History Feature: Early black Marylanders: some born free, most were slaves

Maryland Slaves Guide

EDITOR'S NOTE: This unusual account of our roots is taken from the book "Men in Maryland" by George F. Bragg, an edition now out of print.

It is not definitely known when and by whom the first African slaves were introduced into the Colony of Maryland.

In 1642 records show that Governor Calvert was bargaining with a ship-master for 13 slaves at St. Mary's. At any rate, the increase of slaves, for awhile, was not very rapid.

But just as they began to increase a most interesting question came up with respect to the effect of Baptism administered to them, or to their offspring.

It was held by some, that the effect of Baptism, in making them "Christians," freed them from physical bondage.

That is, on being baptized they immediately became "freemen." This feeling, or conviction, greatly interfered with the increase of slavery as well as with the imparting of Christian instruction to those who had already been imported.

The question occupied the minds of the local authorities as well as the authorities in London.

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In 1671, an act was passed entitled "an act for the Encouraging the Importation of Negroes and Slaves," which declared that Baptism, or Conversion, should not be taken to give manumission in any way to their slaves or to their issue, who had become or should become Christians, or who had been or should be baptized, either before or after their importation to Maryland, any opinion to th contrary notwithstanding.

In Virginia a law was enacted, in 1667, that baptism did not give freedom, so that diverse masters, freed from doubt, might endeavor to spread Christianity among the blacks.

By an act of 1681, children born of white women and black men, were free.

After 1692, the issue of a union between any white woman with a slave or free black, became servants for a long time.

A law enacted in 1715, forbade, under penalties, the marriage of a white to any black or mulatto slave.

But, by this law a white and a free mulatto could marry.

The law of 1717 made a free black or mulatto, except mulattoes born of white women, slaves for life.

In the record office in London, in 1712, there was a list of "Christian" men and women and children, and also black slaves in Maryland.

According to this list there were then, in Maryland, 36,000 whites and 8,000 blacks, in 1790, there were over 208,00 whites and nearly half as many slaves in Maryland.

Of the 2,200 blacks imported into Maryland between 1699 and 1707, all but 126 were brought in London vessels.

It is interesting to note that from the very first there seemed to be a goodly number of whites who were opposed to Slavery.

In various ways, this feeling and conviction was shown. Shortly after the Revolution, 1776, a concerted effort was made in the direction of the abolition of Slavery, members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, were conspicuously in the lead.

In 1785, the House of Delegates of Maryland received a petition along this line, and legislation was introduced to that end, but failed of adoption. Yet, it is significant that the members of that body voting upon the proposition were very nearly equally divided.

Two years later, the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of Friends sent another petition to the legislature on the subject.

In 1789 the Maryland Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slaves, and the Relief of poor Negroes, was organized.

* * *

One of the effects of this continued agitation was indicated in the constant increase of manumissions. An increasing number of whites were moved to set free their slaves, not a few by means of their last will and testament; and, others, were induced to permit slaves to purchase their own freedom.

In 1829 a memorial from citizens of Frederick county, requesting the adoption of such legislation whereby children born of slave parents might become free at a certain time, was considered, but not adopted.

The trend of affairs generally was toward a steady increase in the number of "free Negroes", and this condition of affairs also conspired to render more severe and cruel the lot of slaves.

The presence of 'free Negroes," in itself, was a constant inspiration to the slave to become dissatisfied with servitude.

Then, in 1831, came the news of Nat Turner's insurrection, in Virginia, and this contributed still more to the fears of the slaveholders and, rendered them more watchful, and at the same time more cruel towards the slave.

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Following close upon all this was the bold attitude of William Lloyd Garrison, demanding immediate abolition. Slave laws of the greatest stringency followed fast upon each other. At the same time, all of these various conditions hastened the adoption of the "Colonization" scheme as the State policy.

The establishment of Liberia, on the west coast of Africa, was the logical outcome of the systematic agitation, all along, of humane whites with respect to the abolition of slavery which commenced soon after the first introduction of slavery into the colony of Maryland.

As judged from the exigencies of the situation ,at the time, they esteemd it the very best that could be accomplished, under all the circumstances, in a merciful and humane way, for the welfare of the enslaved blacks.

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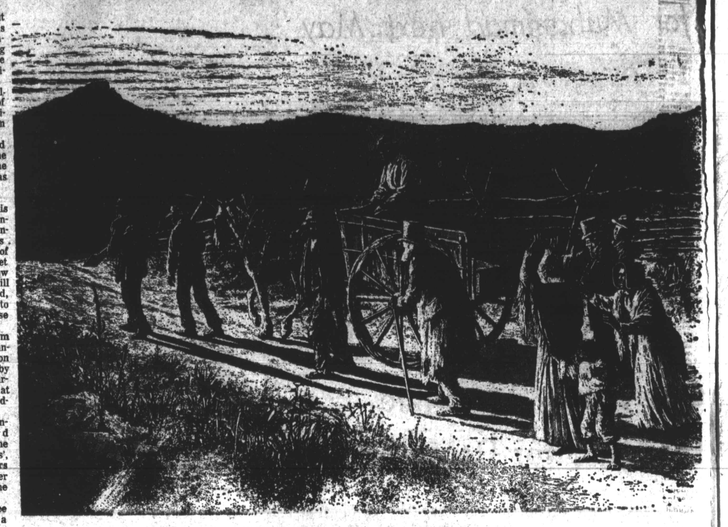
So they finally got the State pledged to Colonization as the State policy, and an appropriation of a certain sum of money to pay the expenses of such as volunteered to go to Africa.

Many manumissions were given with the expressed condition that, in a reasonable time, the person set free should leave Maryland for Africa.

In 1843, a clergyman of the Episcopal Church, of Charles county, brought a number of slaves owned by him to Baltimore, and, himself, presenting them for Confirmation, in St. James' First African Church, to the late Bishop Whittingham, who administered the rite, immediately gave them their freedom on condition that they at once leave the country for Africa, which was done.



SLAVE FUNERAL on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

By 1790 over 8,000 were free

BLACK HISTORY SPECIAL

The number of free black persons in the state of Maryland was quite small until the closing of the 18th Century.

The census of 1790 gave eight thousand free blacks in the State. From this time the number increased.

In 1807, the permanent policy of prohibiting the removal of free blacks into this State, from elsewhere, was initiated. After that time any free black coming into the State could remain no longer than two weeks.

The penalty for a longer continuance was a fine of $10 a week ,and being unable to pay the fine he could be sold into slavery for a term sufficient to cover the fine.

Somehow, free blacks continue to come, and the statute not being generally enforced additional and more stringent legislation was enacted.

Following the great uprising in Virginia, among the blacks, in 1831, laws with increasing severity of punishment were passed.

A free black coming into the State, after ten days, was fined $50 a week for every week he remained, half of the money going to the informant.

Any person who harbored a free black, thus coming into the state, after four days, was fined $20 a day.

Any free black, a resident of the state on going out of the state, should be remain longer than 30 days, without permission, would be deemed a non-resident, and subject to all the conditions which applied to other free blacks entering the State for the first time.

But, in order to encourage Colonization, any black person could come or go at will between Maryland and Liberia, West Africa.

English women, the servant class, were early imported into the Colony, and were in limited slavery. That is, they were constrained to remain in service for a term of years, in payment of the expense in bringing them to this country.

Quite a number of them married black men. The colony of Maryland was established in 1634, and as early as 1664 a law was enacted giving penalties for "such shameful matches," that is, marriage between a white person and a black slave.

Such marriages were also forbidden between white women and free blacks.

Penalties were specified for the Master who permitted such affiliation, and also the minister officiating.

They were fined ,each 10,000 pounds of tobacco.

The law of 1717 is a little curious on this subject.

A free black, or mulatto, marrying a white, woman would become a slave for life. But, mulattoes, born of white women, should serve only for seven years.

In 1777, by the Militia law free blacks were excluded from service, but in 1790 they were specifically included. In 1793 the same Militia law again limits service to white men.

The education of free blacks and slaves, was not forbidden by law in Maryland, but, nevertheless, such enterprises depended upon individuals and members of the Society of Friends.

As far back as 1761 the Rev. Thomas Bacon, a clergyman of the Church of England ,inaugurated a free school for black children in Frederick county.

They held them in such state to more effectually secure their freedom.

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Colored persons, free or slaves, could testify in court, for or against any colored person, but not in any case where a white person was concerned.

The child of a white man and a mulatto slave was incapable of witnessing against a white person but the child of a black man and a white woman — there were not a few cases of such offspring — was qualified as a witness during the limited time he was put to service.

This was up to 1717.

In 1847, there was a very estimable colored man, the Steward of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, whose wife and children were residing in Philadelphia.

religion, as taught in the Church of England."

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A few months later he had received from a goodly list of subscribers among them the Proprietary and Lady Baltimore, Cecelius Calvert and Bishop Wilson, a sufficient fund for the running expenses ,and in the course of a few years his subscriptions permitted the purchase of one hundred acres of land and the erection of a suitable brick home and school.

Thus, in the year 1755, and for many thereafter, Talbot county boasted a fine charity school, but thirty years later, when Bacon and nearly all of the original trustees were dead it was turned over to the county for use as a poor house.

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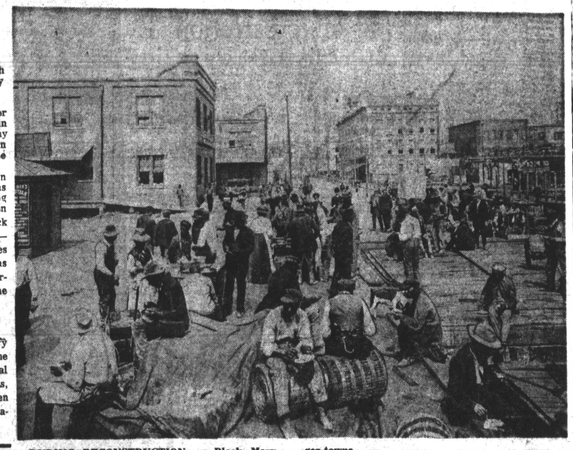
The institution seems to have been born before its time insofar as Maryland was concerned".



DURING RECONSTRUCTION — Black Marylanders begin to migrate from rural areas to larger towns.

This is Black History month

Read the accounts of Maryland's early days and heroes on this page and in this week's supplement.

And even long before this time, the same clergyman had inaugurated a school in Talbot county for the poorer classes of both races.

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Of this effort, Lawrence C. Wroth, assistant Librarian of the Pratt Library, Baltimore, in a published essay, some years ago among other things, said:

"Mr. Bacon had set an example in the Province in regard to the Christian education of Negro slaves which was not generally to be followed by either clergy or laity for many generations.

It was probably his work among the Negroes which led to the project of founding a sort of manual training or industrial school for poor children.

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In a subscription paper circulated in 1750, he remarks upon the 'profaneness and debauchery, idleness and immorality ... especially among the poorer sort in this province' and asks for yearly subscriptions, for setting up a Charity Working School in the Parish of St. Peter's, in Talbot county, for maintaining and teaching poor children to read, write and account, and instructing them in the knowledge and practices of the Christian religion.

Daniel Coker a mulatto, whose freedom was purchased by friends, conducted quite a large and flourishing day school for free blacks in the city of Baltimore, previous to the year 1816.

In 1824, the Rev. William Levington, founder and rector of St. James' First African Protestant Episcopal Church, initiated a free school which was continued in connection with that church, until long after the close of the Civil War.

A Rev. Mr. Watkins, an African Methodist minister, also conducted a day school in the city of Baltimore, for black children and there were several other such enterprises.

From the census of 1860, we learn that there were 1,355 free black children attending school in the State.

There were a number of free colored men who owned their wives, and children.

There were also a few blacks who owned and hired slaves. Mention is made of a free black of Dorchester county receiving payment for a slave whom he had bought for a term of years, and who was sold out of State, for crime, by the court.

Permission for such to visit the husband, and father, was conditioned on their residing in Annapolis, and they should remain only so long as the Steward remained in his present job.

A Washington firm conducted a Summer Resort in St. Mary's county.

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This firm was only privileged to carry its colored help there on the condition that they should be restricted to the grounds and when the season was over should immediately return to the city of Washington.

A free black woman was fined $250 for five weeks' stay in Maryland and sold into slavery for a term of years, in default of not being able to pay the fine.

Color always created the presumption that a black was a slave. It was up to him to prove that he was a "free black."

The Maryland Abolition Society (1789) interested itself greatly in preventing the unlawful "kidnapping" of free black children, who were sold into slavery.

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The constitution of 1776 guaranteed the right to vote to all freemen, of age, and who held a certain amount of property.

Under this constitution there were quite a number of colored men who exercised the right of franchise but under the amended constitution of 1810 the suffrage was strictly limited to white men.

The "free" black had the right of "petition", and it is a significant fact that his right was most frequently used. It was brough "petition" to the legislature that many evils were mitigated on their behalf.

A considerable number of free blacks owned small houses, and pieces of land.

Some of the Banks received deposits from free blacks. In Annapolis there were several black depositors and one owned shares of the Bank stock.

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In 1831, all colored persons were forbidden to assemble or to attend meetings for religious purposes which were not conducted by a white licensed clergyman or by some respectable white of the neighborhood authorized by the clergyman.

In 1842, it was enacted that any free colored person convicted of becoming or continuing to be a member of any secret society whatever, whether it held its meetings in Maryland, or without, should be deemed a felon, and be fined not less than $50.

In default of payment, he should be sold for a term sufficient to pay the fine.

For the second offense he should be sold out of the State as a slave for life. In 1846, colored Camp-meetings, and similar outdoor gatherings, were strictly and rigidly forbidden.

In the constitutional convention of 1850-51, a Mr. Jacobs, of Worcester county, became the author of a bill before the State Legislature which was generally known as the "Jacobs law," and which stirred the free blacks as, perhaps, no other measure had ever aroused them. Through strenuous efforts the bill was defeated.

It had for its object the elimination of all "free" persons of color.

Among some of the provisions of this measure were following:

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No black should be capable of acquiring real estate in the future he could not by lease hold any property longer than a year no free black was permitted to enter the State to remain no black should be manumitted except on condition that he would leave the State within 30 days.

A second "Jacobs' bill" was adopted by the Legislature of 1860, but ere it became effective had to be submitted to the voters of the State at the next ensuing election.

This last measure, happily, was defeated by the action of the people.

Somerset county was the only county in the state where the bill received a majority of the votes cast. In this last measure manumission was absolutely forbidden, and the way made easy for the return of "free blacks" into slavery.

It was in Baltimore that William Lloyd Garrison began the publication of his paper, "The Genius of Universal Emancipation," declaring that to hold slaves longer in bondage was both unnecessary and tyrannical, that justice demanded their liberation, and that to recommense slave-owners for emancipation would be paying a thief for giving up stolen property.

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This was in 1829-30. Most stringent laws were passed, with exceedingly heavy fines and imprisonment, for any person, white or black, who in any way aided in the circulation of abolition literature. These laws were particularly severe upon "free blacks."

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Any such person upon whom such literature was found or who called for or received at the post office, any such literature upon conviction, was liable to imprisonment from ten to twenty years.

And if any one knew that a person received or possessed such literature ,he was liable to a fine of $500 and two months in jail if he failed to report the same.

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In Dorchester county, at the April term of the Circuit Court, 1857, a free black was tried before the court on two indictments.

On one of these he was found not guilty, but, of on the other for knowingly having in his possession a copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," he was given the minimum term of ten years.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin,' he was given the minimum term of ten years."

But ,this man, in 1862, on the representation of a prominent citizen of Baltimore, that he had been innocent of any attempt at violation of the law, was pardon by the governor of Maryland, on the condition of his leaving the State. It was claimed that the book was left in his house by some one who desired to get him into trouble.

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NEW YORK — An odd row has been taking place here over rolls of toilet tissue. The Italian firm Gucci, which sells expensive leather goods and jewelry, is very angry about a firm of toilet tissue manufacturers who put on sale a line of their product carrying the famous "GG" Gucci symbol.

SEX ADVISORY

LONDON — The problem of shy people who are too embarrassed to ask for advice or information about sex has been beaten by a sex advisory centre in Birmingham in the English Midlands.

The center has produced a 24-minute tape recorded lecture on contraception and sexual matters which can be played privately at home. The tape was originally designed to help the blind, but has found great success with shy people.

'What's in $210 million downtown plan for us?'

Analysis

The elaborate unveiling of the study which proposes that downtown get a face-lifting at the cost of some $211 million poses many questions as yet vague and unanswered in facts and figure.

Black citizens would like to know first hand, "What's in it for us?"

When the proposition first reached the AFRO's ears, it was learned that black citizens could expect a fair and equal share as to businesses, and services owned by them. Planners say, "Don't worry. You will."

However, an examination of the many photos of the extravagant arrangement of businesses includes not one mention of space for a black business.

The merchants already established there seem to have taken up all the space.

Lexington Market, the hub of the plan, as to this date has no black stall owners in the section off Eutaw Street.

WHAT ABOUT MONEY?

But, this we do know in looking ahead and asking the question, "Where's the money coming from?"

Black property owners, composing the majority of voters in Baltimore city, will be asked in 1978 to go to the polls to approve bond issues to the tune of $55 million.

In plain words, The city will have to go to black citizens to get the money.

Property tax money from black citizens will be supporting downtown businesses.

This means an increase in property taxes would be coming.

PEOPLE MOVER?

Back to the question," Where's the money coming from?" there comes more information needed by taxpayers.

Authorities reveal that during the Nixon administration Baltimoreans were discouraged that there could be no federal money to come for thing's such as the "Downtown Baltimore People Mover".

There is a chance President Carter and his administration may more readily shell out the money for the government's part.

By way of information, the press released issued last week by the Greater Baltimore Committee says this:

"In April, 1976, the retail study committee spun off a Task Force dedicated to applying for a Downtown People Mover, a promising urban transporation system using automated, overhead vehicles.

The proposal was submitted to federal authorities last summer as a by-product of the retail study and, despite an earlier decision against demonstration funding, the people mover system remains a high-priority recommendation in this report."

The Downtown Revitalization movement began in 1974 with "a partnership," of the city of Baltimore, the Retail Merchants Association and the Greater Baltimore Committee Inc.

An interracial citizen's Advisory Committee was formed to help planning (Del. Troy Brailey who heads the group was unavailable for a report in this area because of General Assembly duties.)

Subsequently, the elaborate plan was put on paper by Arthur Cotton Moore and Associates and Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd.

MORE TO COME

Further exploration of the overall proposal will come in future AFRO stories as the plan develops.

Here is what a press release revealed last week in the unveiling of the $271 million master plan:

The study as announced reorganizes a continuing partnership between public and private entrepreneurs in Baltimore, a partnership which first bloomed in the Charles Center project of the fifties and was followed in the sixties by the success of the Inner Harbor program.

The plan for the retail district must be seen in the same time frame: none of this can happen overnight.

As a plan for public and private investment, however, this retail study can follow its two predecessors as one more deliberate step in Baltimore's exciting progress.

HUNT FOR DEVELOPER

The members of this committee will continue to work together to find a major nationally known developer who will contract to execute this plan to secure private investment to see this process in motion and build a new town center.

What follows this announcement for the retail district? First ,the committee will continue to solicit the interest of he best nationally recognized retail development firms. This process has already begun.

HUNT FOR BUSINESSES

The Retail District Executive Committee will eventually recommend to the City the name of those firms felt to be best qualified to execute this plan.

The selected development firm will be expected to refine the present document, obtain the commitment of retailers who will occupy the new and recycled spaces, and to proceed to implement this plan.

Part of the negotiations between the developer and the City will be the assurances of both parties of their willingness to undertake various parts of the project.

PRIVATE FUNDS

The developer will be expected to demonstrate strong private sector commitment to this project before the City prepares any funding effort of its own.

THE MASTER PLAN

Retailing in Baltimore fortunately has focused on the west side of the Central Business District since the shift late in the last century away from Gay Street to Howard Street. Baltimore's claim until recently to four major stores in its downtown eclipsed any other major city of its size.

In the opinion of the Committee, the presence of four or five department stores downtown should be encouraged on the premise that merchants attract merchants.

But in order to stay in business, some of these stores need to find contemporary settings in efficient, flexible spaces. New construction is necessary.

BOUNDARIES

This study presents a land use master plan for the Lexington Mall corridor, a strip of land already intensely utilized for retailing, stretching from Liberty St. to Greene, from Fayette to Saratoga, and including Lot 3B in Charles Center.

Within this master plan for the retail district the study presents a detailed treatment of the Lexington Market station area as part of a project plan.

The committee's recommendations derive from Wallace, McHarg, Roberts suggestions contained in and Todd's report, titled, "Lexington Center" and Arthur Cotton Moore and Associates' report, "Baltimore Value Capture/Transit Joint Development."

The Committee's own report is an attempt at reconciling contrary suggestions in the consultants' reports and an expression of the group's judgement on these matters.

OFFICE SPACE

Three new office structures are called for in the plan, two of which are assumed to be commercial and one of which could be occupied by a public tenant or owner.

The Lexington and Liberty entrancewaay to the Mall is framed by two of these structures.

First and second levels of these two structures would be dedicated to retail uses, probably specialty space. The buildings would be of market size with up to 250,000 square feet of space in each.

The third office tower is envisioned as a western anchor located south of the Lexington Market with adjacent ground level space provided for Lexington Market exxnansion.

This building would stimulate linkage between the retail center and the University of Maryland campus.

RETAIL

Providing an eastern anchor for the Lexington Mall will be a new retail complex developed as a department store with up to 150,00 square feet of selling space on the location of Charles Center Site 3B. This rink is now situated.

In addition to the department store occupant, the project's developers will work to maximize adjacent existing retailing opportunities at this site.

Soonnine Liberty Street there will be a covered "redevelopment" an extension of the existing second level walkway system.

This bridge structure will link The 3B site to a new retail complex to be built along the north side of Lexington Mall from Liberty Street to Stewart's Department Store.

This complex will feature shops and specialty stores on two or possibly three levels built around an interior gallery.

The south side of Lexington Mall will have an improved facade treatment and the plan calls for a second level walkway space to be integrated into these existing frontages as part of the overall improvement.

Covering the entire new Lexington Mall will be a light, glass and steel covering sheltering the area from most inclement weather.

While this covered Mall will not be airconditioned or heated, there will be air-handling equipment as part of the canopy to reduce heat build-up in summer months.

WALKWAY SYSTEM

The Hecht Company's downtown store and Stewart's Department store will be linked to the second level walkway system allowing for increased access to both of these retail anchors on the traditional "100 per cent corner."

This ped-way system will improve access to the stores not only for pedestrians but also for those people mover patrons who will arrive at the complex at one of the three DPM stations in Lexington Mall.

HOWARD, LEXINGTON, SARATOGA AND EUTAW

The plan provides for the acquisition of all the property except the Provident Savings Bank in this block.

The property would be redeveloped or recycled depending on the developer's plans for ultimate use.

The existing 19-foot grade difference between the beds of Howard Street and Eutaw Street will be eliminated on this block by excavation to the level of Howard Street.

This excavation will create a direct connection between Howard Street, through a partially covered plaza, into the planned mezzanine level of the Lexington Market Station of the rapid transit line.

Opening what were formerly "knockout panels" in the original design of this station into this plaza will create what has been termed "the most exciting new downtown environment in North America."

Creating this plaza entranceway will obviate the need for the former south station entrance which had been planned for Lexington Mall in earlier schemes and a cost efficiency in the station entrance construction project of over $500,00 will be thereby realized.

SPECIALTY STORES

At three levels — mezzanine (Howard Street), the Lexington Mall Level, and at Eutaw Street level, this new plaza will be interspersed and faced with new specialty stores. Fountains will delight visitors and green spaces, will welcome noontime shoppers.

The entire plaza will focus on an improved, mid-plaza entranceway to a revitalized Hutzler's store operating in what will be about 150,000 square feet of recycled space.

Provident Savings Bank, a landmark building, will be untouched.

LEXINGTON MARKET

All studies revealed Baltimore's Lexington Market to be the strongest single attraction. The centerpiece market, dating from the time of John Eager Howard's estate, will be preserved and strengthened.

A new entrance directly from the Market into the rapid transit station is planned.

The Market's own strength is already well established and the demand for expansion is demonstrated in the gradual growth of the "West Market" facility associated with Lexington Market Garage.

In this study, that expansion will be channeled over the course of the next few years to the south instead of west.

In the block south of the existing Lexington Market, grade-level Market expansion is shown mixed with a new, partially-shaded ice rink facility on a plaza in front of the project's third office building.

A vital connection from this plaza directly to the re-worked station interior is called for in the plan.

PARKING

Five major new garage spaces are assumed in this plan:

1) A 250-car facility beneath site 3B in Charles Center.

2) A 1250-car facility north of the Lexington Mall along Clay Street.

3) A major super-garage for up to 1800 cars shown stretching from Hutzler's recycled facilty west along Saratoga Street spanning Eutaw and framing the entire north face of the Lexington Market block.

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4) The Hecht Parkade is shown expanded to include space for up to 400 cars.

5) A new 1250-car garage south of the Lexington Market Garage and serviced by the Downtown People Mover anchors the west side of the project area.

Traffic consultants working with the retail developer will set the precise pattern of these garage volumes, necessary access portals, and suggested rate structure. Rates for parking will be scaled to favor short-term retail parking wherever possible. A Rathskeller restaurant is suggested for below-grade use on the plaza with the new ice rink facility.

ENTERTAINMENT/ RECREATION

The plan urges great attention to be paid to the issue of recreational and entertainment diversion in the new retail center.

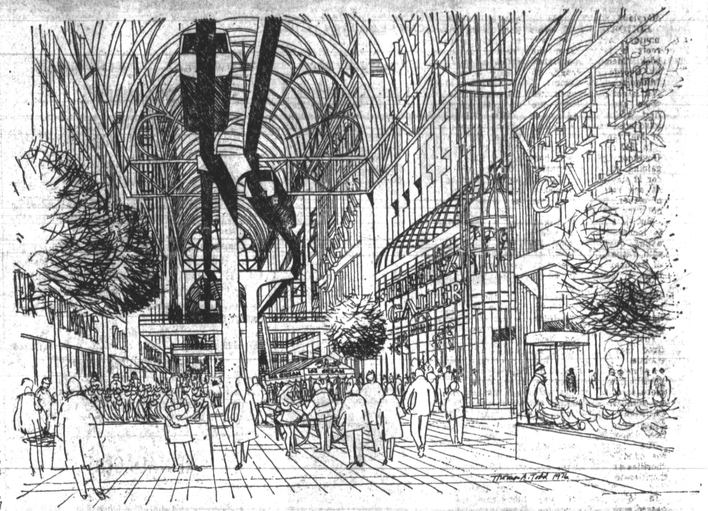
The ice rink, outdoor cafes, street and plaza level food stores create the sense of presence and vitality essential to a successful retail center.

Small theatres, even three or more side-by-side help create this sense of place.

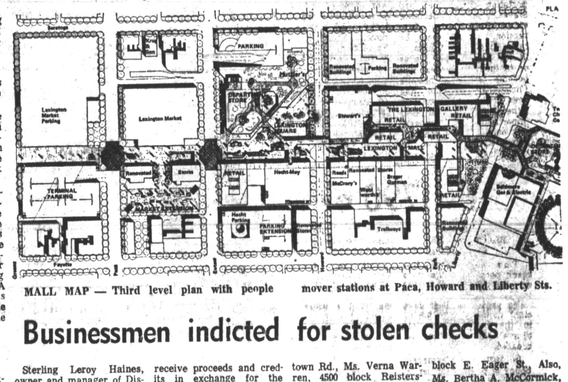
Entertainment and recreational facilities in the retail center will strengthen other downtown promotional efforts now underway particularly the Convention Center.

Linked by the exciting people mover, the attractions of the retails center and the Inner Harbor work together to create a new and dynamic downtown atmosphere.

This is an extremely ambitious plan and the degree of black involvement and benefits is a question most certain to raise as to downtown movement gains momentum.



IN 1985 — Lexington Mall in 1985 looking west from Park Ave. toward Howard St. Station of the people mover.



MALL MAP — Third level plan with people mover stations at Paca, Howard and Liberty Sts.

Businessmen indicted for stolen checks

Sterling Leroy Haines, owner and manager of Discount Tire and U-Haul business at 4531 Reisterstown Rd. and Fitzgerald Lewis Smith, proprietor of an East Baltimore grocery store have been indicated by the federal grand jury for possession of stolen checks and aiding and abetting.

The indictment states the two men forged a total of $4,641.00 worth of stolen checks and maintained a checking account at Union Trust Bank for payments and deposits relating to the business of Discount Tire and U-Haul.

Court records state the men agreed that Smith would receive the checks that had been stolen from the United States mails and would deliver the checks to Haines, who would forge signature or have unknown confederates sign them .

Haines is accused of then using his Union Trust Bank account to negotiate, deposit and cash the checks and receive proceeds and credits in exchange for the checks. The two men would then share the money.

Court records show checks were stolen from the following people, John G. Alston, 5100 block Beaufort Ave. Tommie L. Mizell, 4500 block Reisterstown Rd., Ms. Verna Warren, 4500 block Reisterstown Rd.

Also, Ms. Mary E. McMillan, 3600 block Oakmount Ave., Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Massaquoi , 5300 block Eastbury Ave. Patrick L. and Sherry Boykin, 2200 block Tucker Lane. Ms. Patsy Hunter, 1900 block E. Eager St., Also, Ms. Bertha A. McCormick, 900 block N. Broadway, Larry M. Jackson, 6000 block Amberwood Rd., Bernard F. Waller, 5300 block S. Eastbury Ave., Eddie B. Favors, 500 block Clement Way., Tommie L. Mizell, 4500 block Reisterstown Rd. and Ms. Verna Warren, 4500 block Reisterstown Rd.

Mom, daughter, granddaughter guilty of distributing heroin

A mother, daughter and granddaughter involved in a multi-million dollar heroin ring have been found guilty of narcotics violations and will be sentenced March 8.

A Criminal Court jury deliberated three hours Monday before returning with a guilty verdict on Mrs. Janie Harrington Brown, 65, of the 100 block W. Saratoga St., her granddaughter, Ms. Jackie Gilliam, 25, of the 3900 block Milford Ave. and James Garfield Gregory, 42, of the 1200 block Cedar Heights, Baltimore County They were all convicted of conspiracy and distribution of heroin.

Several weeks ago, Mrs. Anna Mae Jonees, known as the "mother" of the narcotics ring and daughter of Mrs. Brown and mother of Ms. Gilliam was found guilty.

Mrs. Jones, 46, of the 3400 block Milford Ave., had $7,800 cash in her pocketbook when she was arrested last year by the police and said the money was for her gas and electric bill.

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Assistant State's Attorney John Denholm stated Walter Salter of New York, who is also charged with narcotics violations and was part of the ring led by Mrs. Jones is scheduled to go on trial February 14 before Judge Mary Arabian.

Found under a bed in Mrs. Jones' home at the time she was arrested was $36,000 cash and $2,000 worth of heroin was seized from a home on Cordelia Ave.

According to Denholm, most of the heroin was purchased in large quantities from New York and then brought to Baltimore, packaged and distributed.

Other defendants pleading guilty or convicted were Mr. and Mrs. Raymond (Madeline) Fortune of the 3800 block Edgerton Rd. Ms. Harriet Fortune, 25; Donald Wallace, 25, of the unit block S. Schroeder St. Ms. Evelyn Barnhart, 21, of S. Schroeder St., Dwight McNair, 31, of the 2500 block Winchester St. and Ms. Phyllis Poore, 31, of the 4900 block Cordelia Ave.

Fewer drinks, more trouble if drunk driving bill passes

ANNAPOLIS (UPI) — The State Senate tentatively approved legislation Wednesday lowering the required blood-alcohol content to prove drunken driving although one of the Senate's foremost criminal lawyers predicted that legislators would be among the victims of the measure.

And in another move to combat increased traffic deaths, The Senate began debating a bill to return the minimum drinking age from 18 to 21.

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The drunk driving proposal would bring Maryland in line with most of the nation by lowering the blood-alcohol level for intoxication from .15 per cent to .10 per cent.

Sen. Jerome Connell (D-Anne Arundel) viewed the proposal as good for highway safety and his pocketbook.

"As a lawyer the best thing this can do is to increase my business and I'll make a lot of money," said Connell, a prominent criminal attorney.

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"There is no question that drunk driving is a problem," Connell said. "But I must comment that the thing goes through, 80 per cent of the legislative will be off the road."

The legislation is the same as introduced in previous sessions. In which it has raged through the Senate but deed in the House judiciary committee.

Judiciary committee chairman Del. Joseph Owens, (D-Montgomery) said the blood-alcohol content is virtually meaningless because it doesn't really indicate if a person is drunk.

The drunk driving measure will be up for final vote later this week.

Many senators agreed they were wrong in 1974 when they lowered the drinking age to 18 because it has led to increase school discipline problems and alcoholism among even younger children.

Sen. Robert Douglass said "All you did was move the trickle down factor to 15 to 14 so that teachers in schools now have to combat with drunken junior high school students instead of senior high students."

"I think it is for us to admit some responsibility for those who died on the highway,' said Douglass. "It was we who gave them alcohol at an early age."

Further action on the Bill was delayed until Thursday after Sen. John Carroll Byrnes (D-Baltimore) asked for time to draft an amendment raising the drinking age to 20 rather than 21.

Holiday closings

Motor Vehicle Administration Headquarters in Glen Burnie and all branch offices will be closed Friday, February 11 and Monday, February 21, in observance of Lincoln's Birthday and Washington's Birthday, respectively.

Both days are legal holidays in Maryland and most state offices will be closed.

The MVA wishes to especially remind motorists eligible to receive their photo driver's license that they will not be able to do so on these two days.

All Baltimore County government office, courts and courts buildings will be closed Friday, Feb. 11, in observance of Lincoln's Birthday. However, the county's division of community affairs will remain open.