

## ***A Brief History of West Towson by David A. Loizeaux***

### **Early Land Grants**

West Towson consists mainly of two early land grants. The major central portion was a 400 acre tract called "Gott's Hope" patented by Richard Gott in 1719. Richard Gott and his wife Sarah (Sparrows) Gott established a plantation where they raised their ten children. Their three sons, Samuel, Richard, and Anthony, eventually took over portions of the plantation. The northern portion of West Towson, along both sides of Joppa Road, was part of the 250 acre tract called "Gunner's Range" patented in 1706 by James Croke. In 1720 100 acres of "Gunner's Range" was sold to Henry Stone, who in 1744 sold it to William Fell of Jonestown (Fell's Point). In 1730 Richard Gott acquired an additional 100 acres called "Addition to Gott's Hope" which extended his land holdings westward into what is now Riderwood.

Croke's son-in-law, Walter Dallas, sold 250 acres of "Gunner's Range" in 1751 to Samuel Gott. Samuel Gott and his wife Rachel (Norwood) Gott had eight children, while his brother Richard Gott and his wife Ruth (Bond) Gott had seven children, and had inherited "Gott's Hope" and "Addition to Gott's Hope" in 1750. Their brother Anthony Gott, who was a bond servant to Peter Aston of Philadelphia, sold 110 acres of "Gott's Hope" to Aston in 1784, but his nephews Richard and Edward Gott bought it from Aston upon the death of their father Samuel.

The Gott family lived in the area for more than a century, and at one point owned virtually all of West Towson. The 1798 Tax List shows that Samuel Gott's sons Richard and Edward, and his nephew Richard Gott owned a total of 605 acres. They also married into a number of early prominent Towson families, including the Towson, Tipton, Bailey, Bond, Norwood, Hunt, Stansbury, Bosley, Merryman, Woods, and Coale families. Samuel and Richard Gott's sister Ruth had married William Towson in 1735, and in 1752 Samuel Gott sold 73 acres of "Gunner's Range", a triangular portion close to the intersection of York and Joppa roads, to his brother-in-law William Towson.

### **Early Homes in West Towson**

The first homes in West Towson were those built by the Gott family, which included several frame houses, several log houses, log slave houses, log and stone stables, and an assortment of small farm buildings. The log and stone house at 508 Greenwood Road seems to fit the description of one of the Gott family stables. The oldest surviving home in the neighborhood is a log house built about 1742, now 507 Chestnut Avenue.

"Marshmont" - At the site of 509 West Joppa Road and Hardy Court was a collection of early houses which sat at the extreme north-east corner of "Gott's Hope" on "Old Joppa Court Road". This compound consisted of four individual houses, built over many decades, that were linked together to form one large house. One house in this grouping appeared to be earliest, and was possibly a log house later covered with a plastered finish. About 1810 Dr. Grafton Marsh and his brother Josiah took over these houses and called the place "Marshmont".

Grafton Marsh was a surgeon with the Militia during the War of 1812. He never married, and his brother Josiah went into medical practice with him in this house. Josiah Marsh married Eliza Taylor but had no children. After the death of Dr. Grafton Marsh in 1825, Josiah took over the medical practice and the home. Their nephew, Grafton Marsh Bosley, after his schooling, joined the practice with Josiah. At the death of Josiah Marsh in 1850 his wife Eliza moved to Ohio, and Grafton M. Bosley inherited the medical practice, this old house, and 140 acre farm. Dr. Bosley and his wife Margaret M. Nicholson then built a new home at "Highland Park" called "Uplands", now the central portion of the Presbyterian Home. "Marshmont" subsequently became the home of judge Richard Grason, Reverend William Paret the Episcopal Bishop of Maryland, Howard Rieman, and Hugh Price. It then went into the ownership of the Offutt family, Mr. and Mrs. Thiemann Scott "Buzzy" Offutt, Jr. being the last to live there. In 1977 this centuries-old house with a distinguished history was demolished for construction of the "Offutt Estates" development.

Old Joppa Court Road-Since the "Old Joppa Court Road" was the only road passing through West Towson virtually all of the early homes were built on the gently sloping south face of the Joppa Road ridge. West of Charles Street Avenue a two story Late Georgian stone house was constructed in 1803 on 13 1/2 acres on Joppa Road. Richard G. Woods owned this house in the 1850s, and after his death in 1859, at the age of forty-eight, this house was occupied by his son William C. Woods until about 1890. This house was subsequently owned by J.G. Pearce, and Mary Creaghan, and now is addressed as 7106 Charles Spring Way. □Some time in the 1840s Philip Debaugh, a butcher, built a house on 14 1/2 acres on Joppa Road near the Woods home. In the late 1850s Philip Debaugh's son, Julius Debaugh, a carpenter, built a house nearby on Joppa Road. Next to the Woods house was a house built by J. Alexis Shriver who lived here in the late 1860s through the 1890s. Shriver later was founder and president of the Towson and Cockeysville Electric Railway Company. This house sat in the present path of the Charles Street extension just south of Joppa Road.

"Althier Farm" and "Chestnut Summit" - James Boyce, a coal dealer, built a home about 1860 on 39 1/2 acres on Joppa Road. Mr. Boyce was very successful in his coal enterprises and became quite wealthy. He and his wife Elizabeth then purchased both Debaugh houses and razed them to build a large Victorian Gothic stone mansion designed by architect Henry Brauns, which sat at the site of Blakehurst, and they called the estate "Chestnut Summit". Next to the Boyce estate, at the site of Pickersgill, was a house built some time before 1850 which was owned by William Althier, a farmer, in the late 1840s and early 1850s. The original portion of this house may well have been built in the 1700s by the Gott family. This property, known as "The Old Althier Farm", was sold to B.C. Burrell who lived there in the 1860s. The farm was sold to Isaac Hartman some time before 1877. Mr. Hartman was active in the Catholic Church and was instrumental in the establishment of a Catholic Church in Towson. Issac and Catherine Hartman lived here until some time after 1882 when the farm was sold to Henry Imwold who owned several furniture stores. When Henry and Anna Imwold bought this house and 16 acre property they named the place "Dulce Domum", and raised their six children here. Then a new road was created between the Boyce and Imwold estates and Mr. Imwold sold a tract on this road to Charles H. Weir who took over 9 acres and an 1878 house on the property, and called the place "Hawthornden". This house, designed by architect Thomas C. Kennedy, is located at 602 Chestnut Avenue. The new road was first called Weir Avenue and later became Chestnut Avenue. Also part of the Imwold estate was a home called "Clarendon". This

home, said to have originally been a carriage house, was remodeled as a residence as early as 1882, and is located at 605 Charles Street Avenue.

At James Boyce's death in 1892 his son William W. Boyce and W.A. Fisher then sold the Boyce property in both large tracts and small parcels, between 1898 and 1915. Benjamin Franklin Deford, a leather merchant, purchased 67 acres of the estate and the "Chestnut Summit" mansion. The remainder of the estate was divided, under the name "Kalmia Park", into 52 parcels of 4 to 10 acres each. A road was then created to connect Chesapeake Avenue westward to Ruxton, and was named Boyce Avenue, while the private road to the log and stone house on the south- western part of the property was connected to Boyce Avenue, and called Division Avenue, then later became Greenwood Road. John F. Deford, a leather merchant, purchased 4 of the "Kalmia Park" parcels totaling 32 acres, and in 1911 built "Greenwood", a brick Greek Revival mansion overlooking Boyce Avenue, designed by architect Lawrence Hall Fowler, now headquarters for the Baltimore County Board of Education. Mr. Goldsborough purchased 29 acres and built a home on Chestnut Avenue, later demolished, and now the site of the Loyola Blakefield tennis courts. In 1915 Col. Sherlock Swann purchased the Goldsborough property and an additional 15 1/2 acres, called the place "Briarwood", and built a brick Georgian Revival home, also designed by architect Lawrence Hall Fowler, which is now "Xavier Hall" of Loyola Blakefield.

Mrs. George Abell, owner of "Sherwood Park" on the north side of Joppa Road, purchased ten parcels totaling 53 acres. South of Boyce Avenue two parcels in Ruxton were sold to the Levering family, and 17 parcels, totaling 116 acres were sold to Samuel W. Lippencott. Robert B. Deford, also in the leather business, then purchased "Dulce Domum" and called the place "Folly Farm". Mr. Imwold then established a farm at the corner of Charles Street Avenue and Boyce Avenue, on land purchased from the "Sheppard Asylum", and in 1910 built a Foursquare style home, now 6765 Charles Street. In 1943 the "Old Althier" house and its 16 acre grounds were bought by Pickersgill for use as a summer home for their residents, then became a year round retirement home. One of the first residents of Pickersgill was Olga (Imwold) Berndt who grew up in the old house. In 1958 the house was demolished to make way for a new building.

"Woodbine" - In 1850 Amos and Ellen Matthews built a home and operated a 150 acre farm between Charles Street Avenue and just west of the current Highland Avenue, which was a portion of the Gott plantation, and called the place "Woodbine". Amos and Ellen raised eight children on this farm. Amos, from a Quaker family that lived in the "Quaker Bottom" area of Baltimore County, was a Baltimore attorney. Ellen was a sister of Grafton and Josiah Marsh. The home was a large, square, Italianate Revival style house, made popular by Andrew Jackson Downing through his architectural pattern books. The detailing typical of this style was absent in this particular house, probably due to the simplistic Quaker background of Mr. Matthews. Extensively remodeled with the addition of an attic with dormers and a stucco finish, this house is now the Weatherly home at 577 Woodbine Avenue. At Amos Matthews' death in 1874, his wife Ellen sold "Woodbine" to Thomas M. Keerl, a Baltimore attorney. Keerl's wife C. Spaight Donnell was a grand-daughter of Richard Dobbs Spaight one of the "founding fathers" of the nation. Thomas and Spaight Keerl raised their three children here and owned the farm for nearly twenty years, until Thomas' death in 1890, when his wife deeded the property to the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Maryland. The old Matthews farm was then taken over by the Bosley's son, Arthur Lee Bosley, and attorney Richard H. Pleasants. Then about

1898 Allegheny Avenue was extended west through the farm and connected to Charles Street Avenue, and about 1902 the driveway was made a public street, extended south to Chesapeake Avenue, and called Woodbine Avenue.

### **Turn-of-the-Century Growth**

In 1892 John Hampshire built a home at 702 Joppa Road. Adjacent to "Marshmont" property belonging to Arthur Lee Bosley was sold off about 1895 and Charles C. Shuster built a home at 511 Joppa Road. In 1898 Charles B. Bowen built a Victorian Colonial Revival house at 535 Allegheny Avenue. In the first decade of the 20th Century sixteen homes were built in the area, among them some stately homes, including "Highland Hill" the 1903 Shingle Style home of John Grason at 502 Highland Avenue, and the 1903 home of John T. Hershner, Assistant Baltimore County School Superintendent and trustee of the Towson Kiwanis Club, at 605 Joppa Road. In 1907 the Queen Anne style home of State Senator Newton D.R. Allen was built at 517 Joppa Road, and in 1908 the home of Charles F. Imwold was built at 601 Joppa Road. Over several decades the Matthews farm was then leased and sold off by Richard and Marie Pleasants who sold the old Matthews house and 5 1/2 acres to Lewis Klein. Mr. Klein built large greenhouses for the operation of L.H.A. Klein's Florist. Later Leroy Y. Haile sold the house to Joshua Worthington Weatherly. George and Mavice Groom bought 5 3/4 acres on Woodbine Avenue in 1902, built a farm house, now 572 Woodbine, and established "Groom's Dairy". The Groom family also owned Groom's Restaurant on York Road. William T. and Edith Fishpaugh built a home at Chesapeake and Woodbine Avenues, now 412 Woodbine, in 1904 and operated a 2 1/2 acre farm. John A. Horn, a house builder and wood shop teacher, built an early Prairie Style home about 1910 at the corner of Chesapeake and Charles Street Avenues, operated a 17 acre farm, had a small dairy herd, and he and his wife Christine sold home made ice cream from a small grass-roof windmill stand at the corner of Chesapeake and Woodbine Avenues. In 1909 Patrick Hanley, a railroad clerk, built a home on the north side of Joppa Road, which was demolished in 1966. John L. Wagner built a home on 16 acres at Joppa Road and Chestnut Avenue about 1910 and operated a florist business. In 1915 Mr. H. Burke and N.D. Lynn, in the midst of farmland, built homes on 3 1/2 acre lots, now 503 and 505 Woodbine. Later 503 was the home of attorney Duncan Cornell, while 505 was the home of John H. Hale and was for many years the home of his daughter Helen (Hale) Weed.

Alfred S. Loizeaux, an engineer with Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, who had been renting the house at the north-east corner of Allegheny and Woodbine since 1908, built a large Dutch Colonial home in 1916 on Chesapeake Avenue. He and his wife Edith and their eight children operated a 22 acre farm known as "Burnbrae" between Chesapeake and Woodbine Avenues. On the east side of Chesapeake Mr. S. Hardin had a 4 1/2 acre farm, and Howard L. Wells had a 9 acre farm. Harold Scarborough, correspondent with the Baltimore Sun and publisher of The Union News, had a 5 acre estate, later owned by the Gessford family, then by Gaylord "Peck" Auer of the Bachrach Rasin Company. These three homes were demolished between 1979 and 1985. On the opposite side of Chesapeake, Thomas W. Offutt had purchased 16 acres of the old Matthews farm, and in 1924 his heirs donated the land for the construction of the "Kelso Home" orphanage for girls, now the YMCA.

### **The Subdivisions**

With the westward extension of Allegheny Avenue, between 1900 and 1920 about 30 more homes were built in West Towson. Sixteen of these were built on Allegheny including the homes of William Sites, Conrad Sohn, William Bayne, George Coale, Carroll Van Horn, D. Raphael, Charles Whitaker, Harry Busick, and Bernard Sieverts. On Chesapeake Avenue Elmer Haile, Marrion Merryman, and T. German built homes, while Albert Debaugh, Charles Werner, Douglas Winger, and George Hokemeyer built homes on the newly created Debaugh Avenue. Then beginning in the 1920s, after the first World War, a building boom took place as a number of tracts of the old Matthews farm continued to be subdivided for house lots. Nine houses were built on Allegheny Avenue, including the homes of Howard H. Swem, Milton O. Storne, Clarence W. Robinson, Norman R. Poole, Harry Hook, George W. Dance, and Edward M. Frost. Eight were built on Woodbine Avenue, including the homes of H.L. Debaugh, H. Grant German, William Brainerd, David E. Catterson, G. Howard Amrein, George L. Smith, and Paul S. Hoffman. Several houses each were build on Joppa Road, North Bend Road, Highland Avenue, and Charles Street Avenue, including the homes of H.P. Price, Frederick H. Dolenberg, Henry N. Trapp, Lewis B. Hill, Gertrude Schuster, Henry J. Raphael, Milton E. Kirkpatrick, and James E. France. Through the 1920s Lee Stebbins developed the "Stebbins" subdivision creating Park Avenue and Park Lane with 50 homes, and the "Charles Street Heights" subdivision added 10 homes. The Henry Imwold farm at Charles Street Avenue and Boyce Avenue was subdivided and "Villa Madrid" and the John J. Ekin house were built in 1925. In 1927 the Deford family sold "Greenwood" to the Lutheran Deaconess School; "Briarwood" and 45 acres was sold to the Jesuits who moved their Loyola High School there from Baltimore City; "Chestnut Summit", the Boyce mansion, and "Folly Farm" were sold to Mission Helpers, who later sold "Folly Farm" to Pickersgill. In the 1930s Alfred S. Loizeaux developed the "Burnbrae" subdivision creating Orchard Road, Burnbrae Road, and □Bonnie Hill Road with 24 homes; "Marlywood" created Marwood Road with 14 homes and Woodbine Terrace with 12 homes, "Horncrest" added 16 homes, and "Lombardy Place" added 10. In the 1940s the "Morningside" subdivision created 30 homes, "Locksley Hall" added 14, and the "Woodbine" subdivision of the old Fishpaugh farm added 6 homes. The "Wagner" subdivision created 19 homes on Round Oak and Joppa Roads. The largest building boom took place after World War II, in the 1950s. The remainder of the Deford property, not sold to religious institutions, was subdivided as the "Chestnut Hill" subdivision which created Piccadilly Road, Trafalgar Road, and Eton Road with 110 homes, while the "Charles Terrace" subdivision created Loyola Drive, Range Road, and Range Court with 49 homes. Also in the 1950s the old Groom farm was developed as the "Old Court" subdivision creating Groom Drive with 12 homes, while the "Riderwood Hills" subdivision created Meadow Ridge Road with 14 homes.

The development in West Towson continued in the 1970s with "Charles Street Overlook" and the addition of 18 homes on Joppa Road, while the "Chestnut Glen" subdivision added 11 homes. In the 1980s "Hampshire Woods" and "Chesapeake Stone Manor" on Chesapeake Avenue added 25 homes, and "Offutt Estates" on Joppa Road created Hardy Court with 10 homes. After receiving a large amount of fill dirt from the foundation of the new courts building, the "Eldorado Hills" subdivision of the old Horn farm created Barranco Court with 7 homes. In the 1990s the "Greenwood Estates" subdivision on Greenwood Road added 5 homes, and "The Willows of Ruxton" development on Charles Street created Charles Spring Way with 17 homes. Throughout the neighborhood there were also about 30 homes added as one or two house "infills" built on larger or vacant lots between 1970 and 2005. Over the years a number of families have had several homes

built in West Towson as their residences. The Debaugh family have had seven homes constructed, while the Gregory family have had five. The German, Sieverts, Loizeaux, and Wenger families have each had four homes constructed as their residences. A number of families have had two homes constructed, including the Groom's, Horn's, Wagner's, Kauffman's, Hokemeyer's, Hoffman's, Smith's, Rice's, Bader's, Sachse's, Byrnes', and Blair's, while a number of individuals have had two homes built in the neighborhood, including Lee Stebbins, Claude Kriesher, David Gaudreau, and Dr. Emil Vanden Bosche, who built one of his houses on Burnbrae Road with his own hands.