LIFE IN BALTIMORE CAN BE MANY THINGS FOR MANY PEOPLE—SHE'S GROWING, OLD WAYS BLEND WITH NEW, SOME ARE AT LEISURE OR PLAYING WHILE OTHERS ARE MAKING A LIVING.

Native Baltimorean Looks At The Seaport City He Calls Home

By JAMES D. WILLIAMS

No one has ever written a really good song about Baltimore, and maybe no one ever will.

It's rather difficult to get emotionally wrought up enough about Baltimore to scribble lyrics about the city. It just isn't that kind of place.

Sing songs about the sidewalks of New York, the blues in St. Louis, Beale St. in Memphis, but Baltimore is that kind of town that inspires no songs, and if it did it would probably be embarrassed at the notoriety.

Baltimore, you are as exciting as cottage cheese, you turn the lights out at 11, you're more southern than northern, you can hardly boast of a first class restaurant, you've got slums that would be a disgrace in Johannesburg, nobody in his right mind would come here on a vacation — he'd die of boredom,—you're smug and you're set in your ways . . . and in spite of all this, I clasp you tightly and say, sweetheart, I love you.

* * *

I CAN'T tell you why. People have said that once you drink Baltimore's water, you never get it out of your system. Perhaps that's it.

It's got to be something. Lord knows, Baltimore has tried hard enough to make herself unlovable.

Our town is a bland town. Comfortable, yes. A nice place to live, a nice place to grow up in. We don't live all jammed one on top of another. There's room to breathe.

No one will ever accuse Baltimoreans of living at a fast clip. They take the time to find some meaning in this tiring of life, time to lift their heads up from the ground and to savor what is there.

As a breed, Baltimoreans don't get very excited about very many things. A coup occurs in Ghana, the President decides to crack down on big steel, so who cares? Give us the Colts and we'll go stark raving mad.

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OUR LOCATION doesn't help us. Here we are, splashed down between Washington, the political capital of the country, and New York, the capital of everything else, and people think of us as the place they pass through getting to and from the two cities—and now with the Harbor Tunnel they don't even pass through any more.

When outsiders speak of us, about the only thing they can think of to say is that they were impressed by our white steps. A city of almost a million people, and we've got to be known for our white steps.

It would be downright humiliating, except that Baltimoreans really don't care what anybody outside thinks about the town. They love it, and that's enough.

That's enough for me too. I was born here, I was reared here, and I love here. It's a good town, not perfect, but a good town.

Our City Council is distinguished by its mediocrity. **transit system is appalling,** when a few drops of snowfall the whole blooming town comes to a halt, you can't see a good play, but it's home baby, it's home.

* * *

WHEN I WAS a kid, there were well defined areas for people such as I to dwell in. McCulloh St., Druid Hill Ave., Madison Ave., those were the streets with class.

If you had ambition you aspired to live on those streets — there wasn't anyplace else to go except up to Sugar Hill a name we borrowed from Harlem.

Things have changed. Were spread all over this man's town now. On streets whose names we didn't even know a few years ago. I'm glad this has happened for a number of obvious reasons, and also because it has made a number of children happy.

Those white steps again. Little do people, especially grownups, realize how much torture went into scrubbing and keeping those white steps white. In the areas we now are moving into, they don't have white steps.

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RELIGION—NOW there's a subject that loomed large in the life of Baltimore.

On Sunday there wasn't much else to do except go to church and listen to the minister outline the pitfalls.

Easter was always the big day at church. Sinners who hadn't seen the inside of the building since last year were sure to be out on Easter. At my church, of the Baptist denomination you had to get there early to get a seat.

After church, the place to go was the Avenue, and any Baltimorean knows what Avenue I'm talking about. Over on Charles St., the white folks were having their parade, but they never had it as colorful and exciting as the one up and down our own Avenue.

There was always somebody out in a morning suit with spats, twirling a cane and smoking a big fat cigar, looking like a page out of Esquire, and well aware of the admiring glances he attracted from the pretty girls.

* * *

THIS WAS the age before the Supreme Court got around to knocking down segregation, before the sit-ins and all that went along with it. Baltimore was as tightly segregated as many a town in Mississippi.

Even the young knew there was something wrong when we had to ride the rickety-rackety street cars past white schools to get to the one where we were enrolled, but we pretty well accepted this as the way things were supposed to be.

I remember those long street car rides past Clifton Junior High School, past City College, watching the apple cheeked white boys and girls pile off the street cars, while I kept riding, riding, riding.

Our teachers never told us it was wrong. Never for one minute did they attack the system.

So we got the used text books, we recited our recitations when the white people from downtown came up to our school, and we stood while still they patted us on the head and said, "He's a bright little boy."

* * *

IT WASN'T entirely the fault of the teachers. They were doing what they had to do, and they did give us an education. No. 120 at Pennsylvania and Robert, 125 at Pennsylvania and Dolphin, Booker T. Washington at McCulloh and Lafayette, and Douglass at Baker and Carey Sts. That was the route I ran.

You had two choices when you went to high school, Douglass or Dunbar. Douglass, for reasons known only to Douglassites, thought they were a cut above Dunbarites, which didn't set too well with the Dunbarites.

Since teenagers hadn't developed enough to stage street fights, the rivalry reached its boiling point on the playing fields, and a victory over hated Dunbar was a prize to be cherished above all others.

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MONEY WASN'T plentiful then, but if you had any enterprise you could always find an errand to run, a lawn to cut, or a pair of those white steps to wash—and it was amazing how much easier it was to wash somebody's else's steps than your own.

After work on Saturday, the place to go was to the movies. There was the Regent where you could see a shoot-em-up and a half dozen short features, the Royal where you could see live entertainment, and the Carey where you took your fife in your hands when you entered.

The trick at the Royal was to sit through at least two shows. Count Basie, Buddy Johnson, Earl Hines, Erskine Hawkins and "Tuxedo Junction", Charley Barnett and "Cherokee", the music flowed over you in one great big wave. Jitterbug time, in the aisles, until an usher made you sit down.

After the show, if you had 15 cents left, you could stop by Lafayette Market—one thing I've never understood is why they called it Lafayette Market when its located on Pennsylvania Ave. — and get two hot dogs for a quarter.

Along about high school time, boys discovered girls, and girls discovered boys.

Only the bravest of the young men on the west side of town had the nerve to go to see a young lady who lived on the east side.

If you did dare to undertake such a venture, you took along your track shoes, since it was pretty certain that after you had bidden the young lady good night, a group of the eastside boys was going to be waiting to chase you back across the Orleans St. viaduct. It happened the other way also.

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THROUGH IT all I still recall the delicatessen and the hot dog I couldn't be served because my skin was dark, I hated Baltimore then, hated it for its segregated dirty pool in the park, for the places I couldn't go, for the things I couldn't do.

My town is growing up now, and it's about time. It has dropped some of the bars and others are coming down. Perfect? Not yet.

Anytime it takes over 20 years to get one police captain, when we have only two colored members in the city council; anytime we've got crowded schools and poor education, anytime we've got jobs we still can't get, my town is a long way from being perfect.

Perfect it is not, but Baltimore has a warmth about it, all its own. It's a special place. Nothing much happens here to concern the outside world but a lot of things happen that concern us.

The city spawls out all over the place. In the summer we eat crabs and drink beer, in the fall we root for the Colts, in the winter we hide indoors and in the spring the streets come alive with people.

If you want excitement move away from Baltimore, and we've lost a lot of people that way.

But if you want to be around nice people, if you want to live at a pace that gives you time enough to see the scenery as you pass by, Baltimore is the place for you.

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The Rev. John T. Colbert was pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church from 1917 and headed the congregation there until his death Aug. 14, 1962, a total of 35 years.

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From 1888 to 1963, a total of 12,676 persons were baptised at St. Peter Claver Catholic Church.

Gillis Memorial Community Church, with the Rev. Theodore C. Jackson pastor, is noted throughout the East Coast for its weekly extravaganzas that feature noted Gospel singers and choirs. A recent milestone in its development was the June 3 dedication of the new Community House at 1034 Pennsylvania Ave.

Moral — Never push a man until his back is to the wall. He will get you some day. It may be your inning but, the game isn't over.

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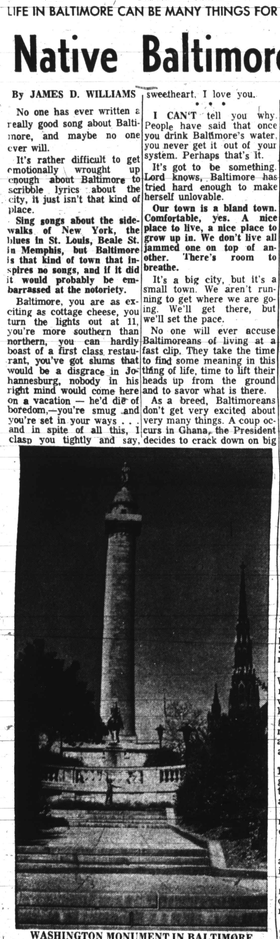
An old African Proverb says, "By the time the fool learns the game, the players have dispersed."



WASHINGTON MONUMENT IN BALTIMORE
Steeple at right is Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church

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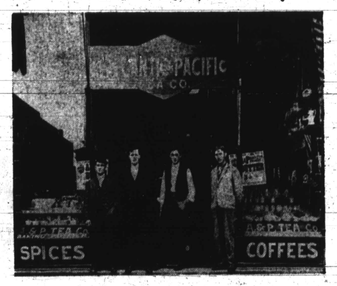

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Baltimore Has Come A Long Ways From The Horse, Buggy Days

Since July 28, 1859, when the first horse drawn trolley clop-clopped its way from the foot of Broadway to Baltimore and South Sts., public transit has been a permanent and increasingly vital — part of the Baltimore scene.

That initial run, on a lazy summer day was hardly a fitting augury for things to come, and those who regarded the strange new vehicle with chuckles and derision could hardly envision the time when mass urban transportation would be one of the most hotly discussed and pressing issues in the country.

Yet that horse's first step has led to the modern Baltimore Transit Company, whose 794 buses now ring up a total of about 330,000 fares each average weekday.

* * *

THE BTC'S 29 routes cover 203.7 miles throughout the city and into Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties (which account for about 80 of the route-miles) and the fleet rolls up an average of about 70,000 miles a day.

The company, which takes in more than $70,000 in fares on a normal day, employs a total of 1,307 workers, including 1,291 bus operators and 327 maintenance men.

The company made a profit of $923,564 in 1965 — about $100,000 down from the previous year — and in May, 1965 added 25 new air conditioned buses to its fleet, bringing the total of such buses to 151.

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THE PRESENT BTC came into being in 1935, two years after its immediate predecessor, United Railways, went broke.

The history of mass transit in the city before that was of smaller local companies who experimented with all sorts of means of conveying the public and came up with the first commercially operated electric streetcar and the first elevated electric railway in America.

Between that first horse-ride in 1859 and the beginning of the 20th century, some 50 local firms shuttled passengers back and forth through the city and into the adjoining counties.

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NOTABLE AMONG these business ventures was the Baltimore and Hampden Line which inaugurated the third rail electric streetcar in this country in 1885. It went out of business after little more than a year of service.

Then there was the city's first overhead trolley line in 1890, operating from North Ave. to Walbrook, and the first Baltimore cable line in 1891, connecting Druid Hill Park with Patterson Park.

The nation's first elevated railway was built along what is now Guilford Ave. in 1892.

A unique operation was a trolley which gave everyone free rides from Guilford Ave. to Charles St. along Lexington St. in the early 1900s. It was run solely for the purpose of preserving a franchise and needless to say, didn't last very long.

* * *

IN 1899, 11 companies, themselves the products of many mergers and consolidations, banded together to form the United Railways and Electric Co., from which the BTC took over when it was born in 1935.

The advantages to the city of this consolidation were numerous: fares, which had before varied with each company, were made into a single rate; competing lines were abandoned; free transfers were set up and connections improved; and a much larger amount of capital was available for improvements.

United Railways prospered through the 20's but the rise of the automobile and inability to adapt sent it to bottom. A group of Baltimoreans picked it up, immediately began making changes, and business slowly improved until by 1940 the entire United Railways debt of over $2.4 million had been paid off.

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THE FIRST major changes took place during the late 1930's, when the use of trackless trolleys began on a wide scale, streamlined electric rail cars were introduced, and modern Diesel buses put into service.

Since then there has been a continual consolidation of lines until the number of routes was reduced to the present figure of 29. According to Clyde Headley, public relations director for the BTC, the firm has eliminated at least eight routes in the last ten years by consolidating them with other routes.

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MORE OBVIOUS to the public has been the retirement of the last streetcars and tractor trolleys.

In June, 1959, tractor trolley routes 1, from Druid Hill Park to Ostend St., and 2, from Fort McHenry to Druid Hill Park, were converted to buses.

The last streetcar lines were Route 8, from Towson to Catonsville, and Route 15, from Overlea to Walbrook Junction, which were retired in November, 1963.

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ANOTHER MAJOR change came in 1952, when BTC began hiring its first colored bus drivers.

According to Mr. Headley, almost 500 of the staff of 1,291 operators are colored. The maintenance department, which was integrated before 1952, has a lesser proportion of colored employees.

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IN ADDITION to the BTC, there are 13 other local bus lines operating in and out of the city, including the airline limousine service and the sightseeing buses.

While most operate only one or two routes for specialized service, two—the Baltimore and Annapolis Railroad Co. and the McMahon Transportation Co. are fairly large operations serving dwellers in Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties who come into the city to work and shop.

The B and A, with a fleet of 64 buses, brings commuters from the Fort Meade, Annapolis and Glen Burnie areas into the Greyhound terminal, while McMahon, with 34 buses, comes into Greyhound from Baltimore County and serves the northern part of that area as well.

McMahon, with financial aid from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, began on May 2 its "Metro Flyer" service which makes the run from the Towson area to Charles and Fayette Sts. in 25 minutes at a cost of 50 cents per person.

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THE "METRO FLYER" project is sponsored by the Metropolitan Transit Authority, which since it came into being on Jan. 1, 1962, by an act of the state legislature, has been playing an increasing role in trying to create an integrated modern system of mass transit lines in the Baltimore area.

One of MTA's major projects has been the planning of a combined rail-and-bus system for express mass transit to be constructed in three stages over the next 20 years.

The system would involve subways, surface and elevated rail lines and special express buses, and would cost a total of about $292 million.

MTA estimates that if Congress appropriates sufficient funds under the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as much as two-thirds of the cost could be paid by the Federal government.

WHILE THE plan, which was drawn up by a consulting firm for MTA, has not been officially adopted by the Authority yet and is still generating much controversy, its features paint a delightful picture of what mass transit might be in the future.

A brochure briefly sketching the proposed system published by the MTA under the name "Operation Giant Step" begins:

Imagine, if you can, traveling in restful, air-conditioned comfort from Charles Center to Memorial Stadium in just 7 minutes . . . from Overlea to the heart of downtown in only 18 minutes . . . from Randallstown to Mondawmin in 15 minutes. . . ."

It's a long way from that sweating nag in July, 1859 and also a long way from practical realization — but it's something to dream about while you're standing on the corner some rainy morning waiting for the No. 5.

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U. S. Supreme Court decisions of great importance nationwide include the 1954 decision that opened public schools to all, outlawed discrimination in education; the 1955 decision that opened state and municipal beaches and swimming pools, came as the result of NAACP efforts started in Baltimore.

Bethel One Of Most Beautiful

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church at the corner of Druid Hill Ave. and Laneville St. is one of the most beautiful in Baltimore.

The majestic white stone landmark that has stood there nearly 200 years attracts the attention of all passers-by on the busy street.

Gothic in structure, it houses a congregation of more than 1,000 persons who are quite proud of the heritage that has made the church a Baltimore institution.

The Rev. Frank Madison Reid, son of the late Frank Madison Reid, is pastor.

THIS YEAR marks the 180th anniversary of Bethel since the organization was officially established in 1786.

Called the Free African Church, the small band of free citizens built the first structure on Fish St. in 1841 the membership totaled 803 persons.

In 1910 when the Rev. Daniel G. Hill was pastor, the congregation purchased the Druid Hill and Lanvale building from a Catholic church at the cost of $90,000.

By the time the Rev. William Sampson Brooks became pastor in 1917, the church was paid for and when the last dollar was counted at midnight, the Mayor of the town had the City Hall bell tolled.

The first Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was held at Bethel that year and annual conferences.

Many are the contributions of Mother Bethel to the city and to the AME church which is now world-wide.

The first AME hymn book was published in Baltimore.

Coppin State College, formerly the old Coppin Normal School, was so named because of the great contributions that came from Bethel's Mrs. Fannie Jackson Coppin and the Baltimore Branch Missionary Society.

Mrs. Coppin was the wife of AME Bishop Levi J Coppin.

THE FIRST colored school was opened at Bethel in 1841.

The earliest beginnings of the AFRO - AMERICAN Newspapers was at Bethel when the founder, the late John H. Murphy Sr., the Sunday School superintendent, published the Sunday School journal.

In 1898, when Bishop John Hurst was pastor of Bethel, the church established a home for the aged.

During the Great Depression when the Rev. Chester A. Clark was pastor, Bethel fed thousands of the city's unemployed, regardless of color.

The congregation's service to the community in the years are legendary.

Of special note is the role Bethel has played in registering citizens to vote and protest areas of the fight for equal justice.

Bethel's ministers have distinguished themselves throughout the church.

The latest pastor to be elevated to the bishopric is the Rt. Rev. Harrison J. Bryant, assigned to South Africa.

Bishop Bryant was pastor from 1949 until 1964 when he was elected bishop.

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OTHER BETHEL pastors who have become bishops include the Rev. Daniel Coker, elected the first in all the church.

He resigned to allow the Rev. Richard Allen to take the post.

Also, Bishops Edward Waters, elected in 1836; Levi J Coppin, 1900; Richard Disney, 1892; James A. Handy, 1892; W. Sampson Brooks, 1920.

And, Bishops Henry McNeal Turner, 1880; Benjamin W. Arnett, 1886; Jebpez P. Campbell, 1864; James M. Brown, 1868; Benjamin T. Tanner, 1885; John Hurst, 1912; Abraham Lincoln Gaines, 1924.

Dr. Chester A. Clark, pastor 1930 - 33, is now AME Secretary of Missions.

He and the Rev. James E. Reese, pastor 1940 - 49, are the only other former pastors living now.

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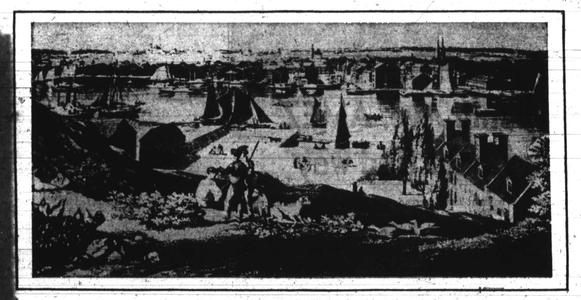

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