

Mr. Edward J. Hecker, Engineer of Surveys (cont'd)

24 to 27, inclusive, of Article 31, of the Baltimore City Code (1927 Edition), and ordained, in lieu thereof, seven new sections, to be known as Sections 24 to 27D, of said Article, relating to the numbers of houses, and prescribing the system and means to be used by the Bureau of Surveys in assigning, fixing and changing house numbers. This ordinance prescribes that houses and buildings within the city shall be numbered in accordance with the "decimal system", and requires adherence to the decimal system in all respects.

Ordinance No. 1263, of June 20, 1950, (new Building Code), Section 2998, also applies to house numbering; it places the responsibility for determining and fixing such numbers in the Bureau of Plans and Surveys, and provides that the Arabic numerals used shall be affixed in a certain fashion and be legible and visible from a certain distance. This section repeats most of the language used in sections of Ordinance No. 516, of December 2, 1948, but is silent as to the system to be used in assigning and determining house numbers. Its provisions in this regard are in no way inconsistent with, nor incompatible with, the provisions of Ordinance No. 516 in reference to the use of the "decimal system".

There would appear to be an inconsistency in terms between the use of the "decimal system" as prescribed by the ordinances and a system whereby fractions are used to designate certain addresses and house numbers within a square. However, Funk and Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary defines the adjective "decimal" as "pertaining to, or founded on the number ten;" and defines "decimal system" as a system of "reckoning by tens or tenths". A "decimal fraction" is defined as a "fraction whose denominator is ten or a power of ten".

In construing the intent of the City Council, however, as to the meaning of "decimal system", we must first look to the language used in the ordinance. Ordinance No. 516, of 1948, does not define "decimal system", but prescribes that the point of beginning for streets running east and west shall be Charles Street, and for those running north and south shall be Baltimore Street; that one hundred numbers shall be the proportion for each square and each successive square shall have its enumeration beginning with an even hundred.

It appears that the "decimal system" was established by the provisions of Ordinance No. 78, passed over the veto of the Mayor, June 3, 1886. (See: Opinion