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SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

OF

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

As remembered by William F. Prettyman

PART II

In a previous instalment, the attempt was made to recall some of the appearance of Rockville as it once was, as also a few of its people of yesteryear. We noticed structural changes on the north side of its main street, with some detours beyond.¹

In this instalment we shall point out some of the more important buildings in that part of old Rockville on the south side of Montgomery Avenue, the town's main street, and also a few other locations south of it.

We shall begin our "tour" with the house on the south side of Montgomery Avenue almost opposite Forest Avenue. This was formerly the home of Philip D. Laird, a learned lawyer of a past generation who served with distinction in several public capacities.

Next to the east is a house once occupied by Harry and Daisy Beard. It was for a number of years the home of Judge Stedman Prescott, presently Chief Judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals.

1. Part One of Seventy-five Years of Rockville was published in the Montgomery County Story for August, 1965 (Vol. VIII, #4). It contains a map of Rockville.

The Robert A. Pumphrey Colonial Funeral Home next door was at one time occupied by Mrs. Abbe and her son "Toddy". Mrs. Abbe was a sister of Daisy Beard and of Alexander Prescott, father of Judge Prescott. For a number of years it was the Montgomery Club House.

Across Williams Street from Pumphrey's is the remnant of one of the really old houses, home of Richard Williams whose widow and daughter Rose continued to live there after his death. His son, Walter A. Williams, was the last of that family to make it his home. His daughters, Mrs. Richard G. Buckingham and Mrs. John Allnutt are still residents of Rockville. The D. J. Dowell family now occupy the old Williams home.

The brick house next door was built and first occupied by Dr. D. F. Owens, our first druggist. Another occupant was Dr. George E. Lewis. Later it was the home of Wallace Ricketts and his daughters, one of whom, Mrs. Gilbert Hartley, now owns the property which she has converted into apartments.

Adjacent to this brick building was the home of Mr. Isaac R. Maus, who lived past ninety years and was seen in fine weather on the streets in his wheel chair. He was father to two distinguished soldiers and to several daughters venerated for their charitable and lovely characters. This house is now abandoned and has been publicly condemned.

Further down Montgomery Avenue was the home of Judge J. B. Henderson. His children included Alby, Doctor Fred, Walter, popularly known as "Pud", Margaret, Rose, and Sarah.

Another resident of this block at one time was Mr. William Talbott, a prominent lawyer. His wife, Mrs. Bertha Talbott, was a leading genealogist and was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Also in this block was the house of Miss Bessie Lyddane and her nephew, Stephen H. Quigley.

Finally, on the corner of Van Buren Street, was the ancient home of Captain James Anderson, who served in the Army of the Confederacy and after the War, returned to his home here. Completing several terms as Clerk of the Court, he retired and spent many sunny days on his not-too-sturdy-looking front porch, smoking his long-stemmed clay pipe. His wife claimed descent from Pocohontas; her complexion and features and those of her sons and daughters gave some evidence of Indian descent. The house fell into dilapidation and was demolished. Its site has been converted into a small park.

Crossing Van Buren Street, we arrive at the home of Miss Daisy Magruder. It was built and first occupied by Edwin West who had a number of buildings back of it, among them a barn. At one time he had a treadmill affair either for threshing grain or lofting it. Watching the horses or mules going round and round this contraption was an irresistible attraction for small fry and some older persons. On the front corner of the yard was a small white house, probably of stone. It was removed, doubtless by Miss Daisy's father, Judge Winfield S. Magruder of the Orphan's Court after he acquired the property.

The eastern boundary of this lot was the western boundary of old Williamsburg-Rockville. On the other side of this line begins the property of the Methodist Church. The original small chapel on this site built by a dissident group a century ago has grown into the handsome stone church building that is the sanctuary of the present Methodist congregation. The commodious educational building covers to the east the site

of a frame residence, first occupied in my recollection by the family of a Mr. Fletcher, a Deputy Register of Wills. It was purchased by Elgar L. Tschiffely, representative and official adjuster for the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Sandy Spring. One of his daughters married R. E. L. Smith, a lawyer, who was active in Methodist Church affairs, serving on the Official Board and as Sunday School Superintendent. His daughter, Catherine, church organist for a number of years, was Assistant Cashier in the Montgomery County National Bank until her recent retirement.

Included in the Methodist Church lot is also a small frame house temporarily used as a church school annex. Once occupied by the Todd family, it was subsequently the residence of the David H. Warfields.

The corner property on Adams Street is now an apartment. Previously it had been the home and office of Dr. Edward Anderson, whose step-daughter, Noma Thompson, was the author of a history of Rockville "Gateway to the Nation's Capital".

Many of the old buildings in the next block have been torn down and replaced by small business establishments. Among the former occupants were Willis B. Burdette, one-time postmaster, who had a store there; Mrs. S. M. Lydanne; and Spencer C. Jones, an ex-confederate soldier, lawyer, State's Attorney, member of the Maryland State Senate, and president of the Montgomery County National Bank.

This brings us to the corner of Washington Street, the zero or starting point for house numbers. Here was the home of Mrs. Rebecca Fields, widow of Matthew Fields and his successor as owner and publisher of the Montgomery County Sentinel. She lived to the very ripe age of 100 years in recognition of which the Rotary Club presented her with a gift.

The Sentinel office was a small frame building adjoining the residence. The mechanics of publication and issuance were performed by her sons, G. William and H. Clay Fields, but certificates of publication, bills and receipts were presented to her for her signature. After her death, this entire property was condemned by the United States Government for a Post Office and for other Federal uses. Members of a younger generation of the family so bitterly opposed this, that they made a demonstration in force at the official dedication of the new building.

Falls Road

Before proceeding further East, let us take a bus back to the last house on Falls Road which was thought of as being "in town" and work our way back towards the Court House. This attractive house of early American design was for many years occupied by the family of John B. Brewer, Justice of the Peace, part Editor of the Montgomery Advocate, and father of a numerous family, only a few of whom are still residents of Rockville. One son, John, built a home on the West side of the family residence.

The only other house on the north side of Falls Road during the "early days" was occupied by the family of George Stone.

Across the street were the residences respectively of Messrs. Frank and John J. Higgins; Lawrence, son of the former, still lives in the first of these.

Next to Higginville (as these two family settlements used to be called) is the home occupied today by Misses Edith, Naomi and Violet Magruder. This house and lot were conveyed by E. B. Prettyman to his deputy Court Clerk, George Patterson. Later it was the home of Mrs. Connell and her twin daughters, Emma and Adelaide.

Thence to where Falls Road merges with Jefferson Street at Van Buren, the several attractive houses are in the subdivision made by the late Waring E. Evans and his sons of the land purchased from the Prettyman Estate.

Van Buren Street

Falls Road ends at Van Buren Street. Here a short ramp toward the East leads into Jefferson Street. Before continuing down Jefferson, we will note one or two of the old houses on Van Buren.

On the corner was the residence of Mrs. Sophia Higgins and her three maiden daughters. Mrs. Sophia was the mother of all members of the Higgins clan in Rockville.

Next was the house formerly the home of Albert J. Almoney, editor of the Montgomery Advocate and for thirty-odd years Clerk to the Maryland General Assembly. After his death, his daughters, Miss Mary and Mrs. J. Paul Brunett, sold it to Dr. Luther Terry, Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service.

At the South East corner of present-day Van Buren and Jefferson Streets is the ancestral home of the Prettyman family. In it lives Charles W. Prettyman, the fifth in direct line to live there. It is here that General J. E. B. Stuart is alleged to have halted his cavalry detachment before apprehending a Union supply train. Family tradition relates that he entered this house and fondled the youngest family child.

Van Buren Street to the south of this point was actually the Prettyman stable lane. On one side was a stone dairy house and an iron "Force pump" with a horse watering-trough hollowed out of a large log. Back of the stable was an extensive grove of chestnut trees, which were the delight in autumn of nutting parties. A tragic blight killed all the chestnut trees in the area.

On the east side of Van Buren between Falls Road and Montgomery Avenue was formerly the Baptist Church erected in 1820, surrounded by its Burying Ground. Through the grave yard was a brick sidewalk closed at one end by a turnstile and at the other by a gate with a heavy hook and staple. Part of the grave yard extended across this walk toward the west and this former part of the burying ground has long since ceased to be used for burial purposes, having become part of a busy traffic intersection. The main portion, however, is still the resting place of many important persons of the past: Brice Selby, one of the first County officials; Dr. Patterson and family; Judge William V. Bouic and family and many others.

When Falls Road reaches Van Buren Street, it ends; its continuation is named Jefferson Street.

Jefferson Street

East of the Prettyman residence at the corner of Van Buren and Jefferson are the grounds of the Rockville Academy. The lots were purchased and the first building erected as the result of a lottery authorized by the State of Maryland in 1805 for the purpose of building a school and buying a fire engine for the town of Rockville. The original building was replaced in the summer of 1889 by the present brick structure. When the Public Schools became adequate for the education of local youth, the Academy ceased to function. Its facilities have been used as a Public Library and nursery school in recent years.

The rest of Jefferson Street's south side (as far as Washington Street) is now occupied by the attractive Jefferson Office Building.

On the north side of Jefferson Street, next to the Baptist Grave Yard, is the Methodist Parsonage built in 1869.

Next to it to the East is the large yard and home surrounded by a venerable iron fence, now owned by Mrs. Watkins. At an earlier time it was the home of Cooke D. Luckett, an ex-Confederate soldier and the most notable educator of his day.

At the end of this block at South Adams Street is a small church, first the house of worship of the Presbyterians and then of the Christian Church. The last named has now turned its sanctuary over to Seventh Day Adventists and Christian Scientists.

Jefferson Street continued on past the back of the Court House to Perry Street with no buildings facing it except the residence of Judge John T. Vinson. Following the death of his daughter, Miss Nannie, the property was purchased by the City of Rockville. The house was torn down and the grounds made into an attractive public park.

Court House Square

Our tours along Montgomery Avenue and Falls Road-Jefferson Street have now brought us to Washington Street and the Court House Square as it is today, bounded by Washington Street on the west, Montgomery Avenue on the north, Perry Street on the east and Jefferson Street on the south. In order to acquire this much land for this present Court House, it was necessary to raze an entire block of houses and offices including those on the east side of Washington Street, the south side of Montgomery Avenue and the west side of Court Street. The last named street, one of the oldest in town, thus passed into history.

We will try to recreate this area as it was in the past and tie it in with structures still standing.

East Montgomery Avenue

The buildings destroyed in this block between Washington and Court Streets included the Maus Building, the upper story of which was the Masonic Temple. This building was moved to the west side of Washington Street.

Next was the home of William Veirs Bouic, jr. - lawyer, State Senator and bank president. When he moved to another residence the house was rented to Warren Choate who lived there with his family which included Miss Eliza Choate and Mrs. Otho H. W. Talbott.

Between this house and Court Street was the residence of Judge William Veirs Bouic, sr. Many years after his death this became the location of the Farmers Banking and Trust Company facilities. This building jutted out into the street, making it difficult for street cars and automobiles to negotiate the sharp angle.

South Washington Street

On the west side of South Washington Street between Montgomery and Jefferson stood the quaint house of Mrs. Susan Russell, believed to be the oldest house standing at the time of its demolition. Tradition identifies it with Hungerford Tavern where patriotic meetings were held prior to the American Revolution. Its one or two weeping willows in front and its high Osage Orange hedge along Jefferson Street are well remembered.

On this site today is the First Baptist Church, improved by its auditorium and parsonage, as well as by the Masonic Temple moved there from the opposite side of Washington Street.

Proceeding south along the west side of the street we reach the former Stonestreet properties on which were the homes of the Stonestreet "girls", Mrs. Lamar, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Abert. Their grandmother, Mrs. Samuel T. Stonestreet, lived in the corner house.

Next we come to Christ Episcopal Church, erected here in 1821 when the congregation moved from the site it had formerly occupied where the Cemetery is now located.

Almost across Washington Street from Christ Church was the home of Judge Edward Peter, the land having been given his wife by her father, Judge John T. Vinson. This property became the Rockville "City Hall".

Going north now on the East side we find homes long identified with the following or their families: Dr. Otis Linthicum, Mrs. J. Somervell Dawson, Miss Julia Anderson. On the corner is a house replacing an ancient one occupied at some time in the past by a Doctor Anderson. The present one has been occupied successively by John Warner, Dr. George E. Lewis and Porter Ward.

In the block between Jefferson and Montgomery were the houses lost in the new Court House Project. Among them were the homes of Eli Moulden, Mrs. Nicholas D. Offutt, jr. and Miss Cora Stover.

Court Street

Court Street was only one block long - between Montgomery and Jefferson. On the east side was the old brick Court House with its row of hitching posts.

On the west side, back of Judge Bouic's house was his stable and carriage house, once the blacksmith shop of that rare artist in iron and wood carving, Philip Reed, senior. Then came the small brick or stone law and insurance office of Clifford H. Robertson and the one-story frame building similarly used by Mr. Robertson and his partner Frank Higgins.

Then came the red brick Presbyterian Church.

Next to the Church was another small frame office building occupied as the dental office of Dr. Barrett P. Willson.

Another double frame house and a vacant lot brought Court Street to its terminus at Jefferson Street.

Perry Street

Perry Street extended south for one block from Montgomery Avenue. Along the west side was the Court House. A marker on this corner of the Court House grounds proclaims it as the former site of Owens Ordinary; the basis of this claim is not known.

Along the East side, except for one or two law offices, the buildings in the old days were insignificant. Today the Fire Department, law offices and business establishments make this one of Rockville's "better" blocks.

In the old days, Perry Street south of Jefferson was the site of a livery stable and blacksmith shop, from whence ran a narrow lane leading to the County Jail, a forbidding stone edifice. A high brick wall enclosed the recreational area in which occasionally was erected a scaffold for execution of criminals. All this has now been replaced by the County Office Building.

East Montgomery Avenue again

At the intersection of East Montgomery Avenue and Perry Street stands today the Montgomery County National Branch of the Maryland National Bank. It replaced a shabby structure of doubtful reputation which was later used as an ice-cream factory.

Next to it was a long one-story office, its roof green with moss, used successively by Alexander Kilgour and Robert B. Peter. Then came a small house identified on the Hopkins map of 1878 as belonging to "Miss Nannie" Wooten who later became Mrs. Byers. Judge West of the Orphans' Court subsequently lived there.

About the middle of a large vacant lot was the little dental office of Dr. Manna-kee.

Beyond was the barber shop and tobacco shop of Albert King. In front was a curious old wooden Indian.

Along this stretch are some modern buildings, including the residence of the Pumphrey family, now occupied by Miss Charlotte Pumphrey.

The brick and stucco store until recently operated by Mr. Steinberg and his sons was once the store of David H. Bouic. The Bouic family lived in the second and third stories.

On either side of the Bouic store were two small houses of similar design and material. One of them was the home of Dr. Sommers. Here also lived for a while J. Oliver Moulden.

In this same square was the confectionery shop of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Hunckel. This building was remodeled by John F. Collins who there conducted a newspaper and magazine store.

The site once occupied as a monument shop by John M. Heagy later became the bakery and home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Marshall.

Mr. Alvey Bean, popularly known as "Seen" had a news stand and refreshment store next door.

Finally we reach the electrical appliance shop of Atlee Burroughs.

If we were to make a brief detour on Monroe Street we would reach the site of the public school of former days. The late Mr. F. Barnard Welsh had the lot, after the school had been pulled down, converted into a field for baseball and other sports which was a god-send for boys who in those days had no public play grounds. The site is now improved by buildings of the County Health Department.

Continuing now East on Montgomery Avenue we pass the extensive property formerly owned by Dr. Edward E. Stonestreet which extended most of the length of a long block. The white brick house had an outside stair leading up to the social rooms on the second floor. On the corner of Monroe Street very close to the sidewalk was the Doctor's tiny office. This was later taken over by a group of women who organized as the Rockville Library Association and conducted a lending Library here.

The Stonestreet property became the site of the Rockville High School, thought of at the time of its construction as a very superior school building. It was destroyed by fire; its replacement is a one-story building used for administrative purposes by the Board of Education.

The remainder of the block is taken up by a number of business establishments of little historical significance.

One of these buildings, however, is important to Rockville history for it was the automobile show room and repair shop of James F. Kelchner - the first automobile mechanic in this area whose skillful hands and brain brought back to life many an ancient Model T. Ford.

On the corner of Park Street stood the home of Mrs. Emma B. Williams and her daughters.

To the south of Montgomery Avenue where it is joined by Park Avenue was a subdivision of Judge William V. Bouic's property which he named "The Park". Only a few houses were ever built in it. This left two lots. One of about one and a half acres was used by Judge Bouic as a pasture for the fresh cow he had brought up from his Meadow Hall farm. The hired man drove the animal up to the Judge's house each evening for milking. In the final settlement of Judge Bouic's estate, his son Wm. Veirs Bouic, jr. took this lot and built thereon a spacious home to which his son Albert Bouic succeeded.

The other lot of about one and three quarter acres was given by Judge Bouic as a wedding present to his daughter, Mrs. Charles W. Prettyman. She and her husband lived here in a substantial house shaded by century-old oaks and adorned with gorgeous flower gardens. These were my parents and this was my boyhood home.

This carries us to the end of Rockville as it was legally until recent years. However, to get the full flavor of life in Rockville in the past we must continue a little farther down the Rockville Pike to the grounds of the Montgomery County Agricultural Society on which each August was held the famous Rockville Fair. Here people from every section of the County brought their live stock, poultry, fruits and vegetables and the work of women's hands for competitive judging. Teams of heavy draft horses embellished with ribbons, colorful harness and bells paraded before judges and admiring citizens. Harness and running races thrilled those in the grandstand or standing beside the fence around the track. Farmers unhitched their teams, tied up the horses and spread their picnic lunches on the ground beside the carriage or buggy; lucky friends were happy to be invited to share the fried chicken and other delicacies. Here candidates for public office found opportunity for some pleasant electioneering. For four successive days life in the County revolved around THE FAIR.

Today the Fair Grounds have become the site of the Richard Montgomery High School.

Here we shall end our look backward into former days in Rockville. Little of the flavor of the former town of some 2000 inhabitants remains since the great growth in area and population have made of Rockville a modern city resembling hundreds of other modern cities which have mushroomed to their present size due to population explosion, shopping centers, developers and modern means of transportation. We hope that our new Rockvillians may enjoy the happy life and pride in their community enjoyed by our forbears. Bull-dozers and Urban Renewal cannot wipe out pleasant memories.

Editor's Note

Mr. Prettyman's original manuscript contains more detailed information, more personal reminiscences and more human interest material than we have been able to include in this article. Persons wishing to consult the original should get in touch with the Historical Society and make arrangements to read it in our Library.