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THE RESURRECTION OF "SCOTLAND"

by Harvey A. Levine

The predominantly African-American community of Scotland, located off of Seven Locks Road in Potomac, began forming in the 1880s, but its land traces back to English proprietorship, as does all in Maryland. On 19 November 1741 William Fields obtained a warrant for 35 acres from his Lordship's Land Office of the Province of Maryland, which entitled him to a tract that size. "Bedfordshire Carrier," as he named his tract, was surveyed and laid out for him "on the west side of Captain John Run between the Snake Den draft and a small draft called the Lick Branch." There being no prior claims to the land, it was patented to him 26 November 1742 for 35 acres. When a resurvey found contiguous vacant land, he had Bedfordshire Carrier patented again in 1745, this time for 176 acres.[1]

By 1767 Evan Jones was owner of the land and Bedfordshire Carrier was patented once more, this time for 584 acres.[2] Eventually the land was handed down to Evan Jones III and his brother Nathan, who divided it, and Evan III retained 319 acres. After Evan III died intestate in 1813, the property lay fallow for many years.

Property taxes on the land fell into arrears by 1879, exposing ownership disputes among a multitude of Evan III's heirs. A fifth generation Jones, Evan Aquilla Jones, along with several family members, filed suit against other relatives for ownership of the land. When the family was unable to reach settlement, the Montgomery County Circuit Court, Sitting as a Court of Equity, ordered that the land be put up for public auction. Charles Wesley Prettyman, a lawyer living in Rockville, was appointed as the trustee for the sale. He was 23 years old and a recent graduate of the University of Maryland's law school.

In February 1880, Charles Prettyman sold the first three lots of the Jones' property to James Gingell, and to a daughter and sister of the complainant, Evan Aquilla Jones.[3] Then in March 1880, Prettyman sold a lot to William Dove, a "Negro,"[4] who paid $210 for 36.25 acres. William

was the nephew of Henry Dove, an ex-slave of Samuel Willson. The 1879 Atlas of G. M. Hopkins shows Henry Dove, D. Wallace, and L. Lyle living in houses on what appears to be the Jones' land. They may have been renting, but, on the other hand, it was a common practice then to allow a potential buyer to take possession of land with the understanding he or she would not receive a deed to the land until the final payment was made.

In 1883 James William Harris, previously a slave of Dr. Nicholas Brewer, purchased 44.5 acres. The following year, William Dove successfully bid on two parcels, one 8 acres, the other 5. At the same time, Noah Mason and his brother Augusta secured 9 acres and 6 acres respectively. The Doves and the Masons were to become two of the dominant families in Scotland in ensuing years, handing their property down to descendants through sales, wills and simple transfers. In some cases, they acquired additional lots from other purchasers. For example, a former freedman by the notable name of George Washington purchased 11.25 acres of the Jones' property in 1884 and sold it to J. Forest Walker in 1907, who in turn sold it in 1939 to James Dove, a son of William Dove. Similarly, James B. Handy, a farm laborer, bought 7.5 acres of the Jones' land in 1884 and following his death his heirs sold the land to Eugene and Leeta H. Mason in 1927. The final Negro purchaser was Alfred Stewart, formerly a slave of Elizabeth Offutt, who bought 5 acres in 1894. All of the Negro purchasers paid $8 per acre. [5]

An 1894 map[6] of the area shows what had been the Jones' tract to be occupied by Henry Dove, his wife Sarah, and William Dove, along with two other Negro families from the Prettyman sale, the Washingtons and the Masons. Other ex-slave families living either on or near the former Jones' property had the surnames of Burley, Johnson, Jones, Lyles and Wallace. In short order, a Negro enclave of about 50 families settled on the east and west sides of Seven Locks Road, between Democracy Boulevard and about midway between Tuckerman and Montrose Roads. With the sale of land to Negroes, area farmers retained an inexpensive and stable labor pool.

The Negro community that had been formed was known as "Snakes Den" until about 1920. Then, according to the story, a "New Scotland" sign was taken from the neighboring Magruder property, the "New" painted over, and the "Scotland" remainder posted, and the community had a new name, "Scotland."

Although slavery ended in Maryland in 1864, publicly-sanctioned racial discrimination did not. Scotland was developed mainly by Negro farm hands and day laborers with little, if any, hope of upward mobility. Montgomery County was largely an agricultural region in the early 20th century and was losing its productive base to more southern states. Furthermore, education for Negroes was limited to the inadequate Seven Locks Colored Elementary School, built north of Scotland in 1879. Conditions improved somewhat in 1927 when Scotland acquired its own elementary school. The Mason family sold two acres of its property to the county for $10, the community raised $500 on its own to match a donation by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, and a one-room elementary school was built in the middle of Scotland. At the same time, the first Negro high school in the county opened - the Rockville Colored High School. However, it was too far away from Scotland to be a practical choice, as was its successor the all-Negro Lincoln High School which opened in Rockville in 1935.

An interesting aspect of the relationship between the Prettyman family and Scotland took place in 1937. William B. Gibbs, the principal of the Rockville Colored Elementary School, with backing from Negro organizations and lawyers (including Thurgood Marshall, the future Supreme Court Justice), filed a suit against the School Board seeking equal pay for Negro teachers. The lawyer defending the Board was William F. Prettyman, the 54-year-old son of Charles. The case was settled with the pay of black and white teachers being equalized.

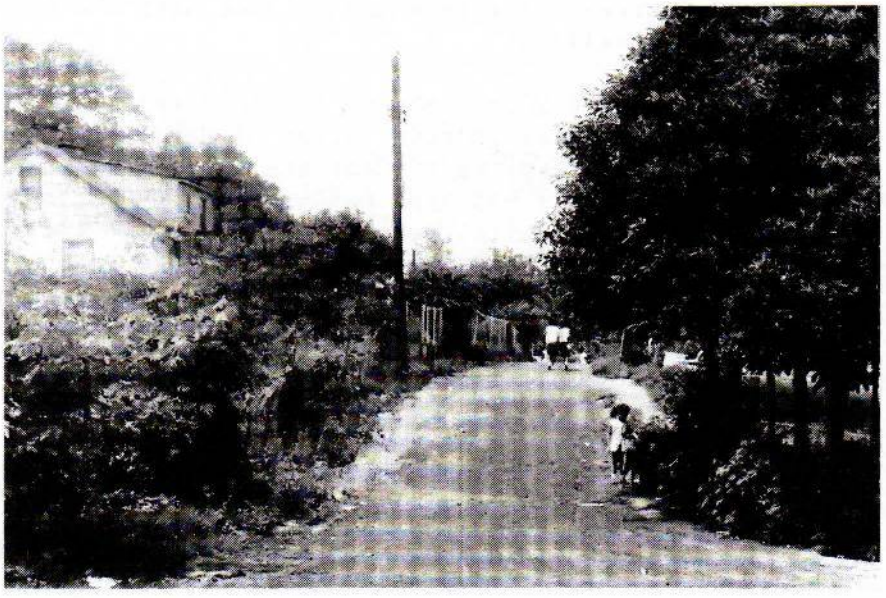
In the first part of the 20th century, Scotland fell into a pattern similar to other black communities in rural areas of Maryland. With agriculture on the wane, the offspring of Scotland's pioneers turned to such jobs as laborers, tradesmen, golf caddies, handymen, trash collectors and drivers. Scotland's female population became maids, nurses' aides, cooks, seamstresses and baby sitters. Their major contact with whites was as subservient employees. Living conditions were deplorable as poorly-built structures began to deteriorate. The cultural focal point of Scotland was the Scotland African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church, built on the east side of Seven Locks Road in 1924, along with its minister. A community matriarch also emerged.

Geneva Mason (her married name) moved to Scotland from Washington, D.C. in 1917, where she had graduated from the O Street Vocational School as a seamstress. While having six children of her own, over her lifetime Mrs. Mason took care of 32 foster children. Also, she organized programs for pre-school children, activities for adults, collections for the destitute, and community events at three different churches. Later in life, she helped raise money for hospitals, school buses, and for poles so that electrical wires could be brought into Scotland. She was known to wear "he shoes" (men's boots) in order to transverse the dirt and muddy ground to fetch water from the stream used by residents.[7] In 1965, at age 65, Geneva Mason would play a major role in saving Scotland and creating a new community.

Following World War II, Scotlanders watched as they became increasingly encircled by suburban growth. The migration to the area was virtually all white, highly educated, and laden with professionals. Aside from the expense, Negroes did not move to the county because of inferior schools and restrictive covenants in many housing communities. Even when, in 1950, Carver High School replaced Lincoln High School (Lincoln became a junior high school), the educational emphasis at the black high school level remained on vocational training. By 1960 the steadily declining African-American population in Montgomery County dipped to below four percent of its total population.[8]

In the 1950s and 1960s, housing developments were approaching Scotland from all sides. For example, in 1954 the Magruder and Wilson families sold 15.5 acres for $13,500, which eventually became the townhouse community of Inverness North. Carl Freeman was buying land for the development of Inverness Forest and Cabin John Mall. Some Scotland residents sold land, including Lisa (Dove) English, Ella (Dove) Hill, Marguerita (Dove) Johnson, Wellington Stewart and Matt Thomas. Scotland's Dove and Cooper families gave some of their land to the county to improve Seven Locks Road in 1956, as did the Masons in 1960, receiving no payment,

just release from front foot benefits. The improved road facilitated development of white, upscale communities. However, the county did nothing to improve the bumpy, rocky, narrow dirt road leading into Scotland.



Entrance to Scotland 1965

In addition to builders, the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission (MNCPPC) began to acquire land for the development of Cabin John Regional Park, which had been approved in 1957. In a few cases, builders such as John Walker donated land in order to enhance the value of their planned developments, but most of the land was purchased. In 1960 MNCPPC bought 130 acres each from the O'Keefe and Levin families, comprising about half of the 525-acre park, which opened in 1966. Scotland residents also sold land for park development in the 1960s, including Cephas Watson, Marguerita (Dove) Johnson and Alma Burns. Burns, after much heated debate, sold to the MNCPPC five acres that was essential to the park's development. The county Board of Education transferred to MNCPPC the two acres it owned in the center of Scotland that had been originally, but was no longer, used for the community's elementary school.

Generally, MNCPPC was offering about $3000 per acre and, as Geneva Mason said at the time, "Where can we go to get a house for that? These people were born here. Their ancestors lived here. We want to stay here. This is their property. We don't want to leave it."[9] Builders were offering up to $13,000 per acre, depending on location and characteristics of the terrain. Since the average family income in Scotland was $65 a week in 1964, some land owners opted to sell, in spite of Mrs. Mason's legitimate concern. Other owners were indicating that voluntary selling was a better alternative than forced sales through condemnation.

By 1964 Scotland was on the brink of disaster. The Negro homes that had once extended for three or four miles along Seven Locks Road had been

reduced to a concentrated area of 48 acres within the original Bedfordshire Carrier patent. Of the 35 homes (shacks) in Scotland, 23 had been condemned by the County, with indications that more condemnations would be forthcoming. Absentee ownership did not help the situation. Broken windows were not repaired, although some were boarded over with wooden planks or plywood. The community was described as having "a few dozen hovels surrounded by mountains of debris and abandoned cars, in a setting of mud and tangled undergrowth."[10] There were 20 structures occupied by more than one family and some had three or more families. One building, known as the "apartment house," was inhabited by five families and 30 people. That structure had no heat, no sanitary facilities and no running water. Some home sites had wells, but these were mostly inoperable. Even the community well could not be used because the pump was broken and the county refused to fix it. No family in Scotland was on welfare.

Because the community lacked a paved entrance road, public water and sewerage, garbage service and public transportation, it was only a matter of

House in Scotland 1965

time until Scotland's property owners sold all of their land. The challenge to Scotland was described by the administrator of a federal housing program:

> "As our cities and suburbs expand, we are increasingly confronted with the question of what to do about the people who live in the old, once-rural communities around which the suburbs have expanded and whose very existence is threatened." [11]

When Scotland's children returned to their schools in September of 1964, the future of the 80-year-old community and the 255 residents looked bleak. In fact, it was generally accepted that Scotland would cease to exist because the Inverness Forest subdivision, soon to be built on the other side of Seven Locks Road, would cover up the stream which was the only source of water to Scotland residents. No one could have anticipated the change that was about to take place.

In the summer of 1964, a young, white Bethesda woman learned of Scotland's precarious situation. Although a wife, mother and a student at the University of Maryland, Joyce Siegel wanted to offer her time and services to a community in need of a play school group like the one developed by Home Study in nearby Cabin John, another black community. She drove her car up the hilly, pot-holed, rocky and trash-strewn entrance to Scotland and was shocked by the deplorable conditions. [12]

Joyce Siegel decided to try to help Scotland beyond providing education assistance. She attended a meeting run by the Bahai, a religious group doing volunteer work in Scotland. The lack of a clear plan on how to save the community was evident. She responded by volunteering to help with the Scotland Christmas party, arranging for a scholarship for a Scotland child to attend the nursery school that her daughter Barbara enjoyed, and soliciting people for a committee which would try to help Scotland survive.

The initial meeting of the committee known as Save Our Scotland (SOS) was held in February 1965 and attended by about 100 people. Chaired by Reverend Earl R. Pritchard of the Bethesda Presbyterian Church, SOS established a Board of Directors (including ministers, residents of Scotland and Mrs. Siegel) and initiated a plan of action. The timing was right. A number of ministers had just returned from Selma, Alabama, where they had experienced significant racial strife and civil disorder. They wanted to do something. A fact-finding committee was formed and a survey of Scotland residents was taken. This data would be instrumental in acquiring federal assistance later on.

Additional meetings were held and action committees were formed. Hundreds of volunteers, ranging from individuals to such organizations as The Council of Churches of Greater Washington, began to give their time and financial support to save Scotland. The message soon got out and much-needed publicity was provided through the unrelentless support of Doc Kapiloff and the Sentinel newspaper. Residents of Scotland were energized and overcame past feelings of hopelessness. If Scotland was to be resurrected, it needed the full participation of those owning property in the community.

Between 1965 and 1968, many activities led to Scotland's resurgence. For example, Minister James Matheson of the First Methodist Church chaired a clean-up committee that collected $800 from local churches and, along with hundreds of volunteers, spent five weekends helping Scotland residents rid the community of decades of trash. The county removed over 200 abandoned cars at no cost. The clean-up was clearly a bonding activity among Scotlanders, civic organizations, and other volunteers.

The Reverend James Macdonell, of St. Mark's United Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, and Minister Frank I. Randall, of Scotland's A.M.E. Zion Church, led an effort to get the sewer line extended to the Scotland church and water and sewer was brought into the community. The church received its sanitary line in the summer of 1965. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission announced it would consider water and sewer to the entire community, but that required clear title for each parcel of land - the same requirement as for new homes. Establishing clear title was a necessary but draconian task; it took several years to complete.

An educational committee was successful in attracting 45 volunteers to tutor Scotland's children, in acquiring funds for a summer camp program for pre-schoolers, and in establishing a series of educational programs. County schools had been integrated by this time, so Scotland's parents became more optimistic about educational opportunities and took a greater interest in the new services being offered to them.

Joyce Siegel and Geneva Mason
At a Clean-Up Workday in 1965

A group of about 100 people representing Scotland attended a meeting of the Montgomery County Planning Board in order to present a petition signed by 1000 people. The attendees stood in unison to support the petition and a motion that the Board stop offering to buy Scotland property. Mrs. Mason herself addressed the Board, stating, "Don't take what is ours. You need people like us in the county as much as you need some of your white rich people." As a consequence, the Board temporarily stopped its land-acquisition program in Scotland and eventually supported the resurgence of the community.

Norman Christeller, Herbert S. Colton, a lawyer and former employee of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and others, established the non-profit Scotland Community Development, Inc. in order to be eligible for a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) planning grant. Aided by Richard Bryant, then an employee of the Federal Housing Administration, Scotland Community Development was successful in obtaining a $78,400 demonstration grant for legal and other help to design a practical plan to provide adequate housing in Scotland. Incorporators included Father Raymond Cahill, Larry Falik, Gordon Hawk, Reverend James Macdonell, Reverend James Matheson, Reverend Frank Randall, Jeannette Shaderich and Lathrop Smith.

Scotland Community Development achieved several milestones. It successfully pleaded before a U.S. Senate committee for a new rent-supplement program that Norman Christeller and others had created - the first in the nation. It was also successful in testifying before the Maryland General Assembly to get a tax exemption for housing non-profit agencies such as itself. Both programs continue to this day. Furthermore, Scotland Community Development worked with the Suburban Maryland Fair Housing Authority in getting fair-housing legislation passed.

After much time-consuming work and a number of setbacks, a relatively elaborate plan was developed involving land swaps among residents of Scotland and MNCPPC. Scotland's homes would be razed and an entirely new community would be built. Financing would be provided through HUD, which, according to its director, used virtually every aid program it had. At the heart of the plan was rezoning a central area for multi-unit residency. With support from 26 citizens' associations, the rezoning was approved. Scotland Community Development then offered $14,500 per acre to each property owner so that they could afford the down payment on a home. Acquiring needed consent from landowners was challenging, as some lots were owned by many people, some owners could not really be located, and others were reluctant, or refused, to sell their property. Eventually, the necessary signatures were gathered and some land was swapped with MNCPPC for land essential to Scotland. The central home-site area shrank from what was then 48 acres to a planned 16-acre community, and eventually to 10 acres.

Rurik (Rick) Eckstrom, A.I.A., selected as the architect, designed a 100-unit townhouse community to cost about $15,000 for each unit. At the insistence of prospective owners, the units had mansard roofs. Ground breaking took place in April of 1968, attended by Robert Weaver, Secretary of HUD, and a number of local politicians. At HUD's insistence, the rental units were completed first and past property owners moved into those units until their purchased homes were ready. The last 25 units were built in 1971. Of the 100 units, 25 were, and still are, owned outright by

individual families and the remaining 75 are rental units owned by Scotland Community Development. The rental units were financed by HUD under its Section 221(d)3 subsidy program. The ownership units sold for $15,000 to $18,000, with 40-year, three-percent loans provided by HUD.

Begun in 1974 and completed in 1975, a $200,000 multi-purpose community center was built within Scotland, financed with an $84,000 federal grant and county funds. County Executive James P. Gleason, with community residents Frances Curtis and Geneva Mason, conducted the ceremonial ground-breaking. Scotland was now complete. It had a paved entrance road, public water and sewer, sanitary service, bus service, and new homes for both owners and renters. Because of so many volunteers, on December 4, 1969, the community as a whole received a prestigious Lane Bryant Volunteer Award, because "hundreds of people from diverse backgrounds worked together to create in Scotland a climate of opportunity in which individuals can become economically and socially viable citizens."

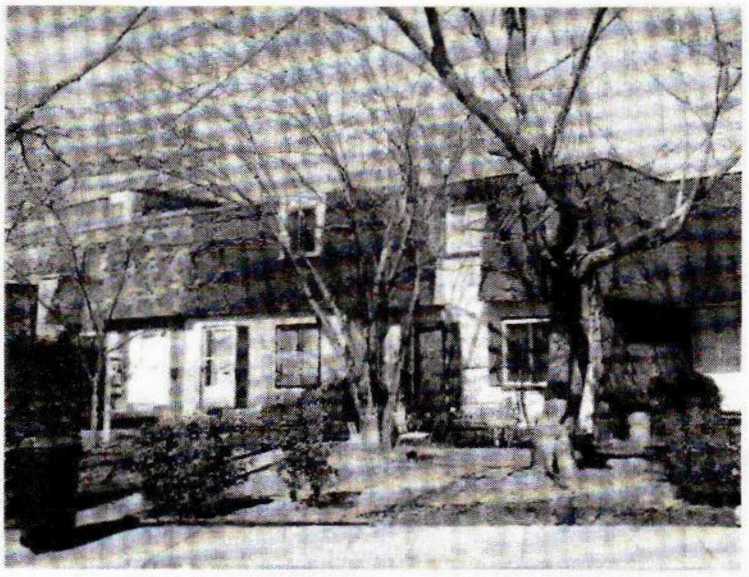
Over the past 30 years, there have been some bumps in the road for Scotland, but the community has become a stable and contributing force in the area. During the later part of the 1970s and the 1980s, Scotland became somewhat associated with crime and drug use. Those conditions seem to have subsided. A continual, sometimes contentious, issue is one of owner versus renter. Occasionally there have been accusations that rental units have not been properly managed and that a community with a 75-percent rental portion will continue to have maintenance problems. Originally, the idea was that in time renters would purchase their units. Also, since the townhouses were of low-cost construction, upkeep has been a concern. In recent years, improvements have been made, including remodeling kitchens, constructing new fences, installing new outdoor lights and planting shrubbery.

Amazingly, Scotland has retained a substantial degree of consistency. The Dove family overwhelmingly dominates home ownership, while some Masons and members of other original families still live in Scotland. Bette Thompson, the Secretary of Scotland Community Development in the late 1960's, currently heads its Board. Scotland's children have gone on to become contributing members of society, college graduates and even some professional athletes. A drive through Scotland reveals a community whose appearance is neat and litter free.

While new housing may have been the heart of Scotland's resurrection, the soul was the human element. In December of 1968, Scotland Community Development held a benefit at Walt Whitman High School to raise money for the community's social needs, including the hiring of a social worker. Performing at the benefit were comedian Sam Levinson, guitarist Charlie Byrd, singer Roberta Flack, and The Showmen, a local singing group which included some residents of Scotland. The program for the event included a poignant expression of one result of the effort to save Scotland:

> "... it has provided a unique opportunity for people of varied backgrounds, black and white, Protestant, Catholic and Jew, to get to know and like each other and work together toward a common goal."[13]

The resurrection of Scotland is a triumph of individual wills over economic self-interest, institutional apathy, and seemingly insurmountable barriers. In 1969 Joyce Siegel was presented with a "Make America Better Award" from the Montgomery County Board of Realtors, and was a finalist for an individual "Lane Bryant Volunteers in America" award. In 1970 she received the Smith College Medal and a "Community Service Award" from the Washington Chapter of the National Conference of Christians & Jews. Mrs. Siegel and her husband Alan still live in the same Bethesda home where they lived during the 1960s. She and hundreds of others, including residents of Scotland and the volunteers from other areas, should be proud of their part in the resurrection of Scotland.



Scotland Today

Harvey A. Levine came to Montgomery County from Pittsburgh in 1967 and, after receiving his doctorate in economics at American University, entered the transportation field, as a consultant and, for 20 years, Vice President of the Association of American Railroads. At present he heads his own consulting practice. His interest in railroad history widened to include other things historical and, when he found Scotland and its youth in his son's school district, he was stimulated to research the history of this unique community.

He thanks Jane Sween and Patricia Andersen of the Montgomery County Historical Society's library for their interest, patience and help in providing source material and the proper facts. Also, his deep appreciation to Joyce Siegel, who was kind enough to share her story with him.

NOTES

1. Patents LG#E, f. 94; BT, f. 63.
2. Patents BC#33, f. 29.
3. Montgomery County Equity No. 313, Maryland State Archives. All sales of the 319.3 acres of Jones' property are described in the case file.
4. The term "Negro" is used here and in other instances where it was given in the records or was fitting with the times.
5. These land sales, and others, were identified by the author through examination of land records at the Court House in Rockville.
6. Griffith M. Hopkins, "The Vicinity of Washington," 1894 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).
7. Based on a discussion between the author and Dorothy (Dove) Lewis, a current resident of Scotland.
8. Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, "A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland 1776-1997 (Montgomery County Government), p. 114.
9. An interview with Geneva Mason was recorded and transferred to writing. It is available at the Montgomery County Historical Society.
10. Robert Davenport, "The Scotland Project: A Low Cost Housing Achievement." Prepared for the Scotland Development Corporation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, July 1969.
11. Press release, July 9, 1965. Robert C,. Weaver, Administrator, United States Housing & Home Finance Agency.
12. The information on Scotland's resurrection came mainly from three sources: (1) an oral history of Joyce B. Siegel, taken by Margaret Cutler on March 22 and April 2, 1972 for the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County; (2) the files on the Scotland community at the Montgomery County Historical Society; and (3) interviews by the author of this article with involved and knowledgeable persons, including Mrs. Siegel.
13. "An Evening of Humor and Music, Benefiting Scotland Community Development, Inc.," program brochure, December 2, 1968.