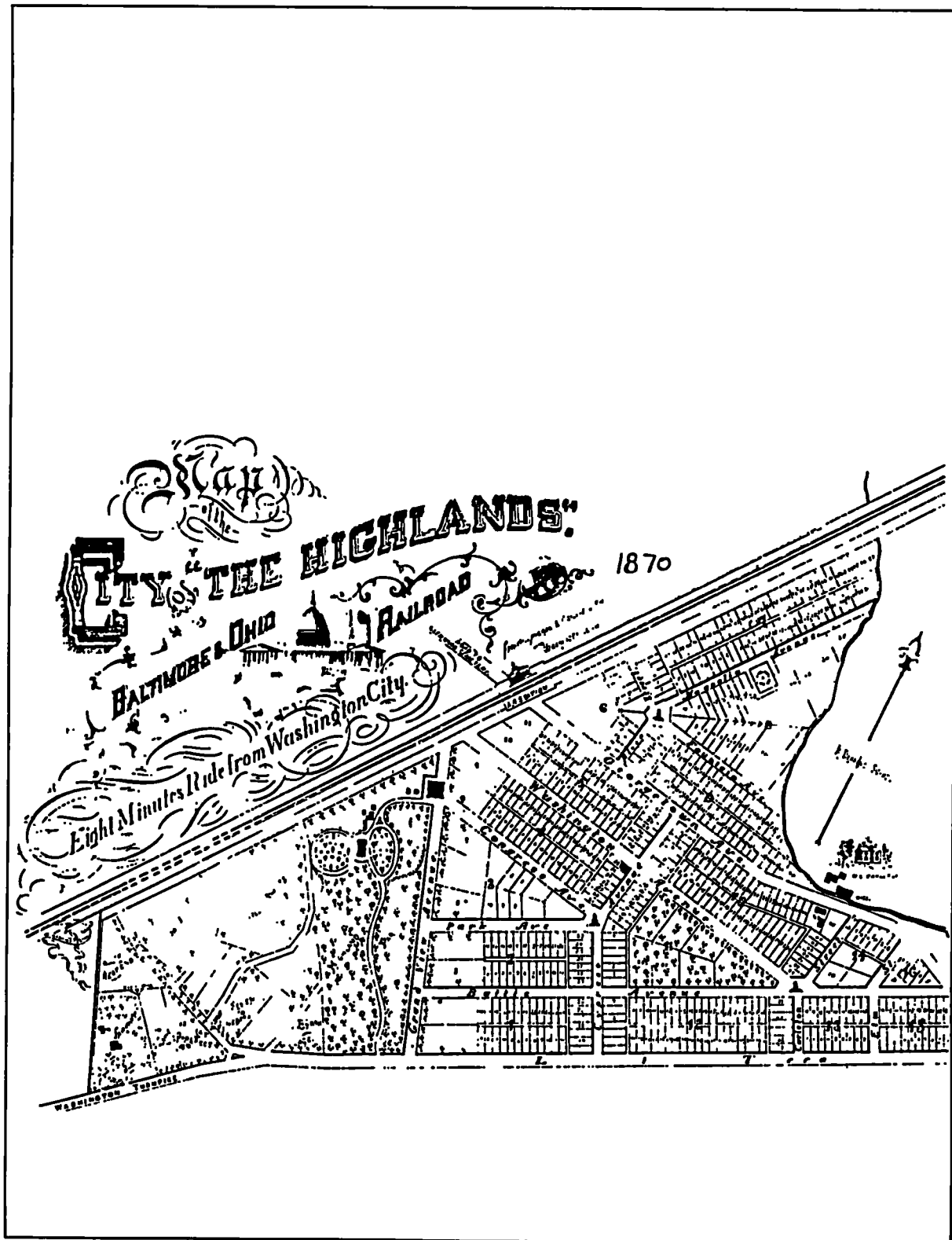


Figure 4 - Plat of the City of The Highlands, 1870, from *The City of The Highlands, Prince George's County, Maryland, Washington, D. C., 1870.*



## THE FIRST SUBDIVISION

In 1887, Wallace A. Bartlett purchased 206 acres, part of the farm of Benjamin Holladay on the northwest side of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad between Hyattsville and The Highlands. On this land he built a handsome farmhouse in the same year. His intention was clearly not only to provide a suburban home for his family, but to develop the land around it into saleable building lots. With two partners he formed the Holladay Land and Improvement Company, and conveyed the land north of his house to himself and these two partners as trustees of the company. In 1891 the Company platted a residential subdivision on the land; the plat was not recorded until 1896 (Figure 5). The section north of the Northwest Branch of the Potomac was called "Holladay Company's Addition to Hyattsville", while that on the south side of the Branch was called "Holladay Company's Addition to Highland". The partners began immediately to sell residential lots in the Addition to Highland.<sup>5</sup> One factor which set this subdivision apart from others developing at the same time was the fact that Bartlett encouraged the purchase of lots by black families, particularly those less expensive lots close to the Northwest Branch. Within a few years, Bartlett and his partners had sold a substantial number of building lots to a variety of individuals, and the construction of dwellings began.

### Early Sale of Lots

At approximately the same time, another group of developers was beginning to take advantage of the development potential of the area near The Highlands. In 1890, the Home Investment Company, incorporated in the District of Columbia, purchased 16 acres of land immediately south of the Highland Station on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. In the same year, the land was platted and subdivided into building lots, but because of a dispute over ownership of the westernmost strip of this land, the progress of the development was held up in court. The dispute was finally resolved in the April 1892 term of the Appeals Court, and the Home Investment Company acquired the full 16 1/8 acres. The plat was corrected to include the additional land, and sale of the lots soon began, with the Company's president, Harrison Crook, and its secretary, George Easterday, actively involved in the sales. Two of the original platted streets in this small subdivision were named Crook and Easterday Avenues (Figure 6). Known from the beginning as Wilen Heights, this small

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5 Prince George's County Deed JWB#8:110, 277,453; Prince George's County Plat JWB#5:646 (A-8).

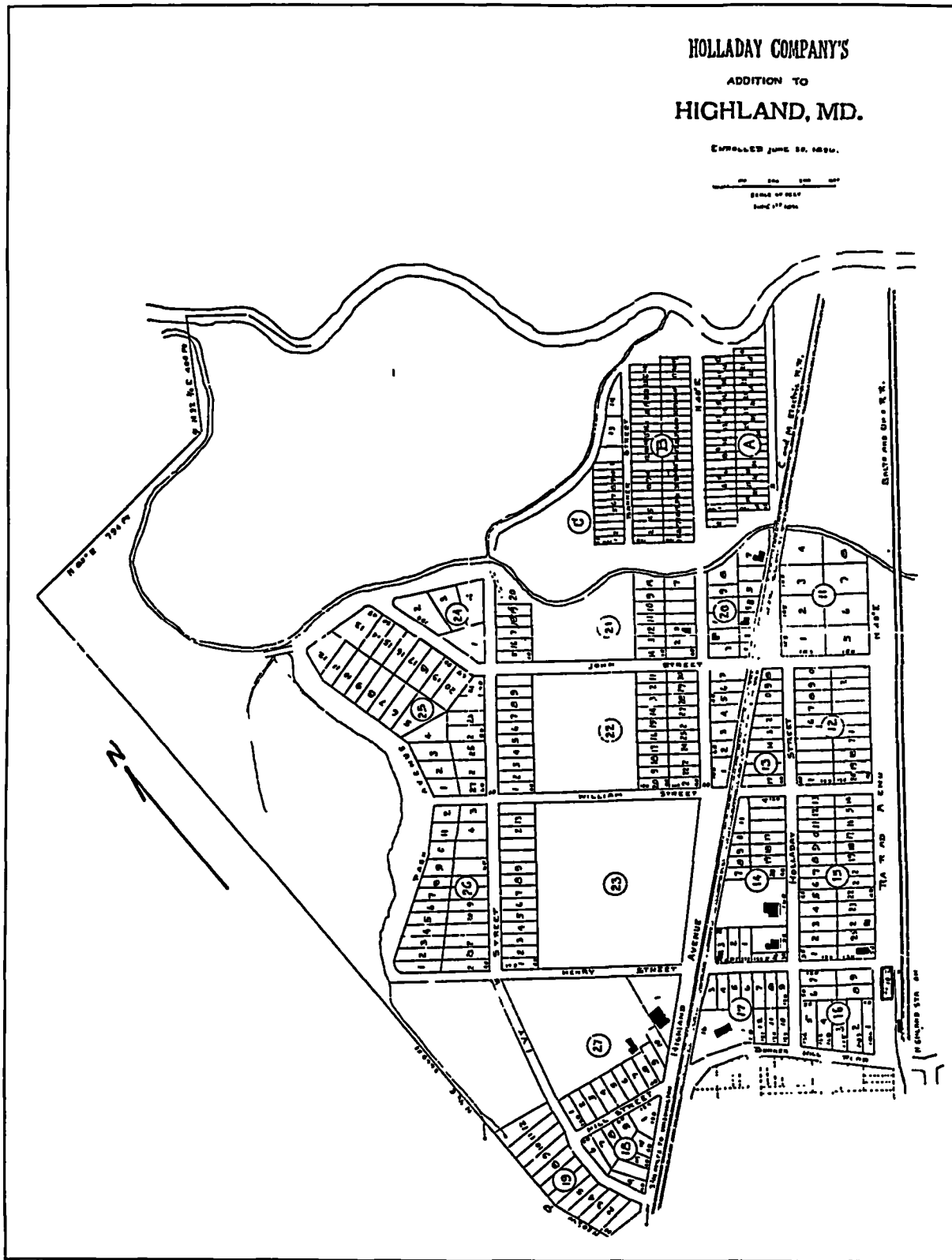


Figure 5 - Plat of Holladay Company's Addition to Highland, Md., 1896, Prince George's County Plat JWB#5:646 (A-8).

**THE HOME INVESTMENT COMPANY**  
**EASTERDAY and HALDEMAN GENERAL MANAGERS**

Supplemental Plan of  
**WILSON HEIGHTS**  
 The Summit Crest of Highlands  
 At  
 Highlands Station  
 B & O. R.R.  
 4 miles North of Washington D.C.  
 1896  
 Enrolled May 2, 1893

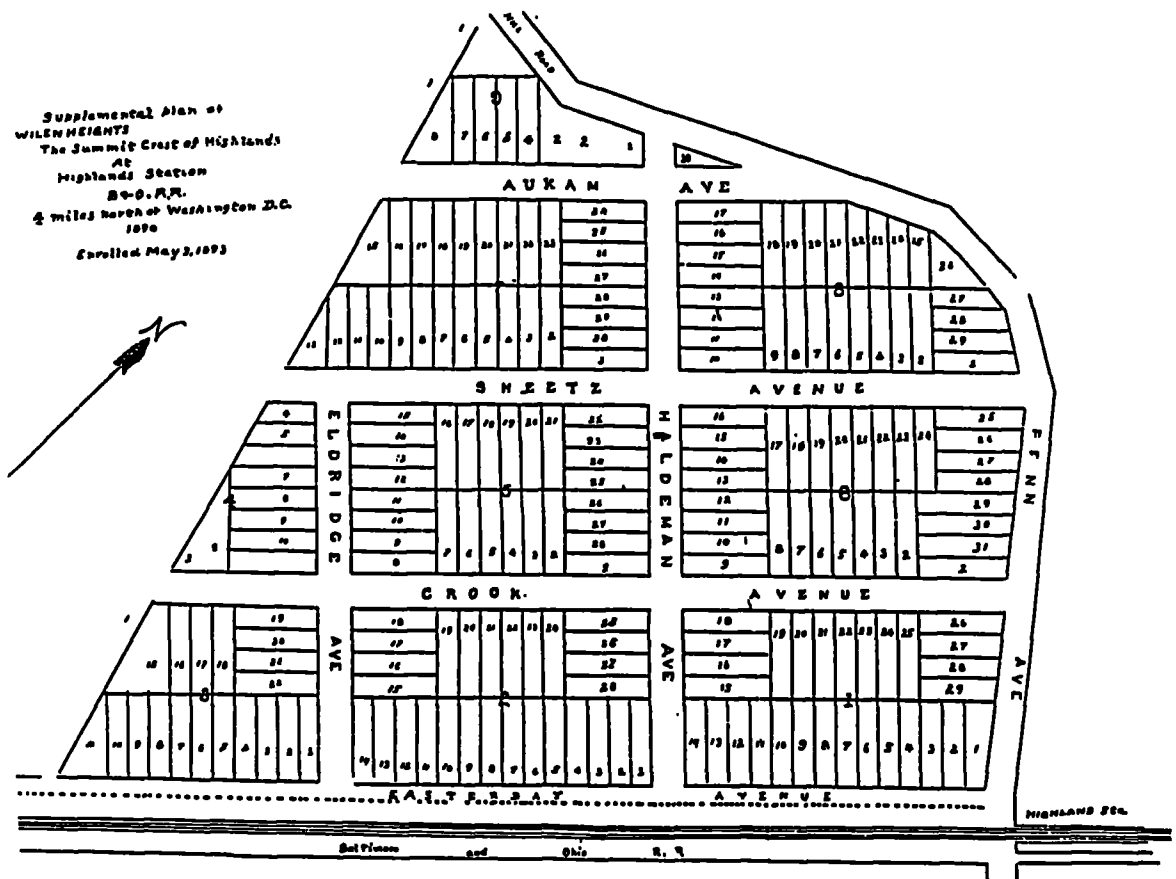


Figure 6 - Plat of Wilson Heights, 1893, Prince George's County Plat JWB#25:165 (A-7).

subdivision developed very slowly. By the end of the century, no dwellings had been constructed in Wilen Heights, while there was considerable building activity in the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland. Building activity began in Wilen Heights in the first decade of this century, and much later, in 1922, Wilen Heights was included in the land which was incorporated as Brentwood.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, Wallace A. Bartlett, together with his partners J. Lee Adams and Samuel J. Mills, were selling lots in the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland, both in the northerly section which would become North Brentwood, and in the southerly area (close to the Bartletts' house) which would become Brentwood. The northern section of the subdivided area was subject to flooding from the Northwest Branch and from the mill race which ran southeasterly from the Branch to the grist mill near Bladensburg; these lots were sold at lower prices. Bartlett encouraged black men, who had been indirectly associated with him through veterans of the U.S. Colored Troops in the Civil War, to buy some of these less expensive lots; some of these men were employed by Bartlett as laborers for the purpose of alleviating some of the flooding problems (See *infra*.) In the meantime, the more expensive lots to the south, not threatened by flooding of the branch or the mill race, were being purchased by white families, and dwellings were being built.<sup>7</sup>

In June 1896, Wallace A. Bartlett, together with his partners, Adams and Mills, officially recorded the plat for the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland, which had been subdivided in 1891. It consisted of approximately 80 acres of the Holladay Farm (Figure 5), including the southeasterly section of the area which later became Brentwood, and most of the northerly section which eventually became North Brentwood.<sup>8</sup> The swampy area to the northwest, enclosed between the Northwest Branch and the mill race, had not at this time been platted.

At the time of the 1896 plat, five dwellings had been constructed in the northerly section which would eventually become North Brentwood, all of them built for black families, members or relatives of the Randall family; this area was popularly known as Randalltown. Eight dwellings and several domestic outbuildings, in addi-

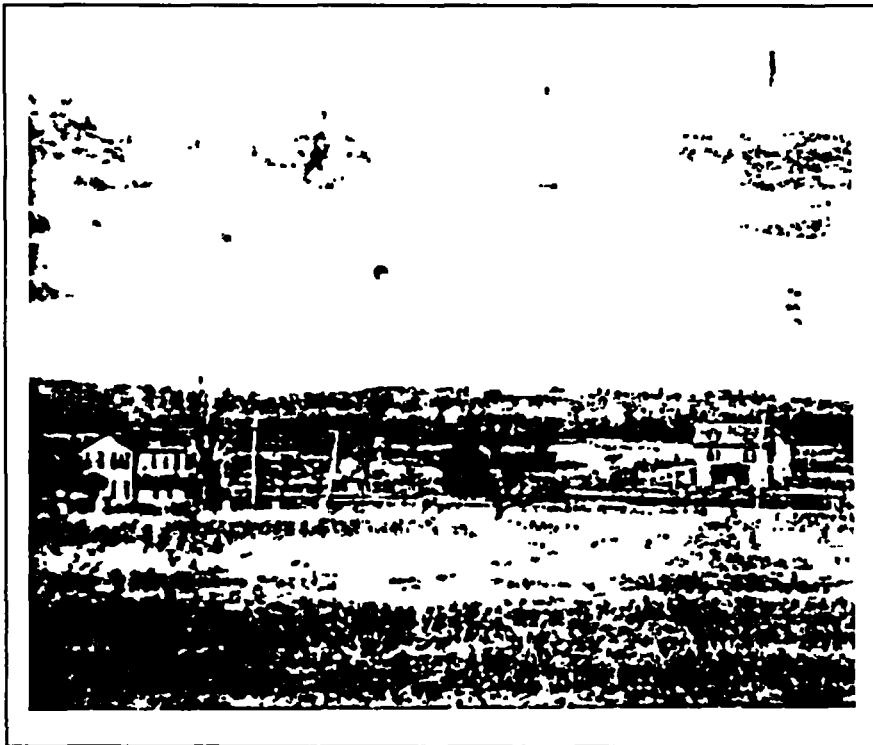
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6 Prince George's Plats JWB#14:582, JWB#25:165 (A-7, 1890 and 1893); Prince George's County Deeds JWB#14:575,577,774; JWB#22:444; JWB#36:118,307. Prince George's County Equity #1814.

7 Prince George's County Deeds JWB#20:200, JWB#35:803, JB#6:198; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1891-1899; see also Prince George's County Equity #2582.

8 Prince George's County Plat JWB#5:646.

tion to the old Highlands Station and freight shed on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, stood in the southerly section which would become Brentwood. One of these dwellings was that of Wallace and Jemima Bartlett, the house which Bartlett built after purchasing the Holladay farm in 1887. The Bartletts' house was a two-story frame farmhouse, cross gable in plan, with wraparound porch, typical of the farmhouses of this period. A photograph taken shortly after 1890 (Figure 7) shows another farmhouse a short distance to the northeast; this somewhat more traditional side-gabled frame dwelling is almost certainly the house built at approximately that time for Cornelius and Laura Mecutcheon. Laura Bartlett, daughter of Wallace and Jemima, married Cornelius Mecutcheon in 1892; an artist, Laura Mecutcheon gave painting lessons, while her husband worked for the U.S. Treasury Department, and later became a partner in the real estate ventures of his father-in-law<sup>9</sup>



*Figure 7 - View of Holladay farm, north from near Highland Station, shortly after 1890; Captain Bartlett's house on left, Hyattsville on hill in background.*

By 1896, other houses had been constructed north of Bartlett's large lot, all in the long triangle formed between the railroad and the developing right-of-way of the City and Suburban streetcar line. By

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Records for Prince George's County, 1900, 1910, 1920; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1888-1915; Prince George's County Deed JWB#11:154. Nelson's Washington Suburban Directory, 1912, 1918.

this time, the plat of "Holladay Company's Addition to Highland" had been recorded, and showed seven irregular blocks of building lots in this long triangular space. Bartlett's house lot showed on the plat as lots 13 through 16 of Block 17. Seven other buildings had been constructed by the time of the 1896 plat; only one of these earliest buildings still stands.

### **Flooding Problems in the 1890s**

From the beginning of residential development in Randalltown, the area was subject to flooding from the Northwest Branch and from the mill race, making this northerly section less desirable for building than the section to the south. Early in the 18th century a grist mill had been built just west of Bladensburg; a mill race was constructed from the Northwest Branch (at a point where the northernmost part of the Holladay Company's subdivision was later platted) curving south and east for approximately one-half mile back to the Branch at Bladensburg and forming a loop around the mill. This grist mill, operated by the Digges family in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and later by Henry Carleton, was purchased in 1888 by Gilbert Moyers; it is referred to as the Moyers mill in land records regarding the Holladay Company subdivision.<sup>10</sup> The mill race ran for nearly 4,000 feet through the center of Randalltown, and added to the flooding problems of the black families who had built homes in this area.

The Bladensburg area had always suffered from flooding problems. Heavy rains were known to raise the level of water in the Northwest Branch as much as eight feet; during these periods, water would pour through the mill race, flooding up to 20 acres of the land around it. In order to alleviate the flooding problems of the earliest Randalltown residents, Bartlett hired a group of them to dig ditches for the purpose of draining the mill race. His rationale was that Moyers' mill was in ruinous condition, no longer operable and therefore no longer in need of a mill race; draining the race would prevent the accumulation of fetid, unhealthful water in its channel, and at the same time prevent flooding of the adjoining land. This ditching work was accomplished in 1898 and 1899, and succeeded in reclaiming a large area of swampland into fertile land for crops. Moyers brought an injunction against Bartlett, claiming that his mill was indeed still operable, and that he therefore needed an intact mill race. Bartlett countered that he would be unable to maintain a

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<sup>10</sup> Prince George's County Deeds JBB#1:137,413; JBB#5:33; City of The Highlands, Prince George's County, Maryland, 1870, promotional brochure, Washington, D.C., 1870.

healthful community for the families who were already living in his subdivision (Randalltown) if he were to be prevented from correcting flaws in the mill race which ran through his property. The Court found in favor of defendant Bartlett, the injunction was dissolved, and the work of draining and improving the land continued. Moyers' mill ceased to operate.<sup>11</sup> Within a few years, former swampland was drained and platted for residential lots. Though the situation was considerably improved, flooding continued to be a problem until 1954 when the Bladensburg Pumping Station was constructed as part of the flood control program.

The settling of the court case between Moyers and Bartlett is particularly interesting because it gives a clear picture of the Holladay Company's development at that time. A plat was prepared in June 1899 as one of the defendant's exhibits; it shows the entire course of the mill race through the developing community. It shows the seven dwellings of the extended Randall family clustered in an area very close to the mill race; it shows that Bartlett had built a bridge just north of this complex of dwellings, to carry Highland Avenue across the mill race. It shows very clearly why the land to the northwest of these houses had not been platted; this was the swampland, which was gradually being converted into cropland by Bartlett's efforts (Figure 8). The 1899 plat also shows the eight dwellings (including Bartlett's and Mecutcheon's) in the area to the south, as well as the Highland Station and freight shed.

Depositions were taken by the Court from several of the men who worked for Bartlett, and they are very illuminating. Most importantly, they reveal that some of the black residents of Randalltown were employed by Bartlett in the actual development and improvement of the subdivision land. Other men who were working for Bartlett at this time subsequently purchased lots and built their homes there. Bartlett himself also gave testimony during the hearing of this case. He indicated that the lots close to the mill race sold for lower prices than those in the southerly section of the subdivision because of their susceptibility to flooding. He also indicated that he had spent \$5,000 to \$6,000 in the construction of streets, sidewalks and bridges.<sup>12</sup>

## **City and Suburban Railway Company**

During the 1890s, companies were being chartered to link Baltimore and Washington by trolley lines. The Columbia and Maryland

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11 Prince George's County Equity #2582, Prince George's County Courthouse.

12 *ibid.*

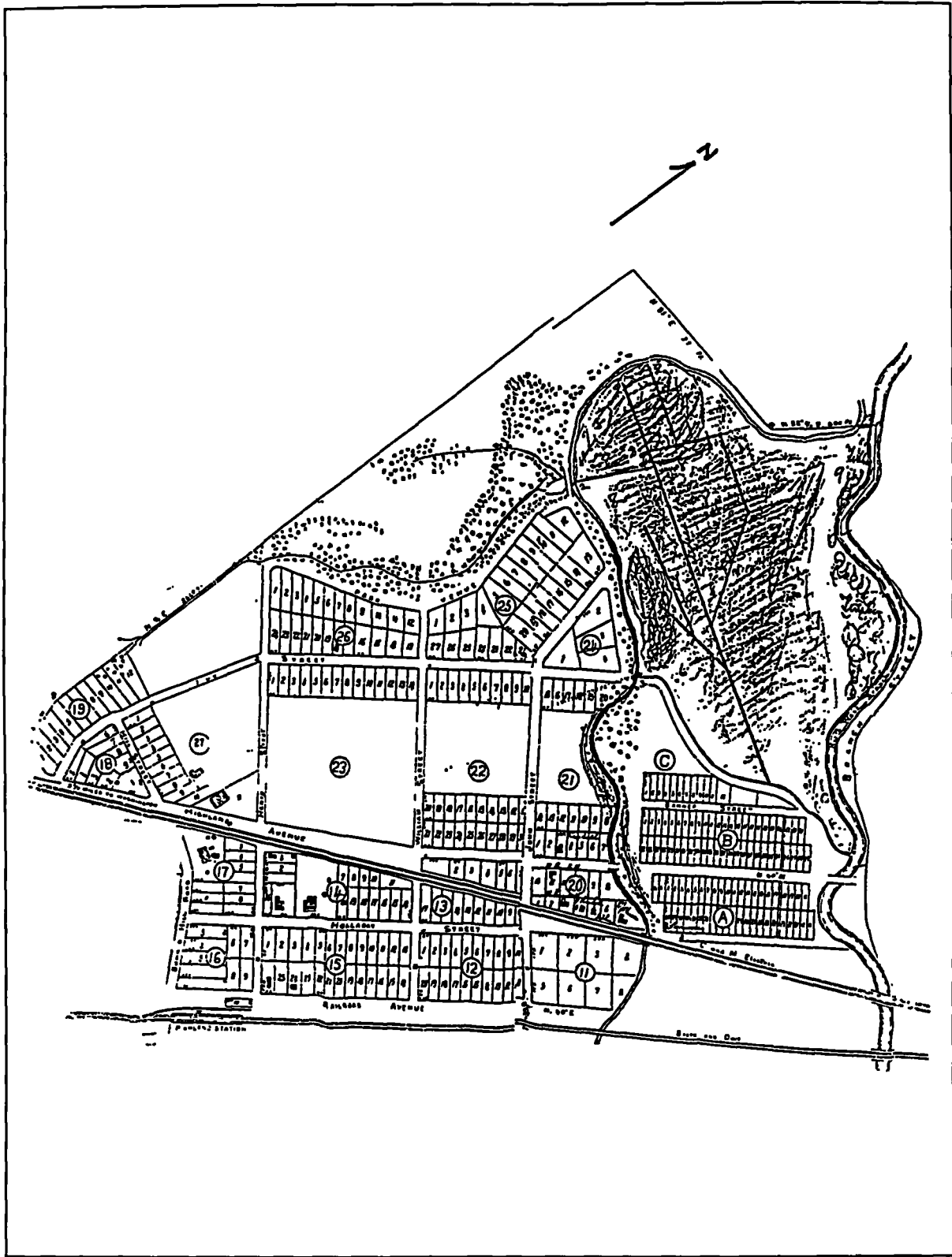


Figure 8 - 1899 plat showing mill race through developing community (Equity #2582).



Railway Company began to buy up land for its right-of-way on a line which ran west of and nearly parallel to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. In 1896, some of the people who had purchased lots along this right-of-way conveyed parts of their lots to the Columbia and Maryland Railway Company for its right-of-way. Tracks were laid along this right-of-way, and the company constructed a culvert to carry the mill race underneath the tracks. The trolley line was completed through this area in 1898, at which time the two operating trolley companies merged to become the City and Suburban Railway Company.<sup>13</sup>

## THE SECOND SUBDIVISION

In 1899, Wallace Bartlett purchased the Fenwick family farm which lay immediately to the west of the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland; with two new partners he formed a new company (the Brentwood Company) to plat this land as an adjoining addition to the already growing community. By this time the area was coming to be known as Brentwood, and it was this name that Bartlett and his new partners applied to their 1899 subdivision. The name "Brentwood" was taken from the nearby Brent family property just over one mile inside the boundary of the District of Columbia. The Brentwood plantation had belonged to Robert Brent, first Mayor of The District of Columbia; the fine Federal-style plantation house was designed by architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe and built in 1817; it became the home of Brent's daughter. By 1899, when Bartlett first applied the name "Brentwood" to the second subdivision, the Brentwood mansion had been abandoned; vandalism, decay and fire ensued and what remained of the mansion was finally demolished in 1919. The road that ran past the mansion and northeast out of the District of Columbia continued to be known as the Brentwood Road (Figure 9), and it was logical that one of the developing suburban communities through which it ran should take its name.<sup>14</sup>

The new subdivision was called the Brentwood subdivision, subtitled Clemson Place. Thomas Green Clemson, who had made a name for himself as an American diplomat in Belgium, and as the

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13 Prince George's County Deeds of Right-of-Way JWB##37:416,418,420; JWB#38:117,119; G.M.Hopkins Map of Vicinity of Washington, D.C., 1894; Historic Contexts in Prince George's County (Streetcar Lines, pp. 35-36), M-NCPPC, 1990.

14 Goode, James, Capital Losses, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., 1979; see also G. M. Hopkins Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Philadelphia, 1878.

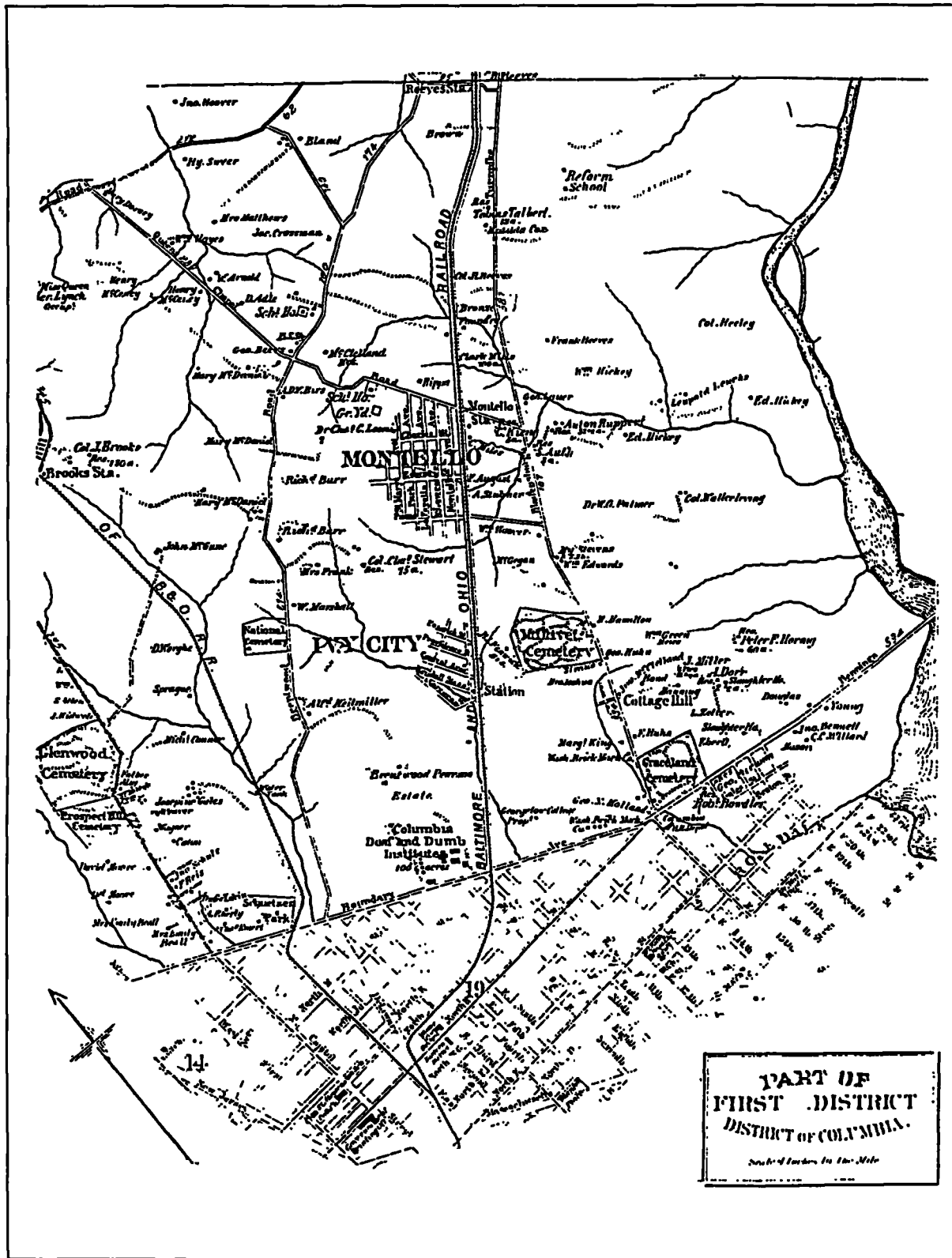


Figure 9 - 1878 map of northeast District of Columbia showing the Brent family mansion, "Brentwood", and the Brentwood Road.

son-in-law of John C. Calhoun, had purchased 100 acres just outside of the District boundary and built his family home there. The Clemsons were forced by their southern sympathies to return to South Carolina during the Civil War, and never came back to the Washington area. The Clemson farm, however, continued to be known as such until 1890 when it was sold out of Thomas Clemson's estate to the developers of what would become Mount Rainier.<sup>15</sup> The 95 acres of land which made up the new Brentwood subdivision comprised the Fenwick farm and a small strip of Clemson's land which adjoined it on the west; originally called Clemson Place after that well-known family, it soon came to be known simply as Brentwood.

The 95-acre Brentwood subdivision was surveyed and platted in 1899 by Bartlett and his two partners in the Brentwood Company, Ira J. Baker and Dr. Sigmund A. Czarra. All three men were at the same time actively involved in the development of Mount Rainier which bordered this land on the west. The plan of the Brentwood subdivision differed considerably from that of the earlier Holladay subdivision; whereas the lines of the Holladay subdivision were determined by the location of the Railroad and of the proposed streetcar line, the Brentwood subdivision allowed for more variety. From the beginning, spaces were reserved for parkland where the two subdivisions adjoined one another, and a series of diagonal streets just west of these reservations created larger triangular lots and another small triangular park (Figure 10).<sup>16</sup> It was in the Brentwood subdivision that most of the next stage of building activity was to take place.

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOLLADAY AND BRENTWOOD SUBDIVISIONS**

In 1904, the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland was expanded, replatted and again recorded; this second plat shows 40 additional acres west of Randalltown, on the land which had formerly been swamp but which Bartlett had reclaimed through his ditching efforts (Figure 11). It also shows several more dwellings than had appeared on the 1896 plat. By far the greatest building

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15 Lee, Floride Clemson, *A Rebel Came Home. The Diary of Floride Clemson*, pp. 1-24; Clemson family papers, Clemson University Library Archives, Clemson, South Carolina.

16 Plat (JB#5:606) attached to Prince George's County Deed, JB#5:605.

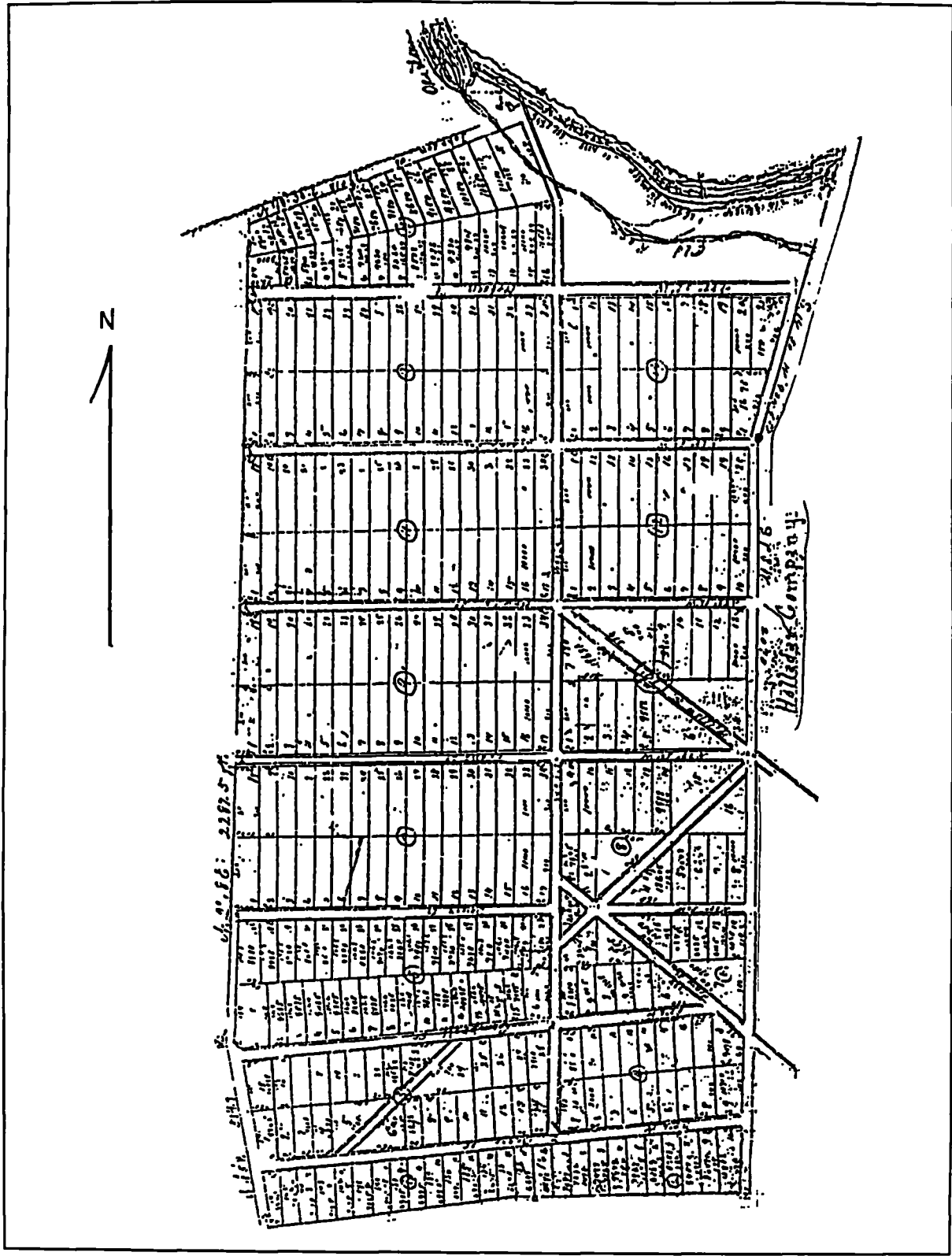


Figure 10 - Plat of the Brentwood Company's "Clemson Place" subdivision, 1899, filed with Prince George's County Deed JB#5:606.

ADDITION TO  
HIGHLAND (BRENTWOOD)

MARCH 1, 1904.

SEE JWB 5 FOL 646

Lots Sold Marked

House Marked O

Scale

ENROLLED MAR. 29, 1904.

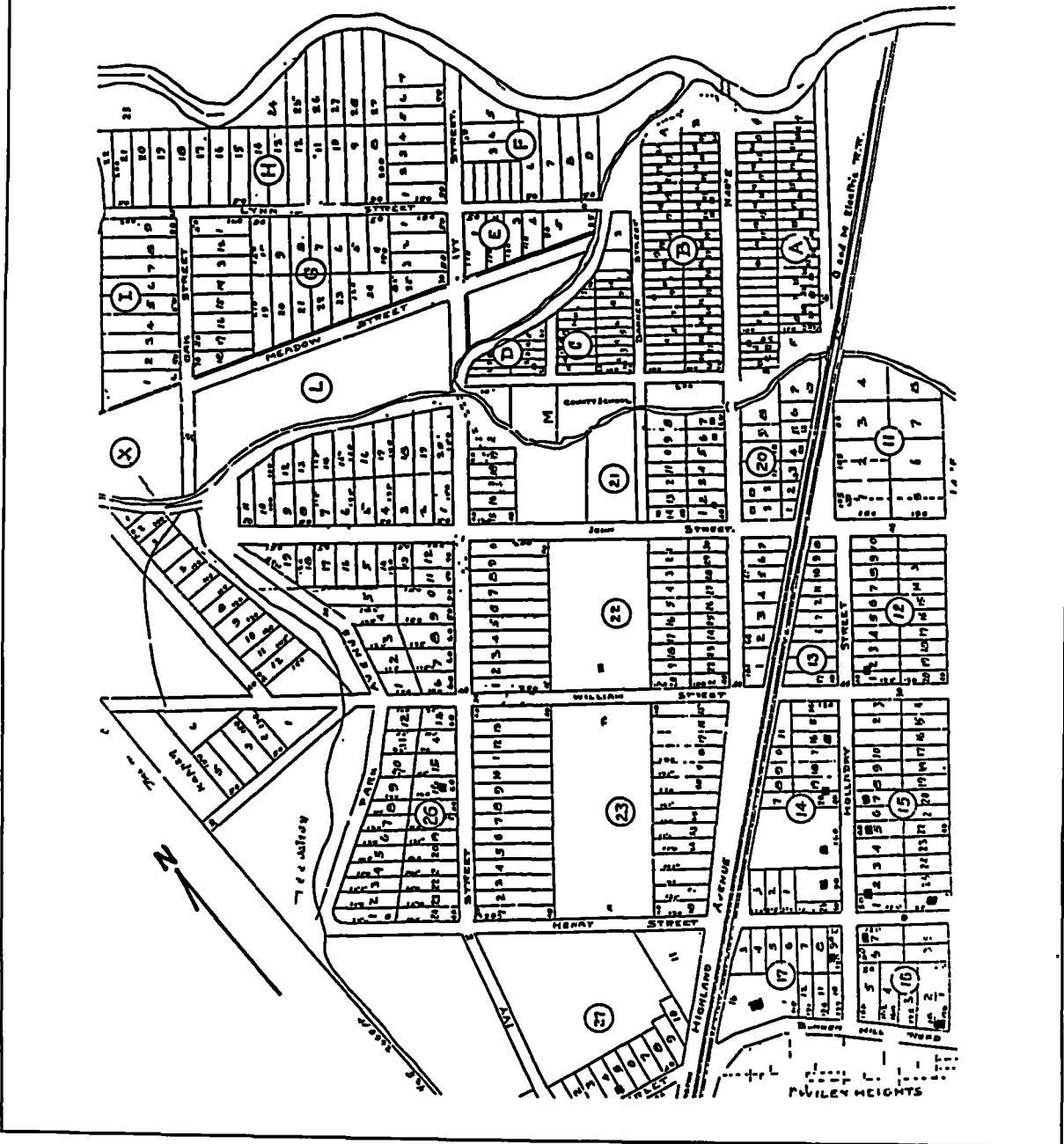


Figure 11 - Plat of Holladay Company's Addition to Highland (Brentwood), Md., 1904, Prince George's County Plan JWB#5:669 (A-9).

activity, however, had taken place in the 1899 Brentwood Company subdivision. A revised plat of the 1899 Brentwood subdivision (Figure 12) indicates all of the dwellings which had been constructed by August 1903. These two plats from 1903 and 1904 show clearly that there had been considerable building activity since 1899. By the beginning of 1904, there were 15 dwellings standing in the Holladay Company's subdivision, and 36 in the Brentwood Company's subdivision.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Earliest Houses**

Survey of these two original subdivisions reveals that only 4 original dwellings, less than one third of the 15 houses from this earliest building period, still stand in the Holladay Company subdivision; this area has become the commercial and industrial area of modern Brentwood, and most of the early buildings have been replaced by industrial structures. In the Brentwood Company subdivision, however, 18 of the earliest houses still stand, i.e., fully half of the 36 dwellings constructed during this earliest building period. Several other good examples of early housing types also survive in the two subdivisions, all built within a few years after those shown on the 1903 and 1904 plats. Assuming that those houses which still stand are representative of the original group of houses, one can extrapolate the most frequent and popular types of dwellings which were built in the two subdivisions in this earliest period of building activity. All of these earliest dwellings were of wood frame construction. They are, as one might expect, typical of the dwelling types being built in all of the developing suburbs at that time.

### **The I-House Type**

The traditional I-house type (two stories, central stairhall with a single parlor on each side, and usually with a central cross gable at loft level), which had been a frequent rural farmhouse type for the preceding generation, was brought into this urban setting and built on the narrow building lots. The I-house type continued to be built throughout the first decade of the century. Four still stand in the Brentwood subdivision from this earliest period.

Clara Vansciver's family home on Baker Street was built in 1903 on lot 10 of Block 3. I-House in form, it was somewhat unusual in that it had a projecting central cross gable on the main facade (Figure

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17 See Plat JWB#5:669 (A-9) for the Holladay Company's Addition to Highland (Brentwood), 1904; see Plat JWB#5:607 (A-10) for the Brentwood Company Subdivision (Clemson Place), revised 1903.

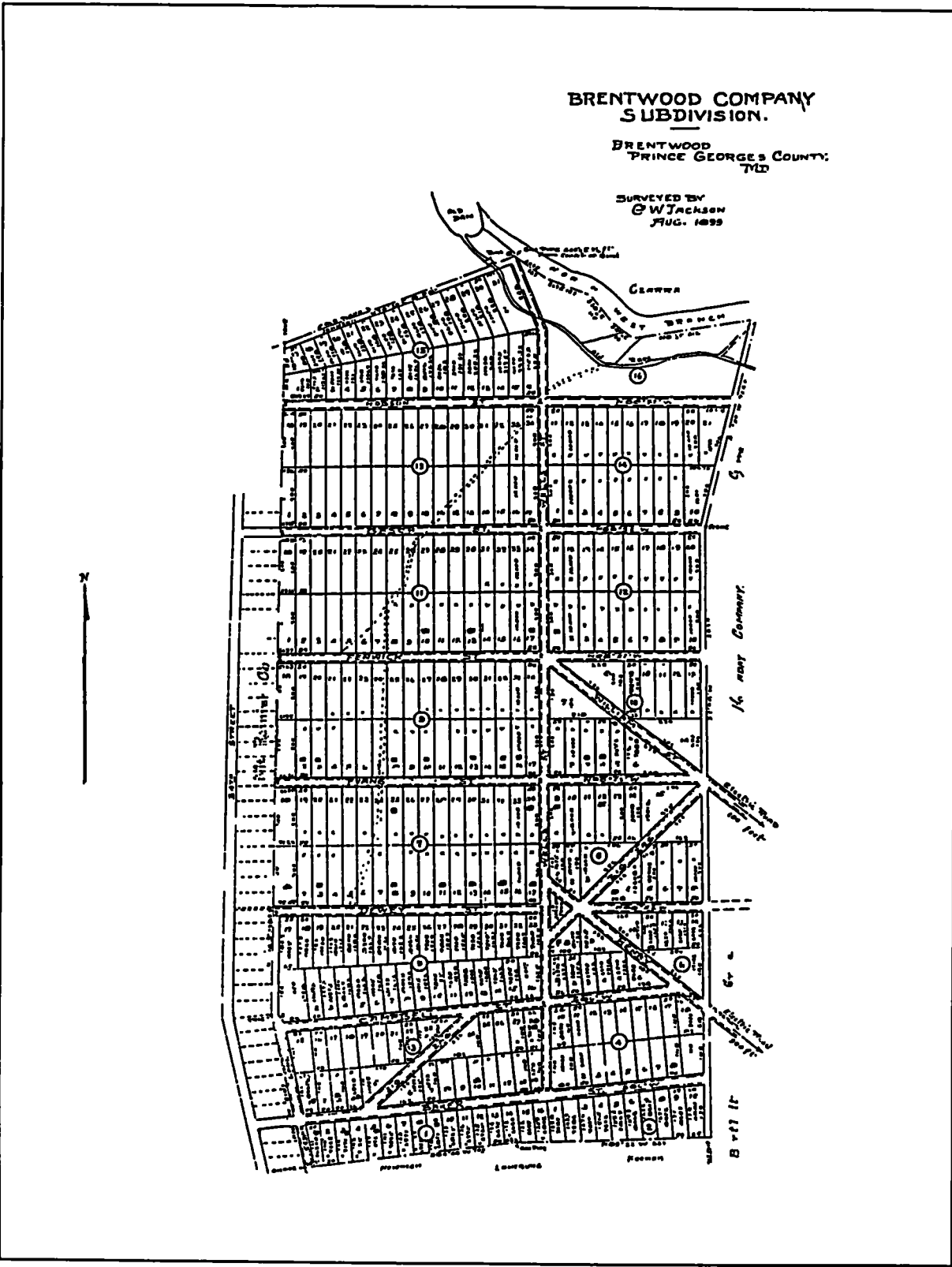


Figure 12 - Plat of the Brentwood Company Subdivision, Brentwood or Clempton (sic) Place, 1899, showing houses built by August 1903.

13).<sup>18</sup> The Evans Street home of Samuel S. Federline, built in 1903 on lot 10 of Block 9, was a more traditional I-house, with flush central cross gable (Figure 14).<sup>19</sup> Martina Miller's family home, also I-house in form with flush central cross gable, was built on Baker Street in 1903; it stands on lot 6 of Block 1 (Figure 15).<sup>20</sup> The home of John and Wilhelmina Bakersmith, was built on Dewey Street in 1904, and is a classic example of the I-house form. John Bakersmith ran a general merchandise market, and like many others of the early Brentwood residents, was of German extraction. He became very active in civic affairs, serving as the first president of the Brentwood Improvement Association in 1917, and later as Town Councilman.<sup>21</sup> The Bakersmith house still stands on a large lot in a setting reminiscent of the rural origins of this house type (Figure 16).

### The Cross-gabled House

Another popular farmhouse type, the two-and-one-half-story Cross Gable, was also adapted for the narrow lots, and for nearly a decade was the favorite among those who could afford to build a larger dwelling. Several cross-gabled dwellings still stand in the Brentwood subdivision. Charles W. Noske built a modest Cross Gable in 1904 on lot 3 of Block 3, immediately after purchasing the lot from Bartlett and his partners; only two bays wide, it has a flush cross gable on each side elevation, and returned cornices (Figure 17). Noske, also of German extraction, worked as an insurance agent; his family remained in the Baker Street house for many years.<sup>22</sup>

A larger and more noticeable cross-gabled dwelling had been built in 1903 for William Zellers on lot 17 of Block 7 in the Brentwood subdivision. Zellers worked as a U.S. government clerk, and raised his family in this house on the corner of Dewey and Wells Streets; like Bakersmith, he became active in civic affairs, and served as the

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18 Prince George's County Deed #11:296; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05.

19 Prince George's County Deed #9:198; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05.

20 Prince George's County Deed #9:555; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05.

21 Prince George's County Deed #14:340; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920.

22 Prince George's County Deed #16:397; Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1903-07; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920; Nelson's Washington Suburban Directory, 1912, 1918; Polk's Washington Suburban Directory, 1923, 1927/8.



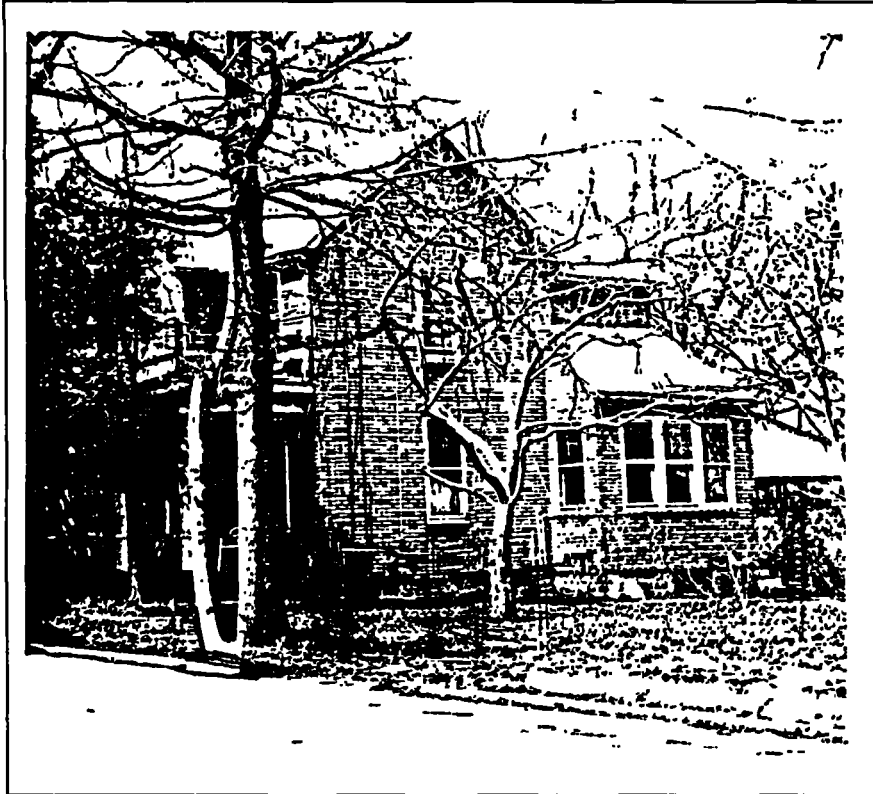


Figure 13 - The Clara Vansover House: Block 3, lot 10, Brentwood subdivision 3600 Taylor (originally Baker) Street I-house type frame dwelling built in 1903.

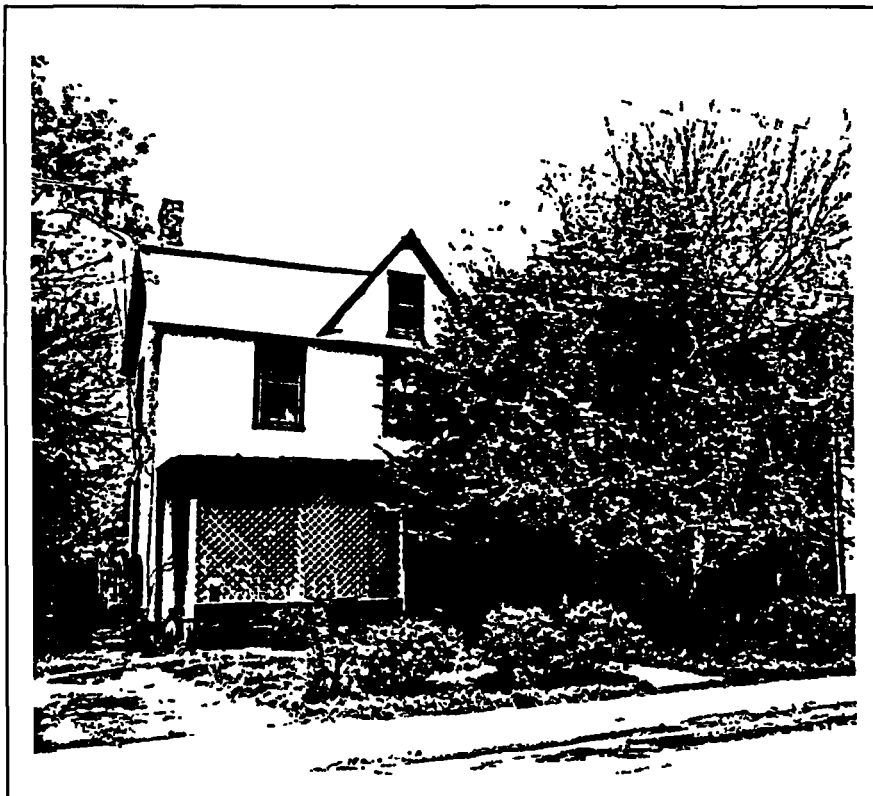


Figure 14 - The Samuel S. Federline House: Block 9, lot 10, Brentwood subdivision 3506 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - I-house type frame dwelling built in 1903.



*Figure 15 - The Martina Miller House: Block 1, lot 6, Brentwood subdivision - 3501 Taylor (originally Baker) Street I-house type frame dwelling built in 1903.*



*Figure 16 - The John Bakersmith House: Block 8, lot 6, Brentwood subdivision - 3704 Upshur (originally Dewey) Street I-house type frame dwelling built in 1904.*

first secretary of the Brentwood Improvement Association in 1917<sup>23</sup> Each gable of the Zellers house formed a pediment, and the principal facade was dominated by a deep gabled porch with stick style decorative motifs (Figure 18).

One of the many lots which Charles Lightbown purchased from the Brentwood Company partners was lot 9 in Block 1. Lightbown, who became actively involved in the building and development of Brentwood, constructed a cross-gabled frame dwelling on this lot in 1904; he then sold it to Charles Lenahan, another Brentwood resident who worked in the construction of houses.<sup>24</sup>

On Holladay Street in the Holladay Company's subdivision, a smaller, more modest form of the cross-gabled dwelling had been built by 1904 for Ella Barber on Lot 1 of Block 12.<sup>25</sup> This dwelling was only one-and-one-half stories in height, and had an inset corner porch with turned posts (Figure 19).

Perhaps the finest of the cross-gabled dwellings with Queen Anne style decorative elements was the home of Elizabeth Altemus, a widow who was employed in the U.S. Pension office. In 1896 she built a large Queen Anne style house on Railroad Avenue, on lot 26 of Block 15 in the Holladay Company subdivision.<sup>26</sup> This two-and-one-half-story hip-and-cross-gable-roof house was one of the earliest built in the community which was to become Brentwood; and certainly the earliest still surviving. It is distinguished by two-story semi-octagonal bays, and a porch with chamfered bracketed posts (Figure 20). Although it is essentially surrounded by dense commercial/industrial development immediately adjoining the B&O Railroad, it still serves as a fine example of late Victorian domestic architecture, considerably larger than the average subdivision dwelling.

Another outstanding example of the Queen Anne style cross-gabled house, built approximately a decade later, is the Evans Street house of George Houser, located on lot 28 of Block 7 in the Brentwood subdivision. George Houser worked as a house plasterer, and

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23 Prince George's County Deed #13:371, Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-07; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920.

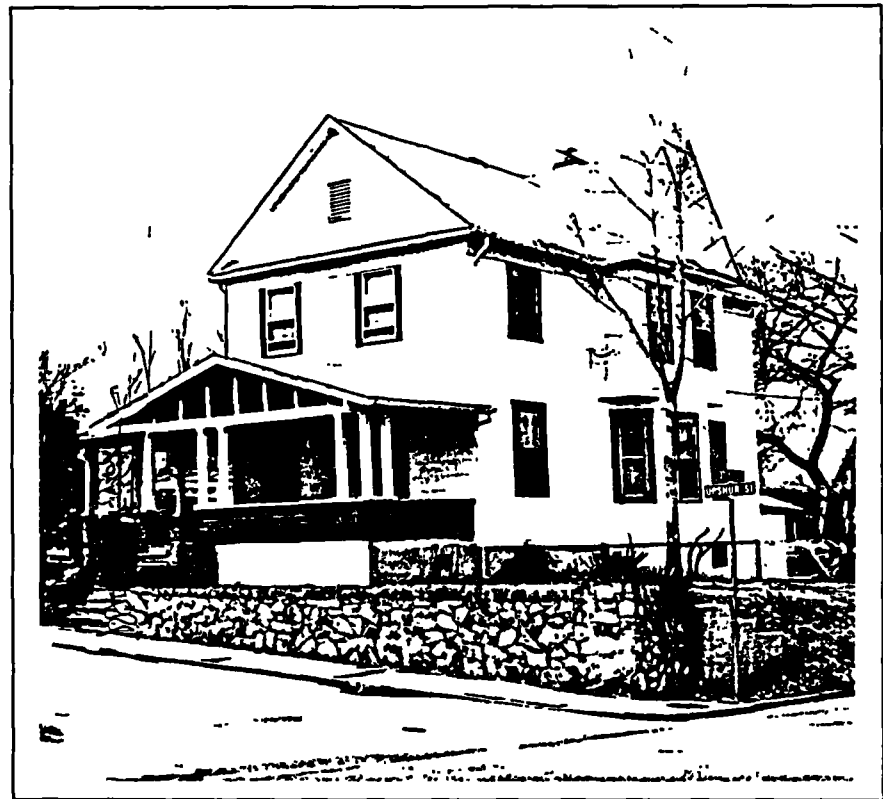
24 Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1904-08; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910.

25 Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1898-1905.

26 Prince George's County Deed JWB#41:405; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1896-1905; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1900.



*Figure 17 The Charles W. Noske House (right): Block 3, lot 3, Brentwood subdivision - 3404 Taylor (originally Baker) Street - cross-gabled frame dwelling built in 1904.*



*Figure 18 - The William Zellers house: Block 7 lot 17 Brentwood subdivision 3608 Upshur (originally Dewey) Street pedimented cross-gabled frame dwelling built in 1903.*



*Figure 19 - The Ella Barber House: Block 12, lot 1, Holladay Company subdivision 4401 41st (originally Holladay) Street small cross-gabled frame dwelling built before 1904.*



*Figure 20 - The Elizabeth Altemus House: Block 15, lot 26, Holladay Company subdivision 4300 Pennwood Road (originally Railroad Avenue) Queen Anne style cross-gabled frame dwelling built circa 1896.*

later worked for the U.S. Treasury Department.<sup>27</sup> A two-story, semi-octagonal projecting bay is surmounted by a full pediment, and dominates the principal facade of the Housers' cross-gabled house; the windows have diamond-shape panes. This fine house is a prominent landmark in the old section of the Brentwood subdivision (Figure 21).



*Figure 21 The George Houser House: Block 7, lot 28, Brentwood subdivision 3507 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - Queen Anne style cross-gabled frame dwelling built circa 1908.*

### The American Foursquare

Another substantial house type was the American Foursquare; this house type would become even more popular later in the first decade of this century as the community developed. Only two Foursquares survive to represent the earliest period, but several others were erected within the next few years, and survive to offer very significant examples.

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27 Prince George's County Deed #27:542; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1905-12; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920.

Victor Violland, a harnessmaker from Texas, purchased lots 1 and 2 in Block 15 of the Holladay subdivision in 1899, and within a year had built a handsome and substantial house (on Holladay Street) which could compare in size and stature with the houses of the Bartletts and the Mecutcheons which stood nearby. Victor Violland went on to work for the railroad, as did his son, and the family resided in this house for half a century.<sup>28</sup> The Violland dwelling is a good example of the transition from Queen Anne Victorian in style to the Colonial Revival Foursquare. It is three bays by two with hip roof, and has two corbelled brick chimneys at the ridge, a one-story projecting semi-octagonal bay, and a porch with turned bracketed posts. On the main facade at loft level is a central cross gable sided with fish-scale shingles. The Violland House still stands in an area now devoted to commercial and industrial pursuits; because it is one of the few remaining of the earliest dwellings, it is a landmark in this area (Figure 22).

A smaller and more modest Foursquare still stands on lot 8 of Block 7 in the Brentwood subdivision. Built by Larry Snead on Dewey Street in 1903, it is noticeable for its compact size, and its low hip dormer with two-part window.<sup>29</sup>

Before the end of 1904, another substantial Foursquare was built in the Brentwood subdivision by Charles Lightbown. Lightbown bought a large number of building lots from Bartlett, Baker and Czarra, and oversaw the construction of many dwellings which he then sold, but in 1904 he had a handsome and substantial Foursquare built for his own family on Lot 24 in Block 3.<sup>30</sup> Four bays by two, with hip roof and hip dormer, this house stood on an unusually large triangular lot at the intersection of Campbell and Zig Zag, one of the diagonal streets which gave the Brentwood subdivision its variety in plan (Figure 23).

By 1905, another substantial Foursquare had been built on lot 6 of Block 3, on Baker Street. A central chimney rises from the pyramidal roof of this handsome house, and the third level is lighted by hip dormers (Figure 24). The house was built for the family of John

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28 Prince George's County Deed JB#6:198; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1898-1910; U.S. Census for Prince George's County 1900, 1910, 1920; Nelson's Washington Suburban Directory, 1912, 1918; Polk's Washington Suburban Directory, 1923, 1927/28.

29 Prince George's County Deed #13:252; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910.

30 Prince George's County Deed #18:308; #20:46; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1902-1910.

*Figure 22 - The Victor Violland House: Block 15, lot 1, Holladay Company subdivision 4301 41st (originally Holladay) Street transitional Queen Anne/Foursquare frame dwelling built in 1899.*



*Figure 23 - The Charles Lightbown House: Block 3, lot 24, Brentwood subdivision - 3601 Tilden (originally Campbell) Street American Foursquare frame dwelling built in 1904.*





Pribula, an Austrian shoemaker who had come to this country in 1887. The Pribula family became active in Brentwood civic affairs.<sup>31</sup>

One of the most noticeable Foursquares in Brentwood was built in 1905 by Winter and Florence Gigous, close friends of the Bartlett family. Winter Gigous worked as the superintendent of a construction company, and it was in his house that Jemima Bartlett, widow of the Captain, spent the last years of her life.<sup>32</sup> This large hip-roof Foursquare occupied a prominent location on Highland Avenue, fronting on the streetcar line, on lot 5 of Block 18, and today serves as the Brentwood Animal Hospital (Figure 25).

### Urban Vernacular - The Front-gabled House

The majority of the houses built during this earliest building period had a narrow, deep floor plan suited to the narrow building lots; they were two- or two-and-one-half-story dwellings, with either pitched roof and gable front (the front-gabled house), or shallow-pitched shed roof (the freestanding rowhouse). By far the most popular was the front-gabled dwelling; of the 18 surviving original houses in the Brentwood subdivision, 9 are of this front-gabled form, and 2 of the surviving 4 in the Holladay subdivision are of this type.

One of these popular front-gabled dwellings was the home of the Beck family. Nettie and Edward Beck purchased lot 8 in Block 6 of the Brentwood subdivision, one of the triangular lots formed by the diagonal streets; in 1903, on this lot at the intersection of Zig Zag and Wells, they built a modest front-gabled dwelling. Edward Beck operated a general merchandise market.<sup>33</sup> The Beck house has been substantially altered in recent years, with the application of aluminum siding, shed dormers and modern windows, but the lines of the original 1903 house can still easily be seen (Figure 26). Another front-gabled dwelling was built in 1903 by Daniel Magruder, who purchased lot 4 of Block 8, another triangular lot formed by Zig Zag and Dewey Streets, near the property of the Beck family.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Prince George's County Deed #43:313, #67:247; Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1904-1910; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920.

32 Prince George's County Deed #21:46; Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1904-12; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920; Prince George's County Will WTD#1:81.

33 Prince George's County Tax Assessments 1902-08; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920.

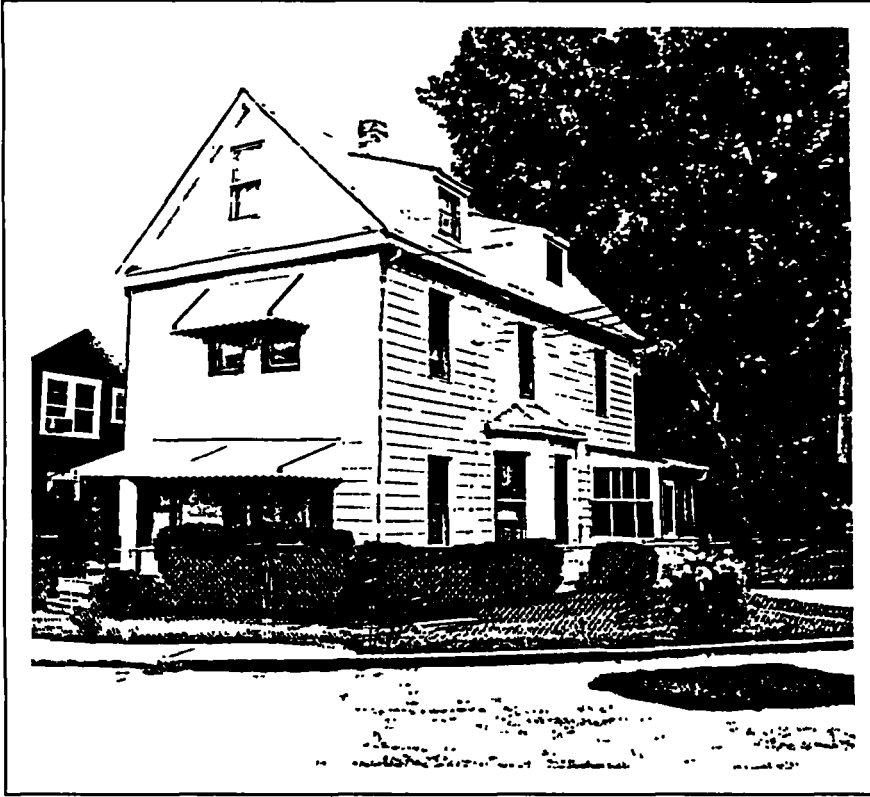
34 Prince George's County Deed #13:227; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05.



*Figure 24 - The John Pribula House: Block 3, lot 6, Brentwood subdivision 3500 Taylor (originally Baker) Street American Foursquare frame dwelling built by 1905.*



*Figure 25 - The Winter Gigous House: Block 18, lot 5, Holladay Company subdivision - 3900 Rhode Island (originally Highland) Avenue - Colonial Revival Foursquare frame dwelling built in 1905.*



*Figure 26 The Nettie and Edward Beck House: Block 6, lot 8, Brentwood subdivision - 3701 Jackson (originally Zig Zag) Street front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1903.*



*Figure 27 The Daniel Magruder House: Block 8, lot 4, Brentwood subdivision 3700 Upshur (originally Dewey) Street pedimented front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1903.*

Magruder's house differed from the Becks' in that its principal gable was pedimented, enclosing a small loft window (Figure 27).

In the block to the west of the Beck and Magruder family homes, Julius Gerhardt purchased lot 13 of Block 9 from Bartlett, Baker and Czarra in 1904, and built a very small front-gabled dwelling. Gerhardt was the son of German immigrants, and married a German woman who had come to this country in 1883. They raised their family in this small house on Evans Street, adding a substantial gambrel-roof addition in the rear in 1913 (Figure 28).<sup>35</sup> Next door to the Gerhardt family, J. H. Shanley also built a front-gabled dwelling in 1903; taller and wider than the Gerhardt house, Shanley's dwelling has undergone little change from its original appearance (Figure 28).<sup>36</sup> On the other side of Shanley's house, also on Evans Street, A. A. Henning built a nearly identical front-gabled frame house, also three bays wide but with shallower roof pitch; the Henning house is now easily distinguished from the Shanley house by its later stucco covering (Figure 29). Aloysius Henning worked as a bricklayer.<sup>37</sup>

Another front-gabled dwelling which survives from the earliest building period in the Brentwood subdivision is the Evans Street house of Wesley Wiedenmeyer, another worker in the construction of houses; his house was built in 1904 on lot 25 of Block 7.<sup>38</sup> Although much altered in recent years, the lines of the original block can still be clearly seen (Figure 30). In 1903, J. M. Magill built a front-gabled house on Evans Street, on lot 9 of Block 8.<sup>39</sup> It still stands today, complete with the novelty shingling in its gable front (Figure 31). Oscar Stickell, who worked as an ornamental plasterer, purchased lot 12 in Block 8, also on Evans Street; his front-gabled dwelling was erected in 1903.<sup>40</sup> Although altered by the application of aluminum siding, the lines and form of Stickell's house can be clearly recognized (Figure 32).

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35 Prince George's County Deed #20:199; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1904-1915; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920.

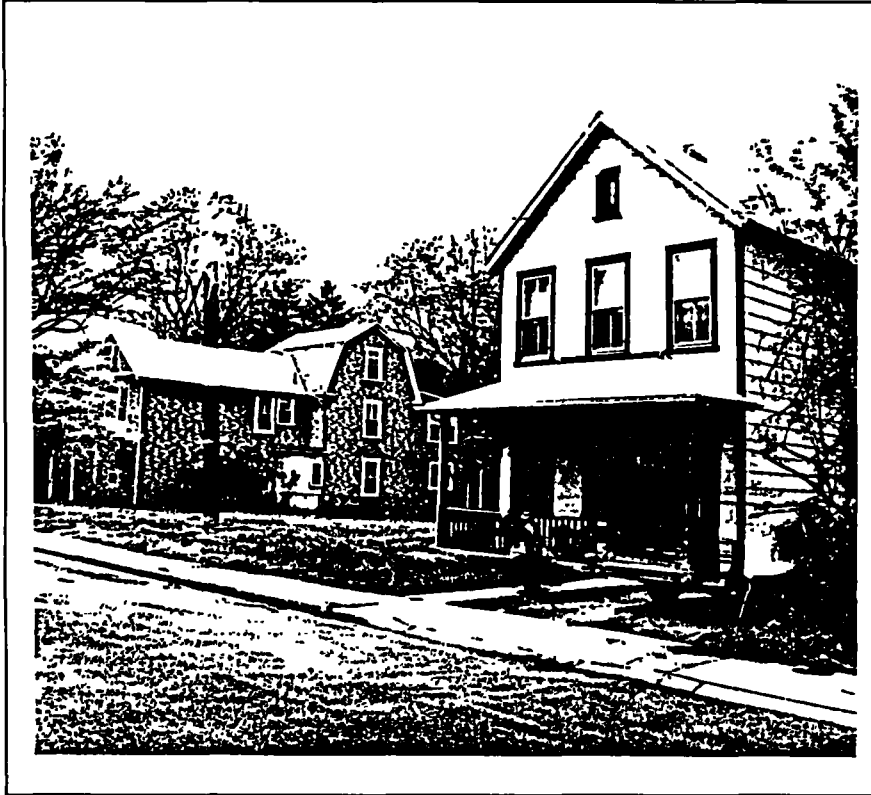
36 Prince George's County Deed #16:442; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05.

37 Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-06; Polk's Washington Suburban Directory, 1912.

38 Prince George's County Deed #16:90; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1904-08. Polk's Washington Suburban Directory, 1912.

39 Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-05.

40 Prince George's County Deed #14:327; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-06; Polk's Washington Suburban Directory, 1912.



*Figure 28 - The Julius Gerhardt House (left): Block 9, lot 13, Brentwood subdivision 3600 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - small front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1904, gambrel addition 1913.*

*The J. H. Shanley House (right): Block 9, lot 15, Brentwood subdivision 3604 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1903.*



*Figure 29 - The A. A. Henning House (right): Block 9, lot 16, Brentwood subdivision 3606 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - front-gabled frame (later stuccoed) dwelling built in 1903.*



*Figure 30 - The Wesley Wiedenmeyer House: Block 7 lot 25, Brentwood subdivision 3501 Varnum (originally Evans) Street front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1904; later wing.*



*Figure 31 The J. M. Magill House: Block 8, lot 9, Brentwood subdivision - 3701 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1903.*

In the Holladay subdivision two outstanding examples of the front-gabled house form still survive from the earliest building period. Before the turn of the century, Martha Miller had purchased lot 16 in Block 14, and had a handsome frame front-gabled house built on it. A widow, Martha Miller lived in this Holladay Street house with her daughter, a dressmaker, and her son, a carpenter.<sup>41</sup> The Millers' house was a somewhat larger version of this popular house form, three bays wide with a pointed-arch window in the gable front at loft level. The upper section of the gable front is sided with alternating courses of fishscale and sawtooth shingles (Figure 33). On the other side of the streetcar line, Conrad Rau, a mill worker, purchased lot 16 in Block 26 in 1904.<sup>42</sup> His was the first house built in this block of Ivy Street, a handsome frame front-gabled house, one side of which was distinguished by a two-story projecting semi-octagonal bay with fishscale-shingled pediment (Figure 34).

This front-gabled dwelling type continued to be built, with considerable variety, in the years which followed Brentwood's initial building phase. As in other contemporary suburbs (e.g., Mount Rainier, Riverdale, Berwyn Heights, North Brentwood and Fairmount Heights), this house form was the most frequent to be built in the early years of the century. It was inexpensive and easy to build, and well suited for the deep narrow lots of the developing suburbs. As the communities became well established, and home-builders began to invest more in their construction, the larger and more prominent Foursquares began to compete in popularity, until in the 1920s, the bungalow predominated everywhere. In the early years though, the simple front-gabled dwellings were the most frequent; several more survive from the period immediately following the first building phase in Brentwood, and stand as good examples of this period.

Late in 1904, for example, Elizabeth McCafferty built a front-gabled house prominently located on corner lot 24 of Block 26, near Conrad Rau's house on Ivy Street.<sup>43</sup> It is distinguished by its pedimented gable which encloses a triple window, and its bracketed wraparound porch (Figure 35). A short distance west of the McCaffertys' house stood a similar three-bay front-gabled house, simpler in form in that it did not have the pedimented gable (Figure

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41 Prince George's County Deed JB#8:160; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1898-1910; U.S. Census for Prince George's County 1900.

42 Prince George's County Deed #20:42; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1904-08.

43 Prince George's County Deed #19:361, Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-15.



*Figure 32 The Oscar Stickell House: Block 8, lot 12, Brentwood subdivision 3707 Varnum (originally Evans) Street front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1903.*



*Figure 33 - The Martha Miller House: Block 14, lot 16, Holladay Company subdivision 4320 41st (originally Holladay) Street front-gabled frame dwelling built circa 1900.*





*Figure 34 The Conrad Rau House: Block 26, lot 16, Holladay Company subdivision 4316 40th (originally Ivy) Street - front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1904.*



*Figure 35 - The Elizabeth McCafferty House: Block 26, lot 24, Holladay Company subdivision 4300 40th (originally Ivy) Street pedimented front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1904.*

36). This house was built by Wallace Bartlett shortly before his death in 1908 on a triangular lot in Block 19 which fronted on Baker Street and which backed up to the reserved parkland; it was occupied and soon afterwards purchased by James Sampson, who would later be elected Mayor of Brentwood. The house is still in the possession of the Sampson family <sup>44</sup>

A much smaller version of the front-gabled dwelling was built in 1908 by Charles Lightbown on one of his many investment properties, lot 31 in Block 5 of the Brentwood subdivision. This small but handsome house fronted on Dewey Street; it was only two bays wide, and had a hip-roof porch with turned bracketed posts (Figure 37). It was purchased in 1912 by Nimrod Keys, an electrician who worked for the telephone company. Keys sold the house in 1922 to Frank Schmidt, a plumber who had grown up in the Brentwood subdivision, and who raised his family in the house; it remains today in the Schmidt family <sup>45</sup>

### Urban Vernacular - The Freestanding Rowhouse

There are only two survivors among the flat-front dwellings built before 1904. This modest two-story dwelling type (sometimes known as the "freestanding rowhouse") had a horizontal front cornice and shallow-pitched shed roof sloping to the rear; the horizontal front cornice was often ornamented with jigsaw brackets. With its single-pitch roof and simple rectangular footprint, this house type was the most inexpensive to build on the narrow subdivision lots.

One example of this type is the Evans Street house of Frank Bernabo on lot 8 of Block 9. Bernabo, a house painter, built this flat-front house in 1902.<sup>46</sup> Although altered in recent years, it retains the jigsaw brackets at the cornice (Figure 38), making it a good example of this early house type. A similar flat-front was the home of John P. Reed, also on Evans Street, just a short distance away on lot 3 of Block 9. This narrow two-bay dwelling was built in 1903 by the Brentwood Company partners, and leased to Reed, who worked

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44 Prince George's County Deed #84:404; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-1915.

45 Prince George's County Deeds #40:324, #81:279 #182:329; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-1922; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910, 1920.

46 Prince George's County Deed #7:386; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-1910; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910.



*Figure 36 - The James Sampson House: Block 19, triangular lot, Holladay Company subdivision 3800 Taylor (originally Baker) Street - front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1908.*



*Figure 37 The Keys-Schmidt House: Block 5, lot 31, Brentwood subdivision - 3605 Upshur (originally Dewey) Street small front-gabled frame dwelling built in 1908.*

as a plasterer in house construction. The Reed family purchased the house and lot in 1907<sup>47</sup> The house has been much altered, and all of the Victorian trim has been removed, but the original lines of the house can be clearly recognized (Figure 39).

## CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

Although the principal building activity seems to have taken place in the very first years of the 20th century, the Brentwood community continued to develop and grow after 1904. At the end of that year Dr. Czarra, one of the partners in the Brentwood Company, platted the section of land between the Holladay and the Brentwood subdivisions which had not been included in the two earlier subdivision plats. Czarra's Addition to Brentwood took in that narrow area between Wells and Pine Streets, north from William Street to the Northwest Branch. Development in Czarra's Addition proceeded more slowly than in the earlier subdivisions.<sup>48</sup>

### After Bartlett

Wallace A. Bartlett died suddenly at his home in Brentwood, 25 May 1908. In addition to several small bequests, his will devised to his daughter, Laura Mecutcheon, two shares of stock in the Holladay Company, and all remaining property to his widow, Jemima Bartlett. Within two months, a legal deed was executed which made Cornelius Mecutcheon the third partner (of surviving partners J. Lee Adams and Samuel J. Mills) in place of Bartlett, with authority to sell property in the Holladay Company subdivision. After her husband's death, Jemima Bartlett continued to take an active part in the real estate transactions of the Holladay Company<sup>49</sup>

Cornelius Mecutcheon became actively involved in the sales of lots in the Brentwood community. By 1910, he and his wife had moved into the Bartlett family home with his mother-in-law, Jemima Bartlett. Because of Laura's illness and serious tension between mother and daughter, things did not go well in the extended family household; at the end of 1922, Jemima Bartlett left her home, and

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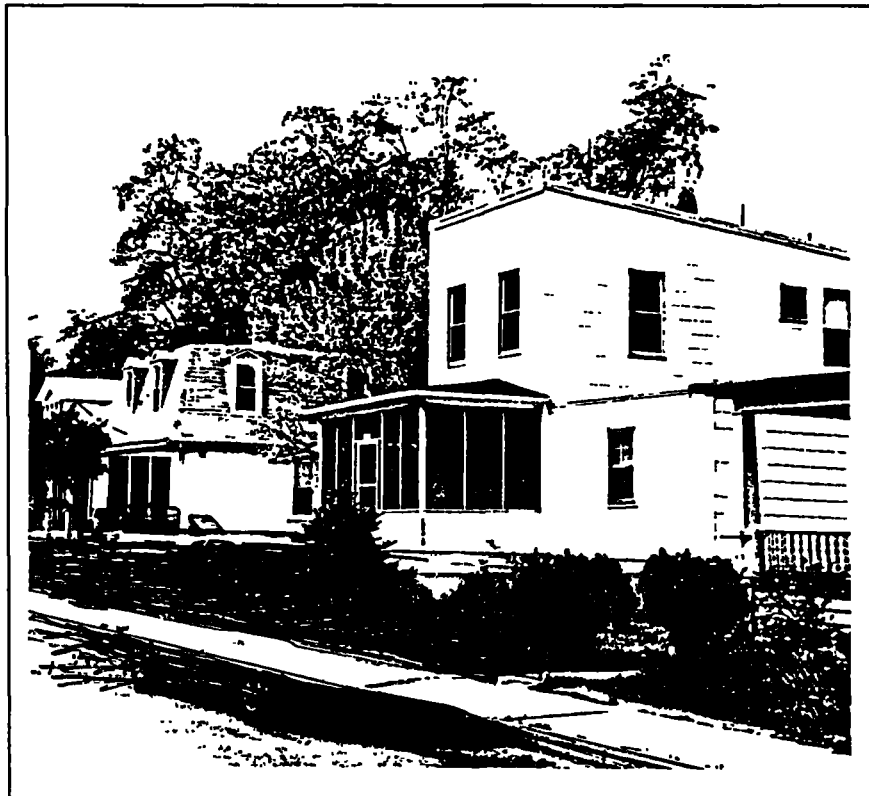
47 Prince George's County Deed #37:186; Prince George's County Tax Assessments, 1903-1910; U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1910.

48 Prince George's County Plat JWB#5:690 (A-11).

49 *Washington Evening Star*, 26 May 1908; Prince George's County Will WRS#1:724. Prince George's County Deed #48:48; Prince George's County Equity #4160.



*Figure 38 - The Frank Bernabo House: Block 9, lot 8, Brentwood subdivision 3502 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - frame dwelling ("freestanding rowhouse") built in 1902.*



*Figure 39 - The John P Reed House : Block 9, lot 3, Brentwood subdivision 3406 Varnum (originally Evans) Street - frame dwelling ("freestanding rowhouse") built in 1903.*

went to live with her neighbors, Winter and Florence Gigous; it was in the Gigous home that she spent the remaining two years of her life. In 1923 and 1924, Laura Mecutcheon petitioned the Court to declare her mother lunatic, but the Court found that Jemima Bartlett was in command of her senses and entirely capable of managing her own affairs. Still estranged from her daughter, Jemima Bartlett died in December 1924. In her will, she left a substantial legacy to Florence Gigous "with whom I have lived since December 1922, avoiding the intolerable conditions of my own home "; she left a regular allowance to provide care for her estranged daughter, and everything else to Winter and Florence Gigous. Jemima Bartlett appointed Winter Gigous as executor of her estate.<sup>50</sup>

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

As more and more families came to the Brentwood area to settle, work and raise their families, community institutions, such as schools and churches, fire protection and citizens' associations were established. Before incorporation, which did not occur until 1922, many of the community services were provided on the initiative and labor of the first residents.

### The Schools

The first schoolhouse was built at the corner of Campbell and Wells Streets, on lots 27 and 28 of Block 3 of the Brentwood subdivision; the lots were conveyed by Bartlett, Baker and Czarra to the Board of County School Commissioners in 1902, and the school opened in 1903.<sup>51</sup> This schoolhouse was of frame construction, one story in height with hip roof, and banks of windows typical of schoolhouses of the period. It had only two classrooms, and within a few years was already overcrowded. In 1909 a larger schoolhouse was built a short distance to the south on Baker Street, on lots 13 and 14 of Block 1. The first schoolhouse was subsequently converted into a residence; today, covered with stucco and with porch additions, it is only with difficulty that the typical schoolhouse form can be recognized (Figure 40).

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50 U.S. Census for Prince George's County, 1900, 1910, 1920; Prince George's County Will WTD#1:81, Prince George's County Estate file #3693; Prince George's County Equity Cases #6019, #6209.

51 Prince George's County Deed #9:307

The second schoolhouse was two stories high, built of brick, of the institutional Foursquare plan which was typical of the period (cf. the brick schoolhouses built in Bowie and Baden in 1912); its architect was Charles Lightbown, who had developed a large number of lots in Brentwood, and who would go on to build other schoolhouses in nearby developing suburban communities. The brick schoolhouse, which had been enlarged in 1917, was destroyed by fire in 1951. A new elementary school was constructed on the site in 1953, enlarged in 1967, and closed in 1977. This school building served temporarily as the offices of Brentwood's Mayor and Town Council, and today is used as a senior and women's center.<sup>52</sup>

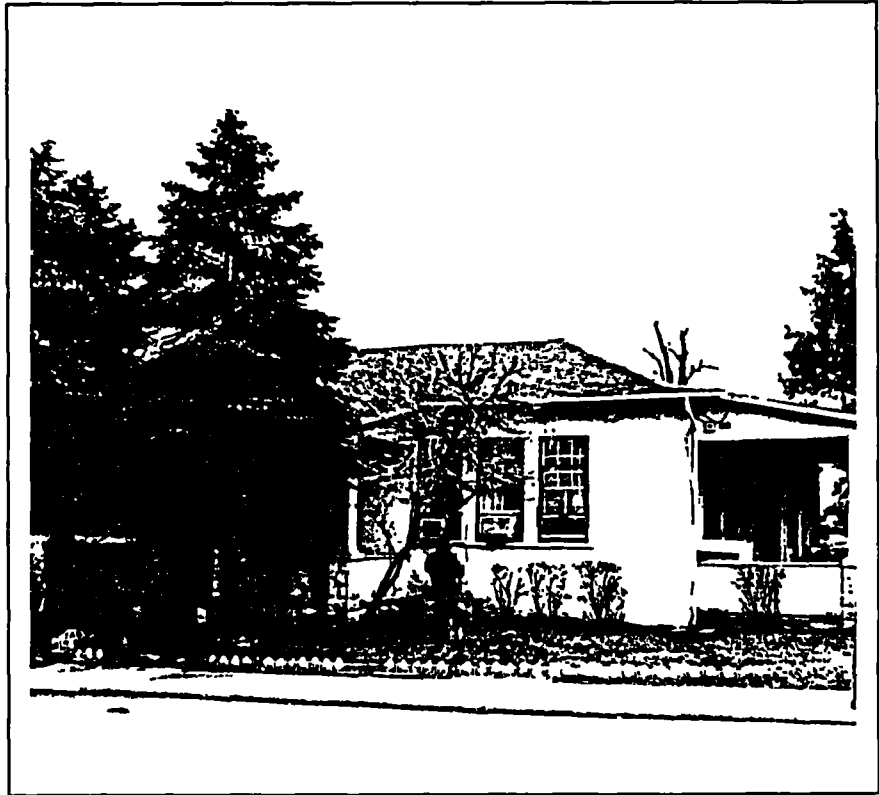
## The Methodist Church

By 1903, a group of new residents of the Brentwood community were gathering to worship together in a barn near the intersection of Dewey and Wells Streets. Under the leadership of Reverend A. L. Hughes, the group acquired from Bartlett and his partners lot 16 in Block 5, at the corner of Wells and Campbell Streets, and construction of a church building began in 1904. This new church building was known as Hughes Chapel, after the first pastor. In 1907, after Reverend Hughes left the area, five men, Robert A. Van Horn, Edward Gemeny, Benjamin F Barb, Amos W Hawk, and Frank A. Tyler, incorporated to form the Brentwood Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the former Hughes Chapel became part of the Hyattsville Methodist charge. Just after World War I, the Brentwood church was enlarged by the construction of a bell tower, and the newly enlarged church was dedicated in 1919. In 1921, the church and its pipe organ were insured against damage by fire. In 1929 the wood siding was covered with stucco, the building was raised and a basement added, and a new entrance vestibule was built over the door on the south facade.<sup>53</sup> Today the handsome building with its prominent tower is a visible landmark in the Brentwood community (Figure 41).

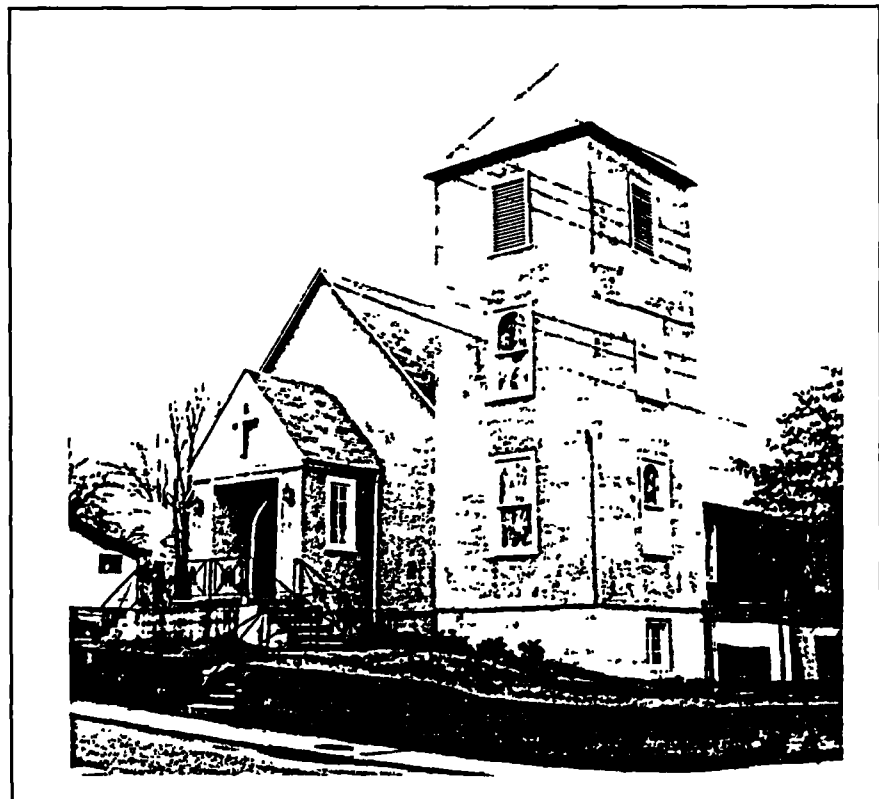
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52 Town of Brentwood 60th Anniversary Celebration, 1982; Fifty Years of Progress, 1900-1950, Public Schools, Prince George's County, Maryland.

53 Prince George's County Deed #31:455; Home-Coming Day, September 11, 1932, program; Town of Brentwood 60th Anniversary Celebration, 1982; Prince George's County Incorporation Records JWB#1:103; Tariff of Rates (insurance), 1921.



*Figure 40 - The Brentwood School: Block 3, lot 28, Brentwood subdivision - 3607 Tilden Street (originally the corner of Campbell and Wells Streets) one-story hip-roof frame schoolhouse built in 1903, later stuccoed and converted into a residence.*



*Figure 41 Brentwood United Methodist Church: Block 5, lot 16, Brentwood subdivision - 3606 Tilden Street (originally the corner of Campbell and Wells Streets) - front-gabled frame church building with later three-story bell tower, and later stucco covering: begun in 1904, enlarged circa 1919.*



## Fire Protection

The provision of fire protection was a community institution which was common and essential to all developing neighborhoods characterized by wood frame housing. The first attempts at establishing this important community service began in 1905, when O. L. Ganbon, R. L. Payne, Everett H. Roberts, H. F. McQueeney and Julius Gerhardt formed the Brentwood Fire Department, for the purpose of "protecting its property, dwellings and buildings and other properties situated in the Town of Brentwood and vicinity from fire, and to acquire machinery" for this purpose. The first meetings were held at the old Firemen's Hall (at the corner of Wells and Campbell Streets) which still stands at 3701 Tilden Street. The Brentwood Volunteer Fire Department was organized again in 1922, and the old Firemen's Hall was immediately insured for damage by fire. A horse-drawn hook-and-ladder was purchased as well as a hand reel and 500 feet of hose, and Cecil G. Sipes was elected chief of the new Fire Department. The Department was incorporated in 1923, and admitted to membership in the Maryland State Fireman's Association. The first new fire engine, an American LaFrance, was purchased in 1930.

During the 1930s, the Fire Department was temporarily housed in a shed at Bartlett Park, and in 1937 moved into its third location on Henry Street. A second story was added to this building in 1949; this enlarged building still serves as the Brentwood Fire Department and stands at 3712 Utah Street.<sup>54</sup>

## The First Citizens' Associations

The first Brentwood Citizens' Association was formed in 1903, when merchant R. E. Potts, Victor Violland, R. P. Riddick, S. F. Richards, and John T. Carter incorporated "for the purpose of the development of Brentwood, fixing streets, sidewalks, gutters, etc., and for the general welfare of its citizens and property, and the further development of the intellectual, moral, musical and social virtues of its members, through lectures, readings and musicals." The Association's income was to come from voluntary contributions, entertainments, fetes, and from some occasional assessments, to be made from time to time as needed.<sup>55</sup> Many of Brentwood's older citizens remember the lawn fetes and other entertainments which

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54 Brentwood 40th Anniversary Celebration, brochure, 1962; Town of Brentwood 60th Anniversary Celebration, brochure, 1982; Prince George's County Incorporation Records JBB#1:51; Tariff of Rates (insurance), 1921.

55 Prince George's County Incorporation Records JBB#1:22.

created much of the community spirit, and at the same time raised money for needed community services.

Another civic group, the Brentwood Improvement Association, was formed in 1917, with its focus on the western section of the community, i.e., the Brentwood subdivision, plus that part of the Holladay subdivision which lay to the west of the City and Suburban streetcar line. John Bakersmith was elected the first president of this new association, and William Zellers the first secretary. The Brentwood Improvement Association, later known as the West Brentwood Citizens Association, laid the groundwork for the later established municipal government. Its early efforts included streetlighting, road maintenance and fire protection. Kerosene lanterns and poles were acquired before the end of 1917; electric lights were installed in 1920. Streets were graveled and oiled, and the association provided its own manpower for the maintenance of a storm drainage system. Before the establishment of the Volunteer Fire Department, one of the principal projects of the association was provision, in cooperation with the Board of Education, of fire protection for the Brentwood School.<sup>56</sup>

## THE PERIOD OF INCORPORATION

The early efforts of the Brentwood and West Brentwood Citizens Associations provided some of the services which might have been provided through corporate municipal taxes, but it would be several years before Brentwood would achieve incorporation. There had been a movement to incorporate the community of Brentwood as early as 1912. In that year, the General Assembly of Maryland approved legislation for the incorporation of a Town of Brentwood which would have adjoined the black community of Randalltown on the south and west, with John Street as the northeastern boundary. An election for ratification of the charter was held on the first Monday of May 1912, but the voting population of the community rejected the charter.<sup>57</sup> It is not certain what factors caused the voting population to vote against incorporation.

In 1913, real estate developers Jackson Ralston and J. Enos Ray (of Hyattsville) were appointed trustees of the Holladay Company in place of Samuel J. Mills, Arthur B. Adams, and Cornelius Mecutcheon, to hold the Company's Addition to Highland in trust

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56 Brentwood 40th Anniversary Celebration, brochure, 1962; Town of Brentwood 60th Anniversary Celebration, brochure, 1982.

57 Laws of Maryland, 1912: Chapter 401.

with the authority to sell. In 1919, Ralston and Ray petitioned the court for permission to resubdivide a part of that property which was undeveloped (Blocks #13, #22 and #25) between William and John Streets in the middle of the Holladay Company subdivision, bordering the black settlement of Randalltown. Ralston and Ray resubdivided these three blocks, creating long narrow lots arranged on the north and south sides of an alley which divided each block lengthwise (Figure 42). Ralston and Ray then began to sell individual lots in this section, which was simply known as the Ralston/Ray Resubdivision.<sup>58</sup> It was the resubdivision alley, running east and west through Blocks #25 and #22, which became the boundary between Brentwood and Randalltown when the southern section (Brentwood) was finally incorporated a few years later

The movement towards incorporation began again after 1920, when the population of the Brentwood community had exceeded 1,000. In December of 1921, the citizens voted to pursue a Mayor and Council form of government, and appointed a charter committee. The charter was prepared and taken to the Maryland General Assembly, which ratified it in the spring of 1922. The proposed area included approximately 400 acres, bounding on the corporation of Mount Rainier on the west and southwest, the Northwest Branch and the Ralston/Ray Resubdivision alley on the north, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad on the southeast. It included the southerly part of the Holladay Company subdivision, the Brentwood Company subdivision, Czarra's Addition, and Wilen Heights. This time, the boundary with Randalltown was slightly changed from what had been proposed 10 years earlier; the 1922 law set the Ralston/Ray Resubdivision alley as the northeastern boundary of the newly incorporated Town of Brentwood, thus excluding 24 building lots which the proposed 1912 boundaries would have included. (These 24 lots were subsequently included in the charter for the incorporation of Randalltown as North Brentwood which was adopted two years later in June 1924.) An election was held in Brentwood, 12 June 1922, for the purpose of ratification of the charter; the vote was in favor, and the incorporated Town of Brentwood was established.<sup>59</sup>

The census records of 1920 and the suburban directory of 1923 give a clear demographic picture of the community which was developing in Brentwood at the time of incorporation. It was a

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58 Prince George's County Equity Cases #4160 and #5331, Prince George's County Plat #3:42.

59 Laws of Maryland 1922: Chapter 153; Laws 1912, Chapter 401, Laws 1924, Chapter 508.

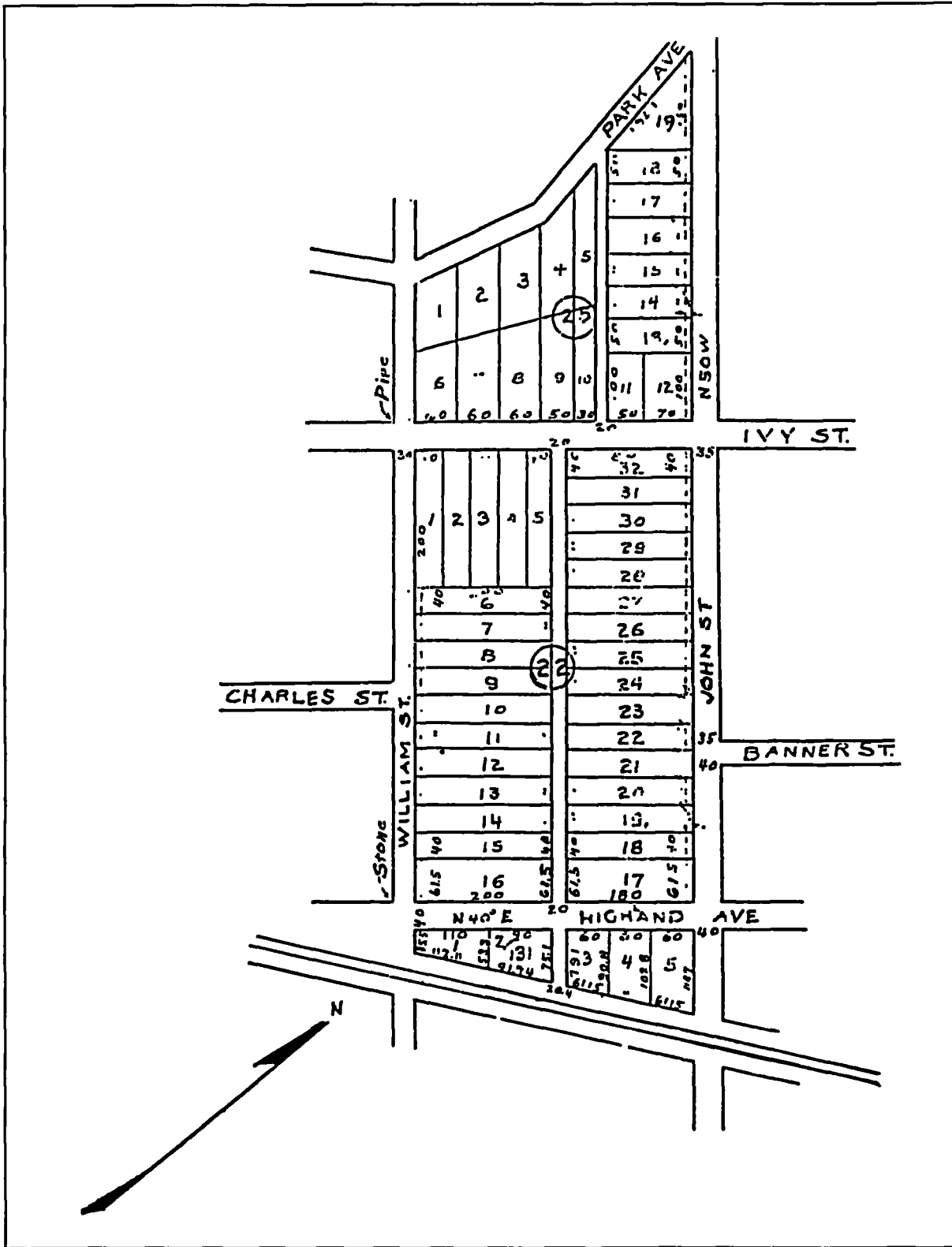


Figure 42 - Plat of the Ralston and Ray Resubdivision of Blocks 13, 22 and 25 of the Holladay Company Addition to Highland (Brentwood), 1919.

working class community of individuals and families making their way up in the world, striving to own their own homes and raise their families in safe and healthful surroundings. The residents represented a cross-section of a working class community, including all the trades and occupations which make a small town function. There was an elementary school and a Methodist church. The largest group of persons (58) worked as clerks in government offices (Departments of War, Treasury, Internal Revenue, etc.), while 21 worked for the Government Printing Office, 7 in various capacities for the Post Office, and 7 for the Department of Agriculture; commuting to all of these government offices was easily done by railroad or streetcar. These transportation lines, so important to the development of the town, employed 10 other men: 5 as train conductors, and 5 as motormen for the trolley line. A significant number of men worked in the building trades: 19 carpenters, 5 bricklayers, 18 painters, 9 electricians, 6 plasterers, 5 plumbers, 2 contractors, 1 glazier, 1 caulker, 1 paperhanger, and 1 concrete block manufacturer. Eleven men worked at the Navy Yard, 12 were involved in auto mechanics, 15 worked as machinists; there were 11 stenographers, 5 bookkeepers and 4 persons in real estate. This was a working class community, and the professions were only sparsely represented in the early years: there were two attorneys, one dentist, six nurses and four teachers. More representative of the small town atmosphere were five grocers, three butchers, five bakers, three dressmakers, two confectioners, three firemen, two policemen, one florist, two shoemakers, one barber, one tailor, one ice-and-coal distributor, one milliner, and four operators of general stores - providing the variety of services which makes a community work.<sup>60</sup>

### After Incorporation

The growth and development of Brentwood and North Brentwood in the 1920s is reflected in the map prepared by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company in 1922. The Sanborn map does not show all of Brentwood, but it gives considerable detail about the nucleus of the earliest community, i.e., all of the area between Hobson (now Allison) Street on the north, John (now Webster) Street on the northeast, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad on the southeast, Baker (now Taylor) Street on the south, and approximately eight lots

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60 Nelson, Justus, C., Nelson's Suburban Directory of Maryland and Virginia Towns Adjacent to the District of Columbia, 1923, pages 55-79; Federal Population Censuses, U.S. Bureau of the Census, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 1920, Election District 17, Prince George's County, Maryland.

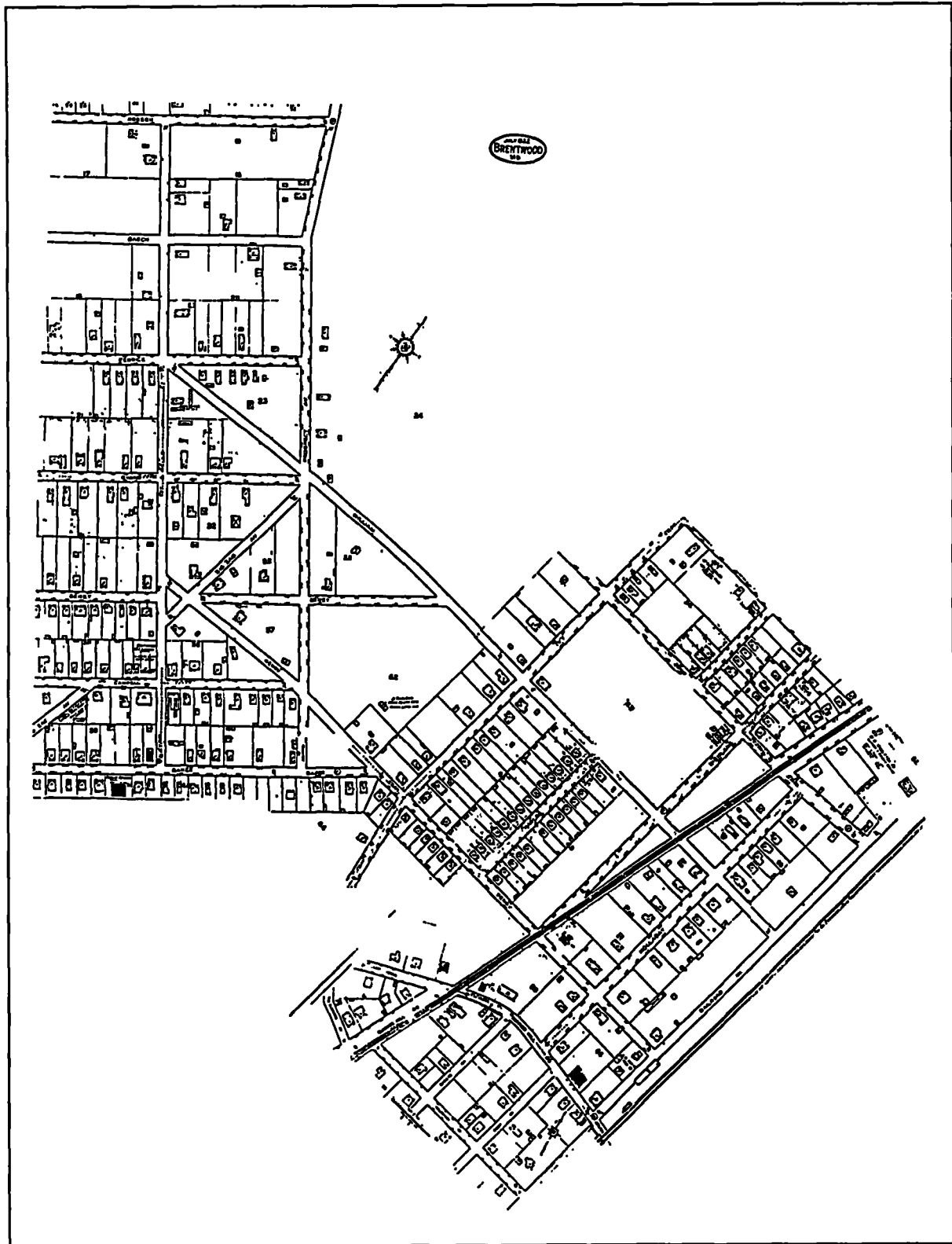


Figure 43 - Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of part of Brentwood, 1922.

west of Wells (now 37th) Street on the west (Figure 43). This fire insurance map indicates that there had been considerable building activity in the two decades following the construction of the first 51 dwellings shown in the 1903 and 1904 plats.

The bungalow form, which was to become so popular in suburban areas, had made its appearance during these years. The dense development of Charles Street (now 40th Place), totally undeveloped in 1904, shows clearly in the 1922 Sanborn Map. All of these houses, completed before 1922, were bungalows, one story high with pyramidal roof and central chimney. They were built on two basic plans: one with projecting hip-roof porch, the other with a similar, but gable-roof porch. These 26 nearly identical bungalows were very likely mail-order houses, although the exact model has not been identified; they closely resemble the Katonah and the Adeline models, which were first distributed by Sears, Roebuck and Company in 1917 and 1918, respectively.<sup>61</sup> A majority of these bungalows on 40th Place stand today.

Other bungalows were built on formerly unimproved lots throughout the other sections of the Brentwood community; the side-gabled bungalows which were built circa 1920 on Baker and Evans Streets, and which stand today on lot 5 of Block 1 (Figure 44), and on lot 12 of Block 9 (Figure 45), are good examples of this building activity in the period just after World War I.

In 1929 Rhode Island Avenue was opened along the west side of the trolley tracks in order to provide a continuous thoroughfare from the newly constructed railroad overpass in Hyattsville straight into Washington, D.C.<sup>62</sup> This expanded right-of-way shows clearly in the map prepared by the Franklin Survey Company of Philadelphia in 1940 (Figure 46).

During the war years of the 1940s, development continued. Streets were paved and extended. When a new system of street names was adopted throughout the Washington suburban area, the names of Brentwood's streets were changed. In the Holladay subdivision, Holladay Street became 41st Street, Railroad Avenue became Pennwood Road, Ivy became 40th Street, Charles Street became 40th Place, and Park Avenue became 39th Place. In the Brentwood subdivision, Baker became Taylor Street, Campbell became Tilden Street, Dewey became Upshur Street, Evans became

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61 Stevenson, Katherine Cole, and H. Ward Jandl, Houses by Mail, A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company. Washington D.C., The Preservation Press 1986.

62 Celebrating Official Opening Rhode Island Avenue, Hyattsville, 1929, booklet.



Figure 44 Typical side-gabled frame bungalow, circa 1920: Block 1, lot 5, Brentwood subdivision - 3409 Taylor (originally Evans) Street.



Figure 45 Typical side-gabled frame bungalow, circa 1920: Block 9, lot 12, Brentwood subdivision 3512 Varnum (originally Evans) Street.



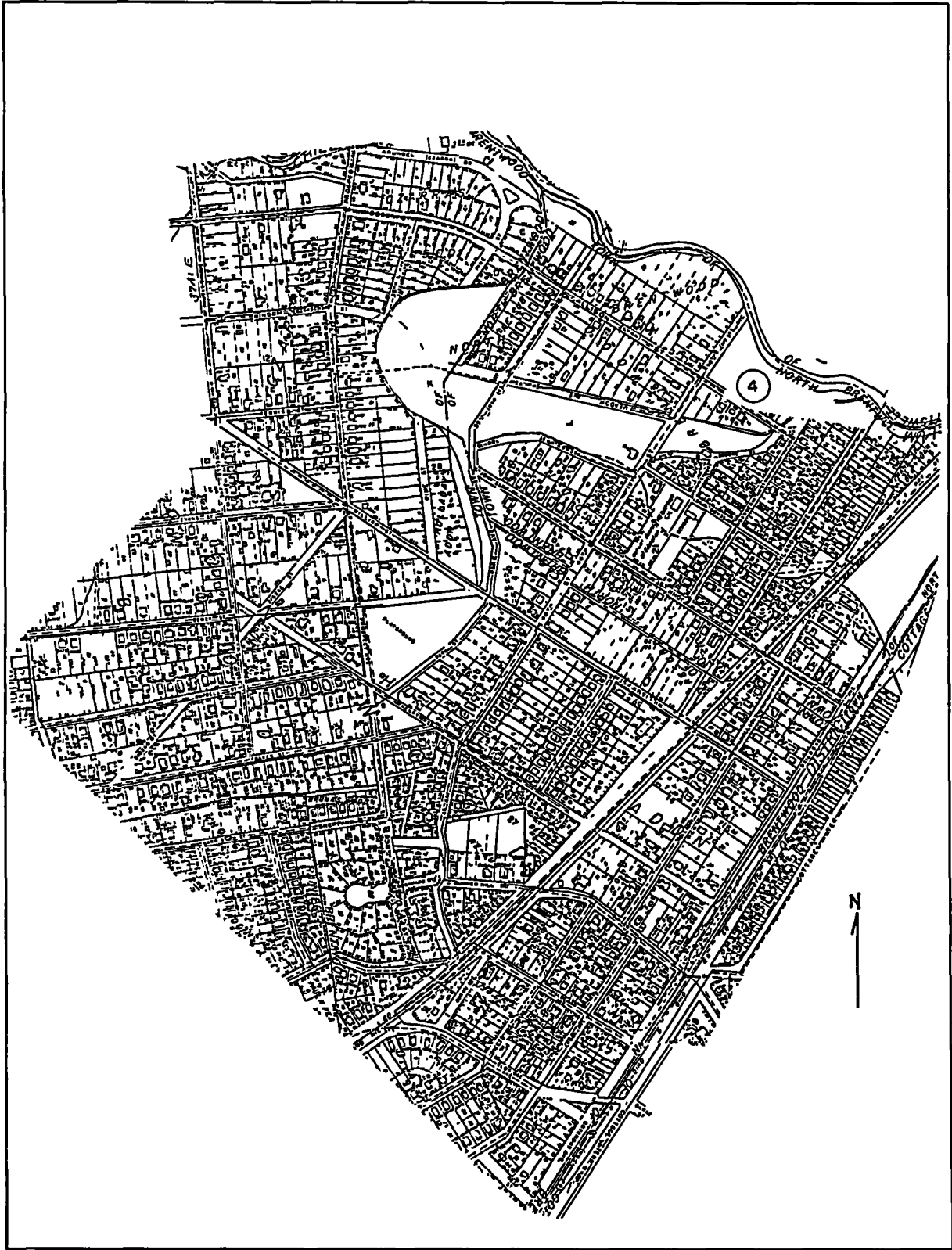


Figure 46 - Map of Brentwood, Franklin Survey Company Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1940.

Varnum Street, Fenwick became Webster Street, Gasch became Windom Street and Hobson became Allison Street. The principal north-south streets Wells and Prospect became 37th and 38th; and the diagonal streets Zig Zag, Henry and William, became Jackson, Utah and Volta, respectively. Bunker Hill Road and Rhode Island Avenue, which by this time had become the principal thoroughfare, retained their names; many people, however, returning to Brentwood at the end of the War, had trouble finding their homes.

The 1940 Franklin Company atlas shows the continuing development in the Town of Brentwood. At the time of incorporation in 1922, the population of Brentwood was only slightly over 1,000, but it had reached 1,842 by 1930; on the eve of World War II, the population had increased to 2,433. The greatest increase came during the war years, when large numbers of defense workers brought their families to the Washington area, and many settled in Brentwood; by 1950, the population had increased to 3,523. During the 1950s an influx of federal government workers swelled the population, peaking in 1960 at 3,693. Also during the 1950s, many of the older homes were replaced, and the empty lots were filled with small cottages and ramblers, which compare in numbers today with the ubiquitous bungalows of the 1920s. After 1960, the population stabilized and then began to decline, registering at 3,005 in 1990.<sup>63</sup>

Today Brentwood is principally a community of commuters, of middle-class housing in a convenient location close to the District boundary, where families can find affordable homes, and where many of the old-time residents have stayed. It is a close-knit community which retains a hold on many of the older families while welcoming newcomers, and which holds an annual parade to celebrate its founding. Brentwood's century of history typifies the history of many towns which owe their existence to the major arteries of transportation. It differs from some, however, in that many of its earliest dwellings still stand and provide a visible history of the growth and development of the community

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<sup>63</sup> Community Renewal Program, The Neighborhoods of Prince George's County, 1974; "Municipal Population, Prince George's County" U.S. Bureau of the Census, prepared by M-NCPPC, January 1991.

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