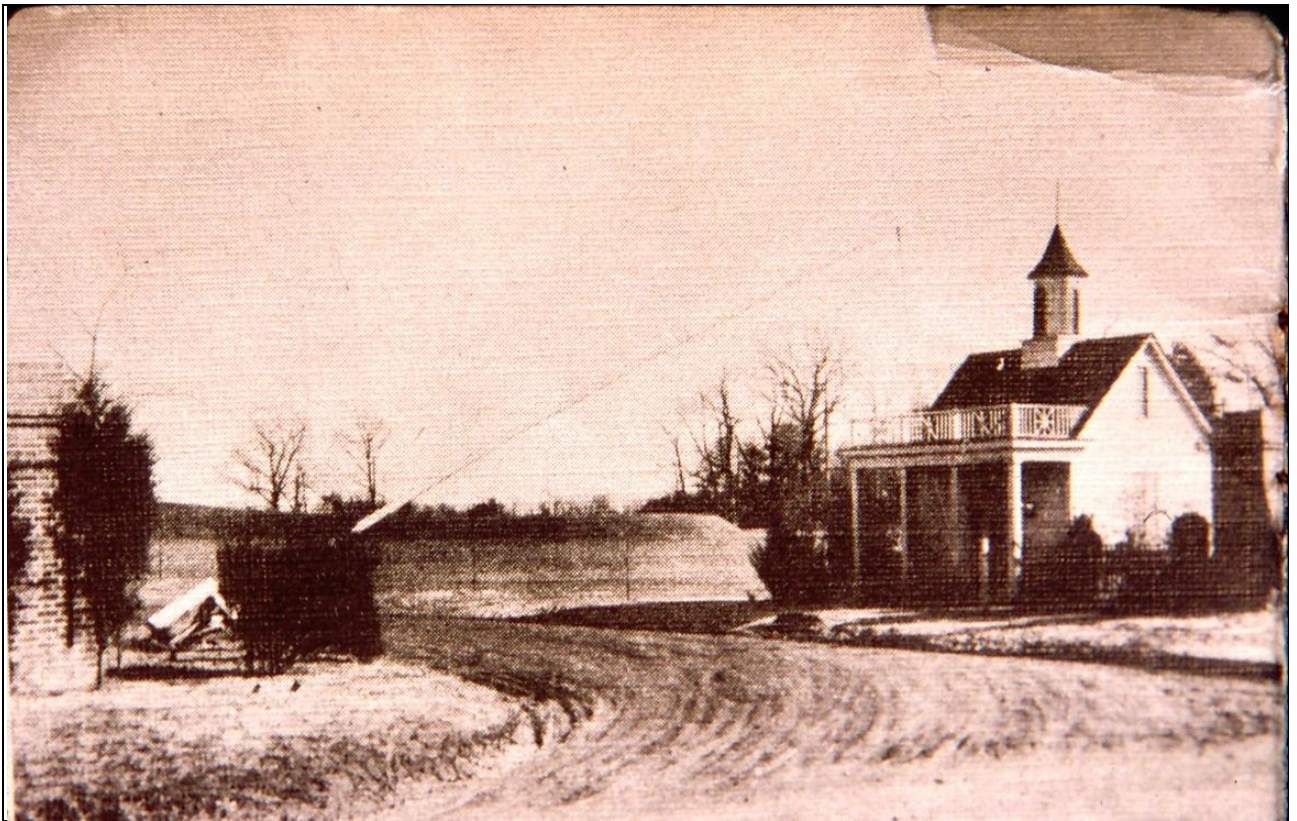


Annapolis Roads:
An Olmsted Designed Community



James G. Gibb

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This work is dedicated to the memory of Don Riddle.
May his innumerable acts of love, kindness, and generosity
guide his friends and his Annapolis Roads neighbors.

Preface

We think little of getting into our cars and motoring to work, stores, restaurants, and theaters. When work is done, the groceries bought, or the evening's entertainment done and over with, we drive home. Most think little about the landscapes through which we move, least of all the neighborhoods in which we live. "This is my community, here's the street I live on. My house is the second one on the left, green with greener trim." What else need we know and why?

Most Americans think little about the places in which they live, simply taking for granted everything from the general layout of lots to the names of the streets. But these neighborhoods didn't just happen: they were created, they were modified. Decisions made in the past influence how we live and how we interact with our neighbors and with those in neighboring communities. Knowing something about who created the places we live in—when, why, and how they developed our neighborhoods—is fundamental if we are to understand and control our quality of life. Ignorance only makes it easier for a community to be controlled by outside forces, to have its way of life dictated by those whose interests are purely pecuniary and persist only for as long as is necessary to insure personal profit. We don't know what we have and, therefore, what we are offering in trade for somebody else's vision of what our lives should be like.

Annapolis Roads provides an excellent example of how an understanding of its history can inform current decisions: excellent, not because it is a rare instance of a suburban tract community (although the documentary record of its creation is richer and more colorful than that of many communities), but because it has much in common with suburban neighborhoods throughout the United States and Canada. To say it is unique is to say nothing; every community is unique. Annapolis Roads has its own special history that can be read in the landscape as well as in documents, but a history that also represents larger trends in the development and transformation of suburban life.

I have tried to assemble between these covers a coherent, verifiable narrative of the history of Annapolis Roads, an approximately 330-unit subdivision on the edge of Annapolis, Maryland, and on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. The community's relatively short history covers less than 100 years; but it is a wide ranging history that takes in far more than a few hundred acres and ten decades. It is a story that reaches back to 1822, and necessarily encompasses several seemingly unrelated topics such as archaeology, playwrighting, landscape architecture, widespread adoption of the automobile, architect John Russell Pope, and summer vacation. Even artist James Whistler and novelist Theodore Dreiser make brief appearances. Most of all, this is a story of how the ideas of America's first and foremost landscape architect—the co-creator of New York City's Central Park and designer of many other iconic landscapes throughout the United States—were given material form near the mouth of the Severn River, and how that form has persisted, and changed, since first conceived in 1926.

History has not ended at Annapolis Roads. It is fresh and immediate; significant events have occurred too recently to allow a balanced view. Indeed, some continue to unfold. I have ended the narrative at 2003 and only refer to developments of the last ten years only in broad terms and without any discussion of key individuals. Ten years hence, perhaps the events and individuals can be appraised in a revised work that benefits from a longer view.

The following pages introduce the individuals who directly and indirectly created and shaped Annapolis Roads between 1926 and 2003, with emphasis placed on those who conceived and executed the design. The information, cited through footnotes and supported with a list of publications on these and related topics, comes from several sources, some of which I found on

my own, but many of which were brought to my attention by friends, colleagues, and neighbors (and these are not mutually exclusive categories), some of whom I shall try to acknowledge: Judy Dobbs of the Maryland Humanities Council and Friends of Maryland Olmsted Parks & Landscapes; Barbara Samorajczyk, a very good friend, former neighbor, and former County Councilman; the late Don Riddle, also a very good friend of mine and of the community; National Park Service Superintendant Lucy Lawliss who provided information on Percival Gallagher; Jane McWilliams, historian of Annapolis and nearby Bay Ridge, and a material contributor to this book; Constance “Connie” Ramirez, historian and landscape scholar; and my wife, Bonnie Persinger, a collaborator in much of the research and ready sounding board for how best to present the material. To those others whom I have not named individually, but to whom I owe much for support in this and other research, endeavors, I apologize. All errors of omission and commission—although I’ve done my best to correct them—are, of course, mine and mine alone.

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Introduction

Pushing a lawn mower on a hot August afternoon, inhaling gas fumes and dust, sweating right through to your socks, it's hard to believe that you are part of history. Not in a creative way, necessarily, but in maintaining a historical product...a landscape...and using it in the manner for which its creators intended. This is a story about the creation of Annapolis Roads through the application of a set of design principles intended to enhance the quality of life of the community's residents. Frederick Law Olmsted, founder and doyen of American landscape architecture, formulated those principles over the course of 40 years; principles refined in application by his associates, first under his direction, then of his son John, and finally under Frederick "Rick" Olmsted, junior. The Olmsteds (by which I mean the principals and their associates) regarded landscape architecture as a fine art and the designs that they produced as works of art. But Olmsted, senior—although an idealist and a progressive—was well-grounded in the realities of business: he knew he needed to create something his clients could build and use. His sons learned this lesson well.

Understanding the significance of the Annapolis Roads design requires that we explore not just the design principles and the lives of the people who developed and implemented them: we have to examine the changing social milieu in which they operated. The United States changed immensely between 1857, when Olmsted and Calvert Vaux (pronounced Vox) began construction of New York City's Central Park, and 1950 when Rick Olmsted retired. And we need to know the peculiarities of the clients, their circumstances, and the land slated for development.

The following chapters examine the lives of those individuals key to the creation of Annapolis Roads, the trajectories that brought them to the project, and the life experiences that shaped their visions of what the place ought to be and how it should look. Chapters are devoted to: Annapolis Roads before there was an Annapolis Roads; the developer, Rella Abel Armstrong; the designers, Percival Gallagher and the Olmsted associates; the golf course architect, Charles H. "Steam-Shovel" Banks; the design as negotiated between Armstrong and Gallagher and its implementation; and the development of the community from initial construction in the late 1920s to the conflicts that have united and divided the community in the first quarter of the 21st century.

I provide critical sources of information throughout the text with standard footnotes and a bibliography of relevant literature. The footnotes serve two purposes: they keep me honest and they provide another dimension for specialists and those who have a particular need to scrutinize and evaluate what I have written. The general reader need not be troubled to read these footnotes, most of which merely cite sources without providing additional illumination of the points to which they refer.

Chapter 1. Before Annapolis Roads

As of this writing, Annapolis Roads has existed as a concept for 86 years, perhaps a bit more; and as a community, perhaps 80. In terms of human history in the region, a nanosecond. All except for the latest developments had no direct influence on the creation of the community; nonetheless, some background on the Annapolis Neck, of which Annapolis Roads is a part, may interest the reader. From European invasion in the middle of the 17th century until the very end of the 19th century, the Annapolis Neck peninsula, which embraces the state capital of Annapolis, was largely farmed. Tobacco, corn, and wheat supplied national and international markets; hay, some dairy, and truck gardening supplied the local market and the City of Baltimore, readily accessed through the steamboats that plied local waters throughout much of the 19th century. The land that became Annapolis Roads was typical in this regard.

Jeremiah Townley Chase purchased West Quarter, then comprising 690 acres, in 1788 from Benjamin and Henrietta Margaret Ogle, Henrietta Margaret having inherited at least a portion of it from her grandfather in 1761. Chase had the tract and adjoining parcels resurveyed into a single tract of 794.75 acres, renaming it Bellemont, in 1817 (Table 1-1). The surveyor's plat depicts Howell Creek, now Lake Ogleton, on the right side and the Severn River on top (Figure 1-1)

James W. Allen purchased the 341 Belmont Farm in 1855. Agricultural schedules of the 1860 federal census reveal something of how James (b. 1820) and Elizabeth Allen (b. 1837) operated the farm. Approximately 140 acres of Belmont remained unimproved; which is to say, wooded. 'Unimproved,' of course, means something different in the 21st century when most homeowners heat with fossil fuels and purchase lumber from the local home improvement store. In the 19th century, many rural households still heated and cooked with firewood and leased timber rights to building contractors or harvested timber to produce their own lumber. The Allens farmed the remaining 2000 acres with five horses, three mules or asses, and two oxen. With animal traction power—and nine slaves—they produced 200 bushels of wheat, 1250 bushels of corn, and 12,000 pounds of tobacco for national and international markets. The census return suggests that they also produced for the local market. The Allens had six milk cows and 40 swine, where two milkers and a dozen or so swine would have met annual household needs for most farm families, and theirs was a small household: just two children, James (aged 4) and infant Chase. They produced 200 bushels of oats, no doubt to feed their livestock, and \$200 worth of market produce. The Allens ran a substantial, productive farm. Nevertheless, in 1864 they sold the farm to Jacob Brandt.¹

¹ US Census, 1860, Agricultural and Slave Schedules, Second Election District, Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

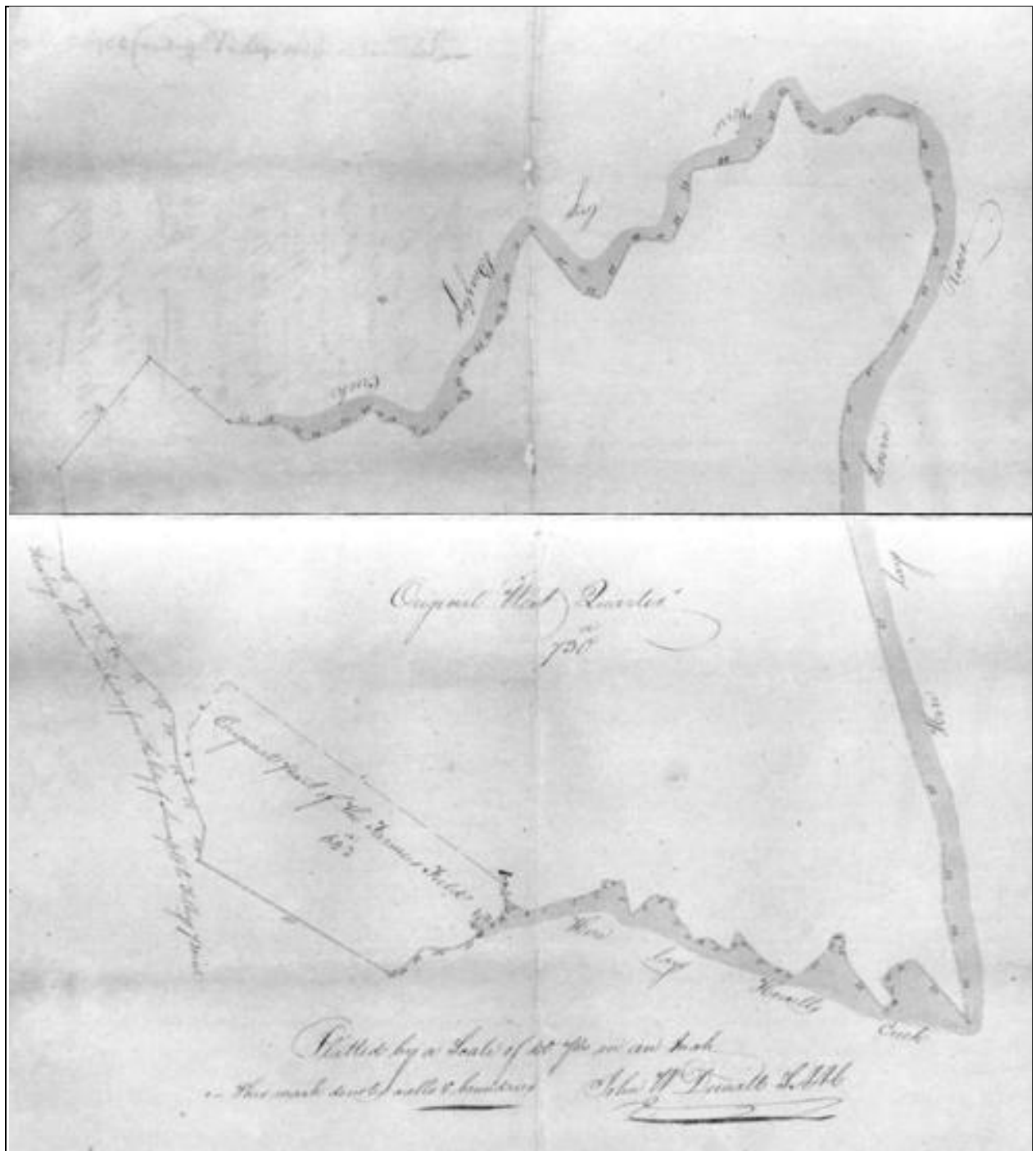


Figure 1-1. Plat of West Quarter, resurveyed as Belmont, 1817.

An advertisement appearing in the September 19, 1863, issue of *The Baltimore Sun* describes the farm in the glowing terms one might expect of a seller, but with sufficient detail to give readers a sense of the place:

VALUABLE FARM FOR SALE
IN
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
(*Four Miles from Annapolis*)

The undersigned, Attorney for the owner, offers at private sale a most VALUABLE FARM, containing three hundred and forty one (341) Acres of Land, situate four miles from Annapolis, Md., by land, and three miles by water, bounding on and commanding a beautiful view of the Chesapeake Bay. About 80 acres are in wood and timber; the balance highly improved and under cultivation.—Kind soil, well adapted to the growth of Tobacco, Wheat, Corn, Fruit, etc.

The improvements are a large two story DWELLING, part brick and part frame, containing eight fine rooms. Outbuildings all new, and comprise three large BARNS, Stables and Carriage-House, Corn-Cribs, Meat-House, [Slave] Quarters, Ice-House, Dairy, Poultry-House, etc. A pump of cold water, also a cistern in the dwelling yard, and several excellent springs on the place. Young Peach and Apple ORCHARDS in a flourishing condition. Place convenient to Church, Mill and Markets; also to the railroad and steamboat stations. The waters abound in oysters, fish and wild fowl. Good landing, and location healthy.

Title good and terms to suit purchaser.

Address JAS. REVELL, Attorney-at-Law, Annapolis, Md.

Jacob Brandt—an absentee owner—lived in Baltimore. He was a merchant and steamboat agent, and from 1868 to at least 1875, president, of the Powhatan Steamboat Company.² He did farm the land, but the 1870 agricultural schedule of the census suggests that he did so in a different manner than did the Allens; specifically, he invested less labor. His livestock compared favorably with that of the Allens, except only 15 swine, and he harvested 1000 bushels of maize and 300 of oats, values similar to those of 1860. Brandt also produced 300 bushels of white potatoes and 100 bushels of sweet potatoes. But the farms of 1860 and 1870 differed in one major respect: the Allens produced 12,000 pounds of tobacco, Brandt none. Without slave labor, growing a crop of tobacco would have been difficult. Grain crops could take advantage of new planting and harvesting technologies; tobacco remained labor intensive. But, perhaps, there was another major difference: the number of improved acres remained unchanged, but production dropped dramatically, largely with the abandonment of tobacco culture.

Jacob Brandt mortgaged the property to Oliver Horwitz, an attorney living in Baltimore, for \$10,000, and Horwitz foreclosed in 1873. Tenants leased the farm for some years afterward.

One portion of the tract was a right-of-way granted to the Bay Ridge & Annapolis Railroad in or around 1886. It was a 60' wide strip 2100 feet in length, but for which I've been unable to find the conveyance. The only reference to it is an exception in a 1907 deed. Horwitz did grant a 30' right-of-way along the top of the bluff (now termed "the Overlook") to the Anne Arundel County Commissioners in 1887 for the purpose of building and maintaining a road and a bridge over the mouth of Lake Ogleton, linking the lands of the Bay Ridge Company to the City of Annapolis. This is the same road and bridge appearing on the Lacey Chinn plat of 1894 and probably depicted in Figure 1-2.

² Baltimore City Directories, 1865-1875.

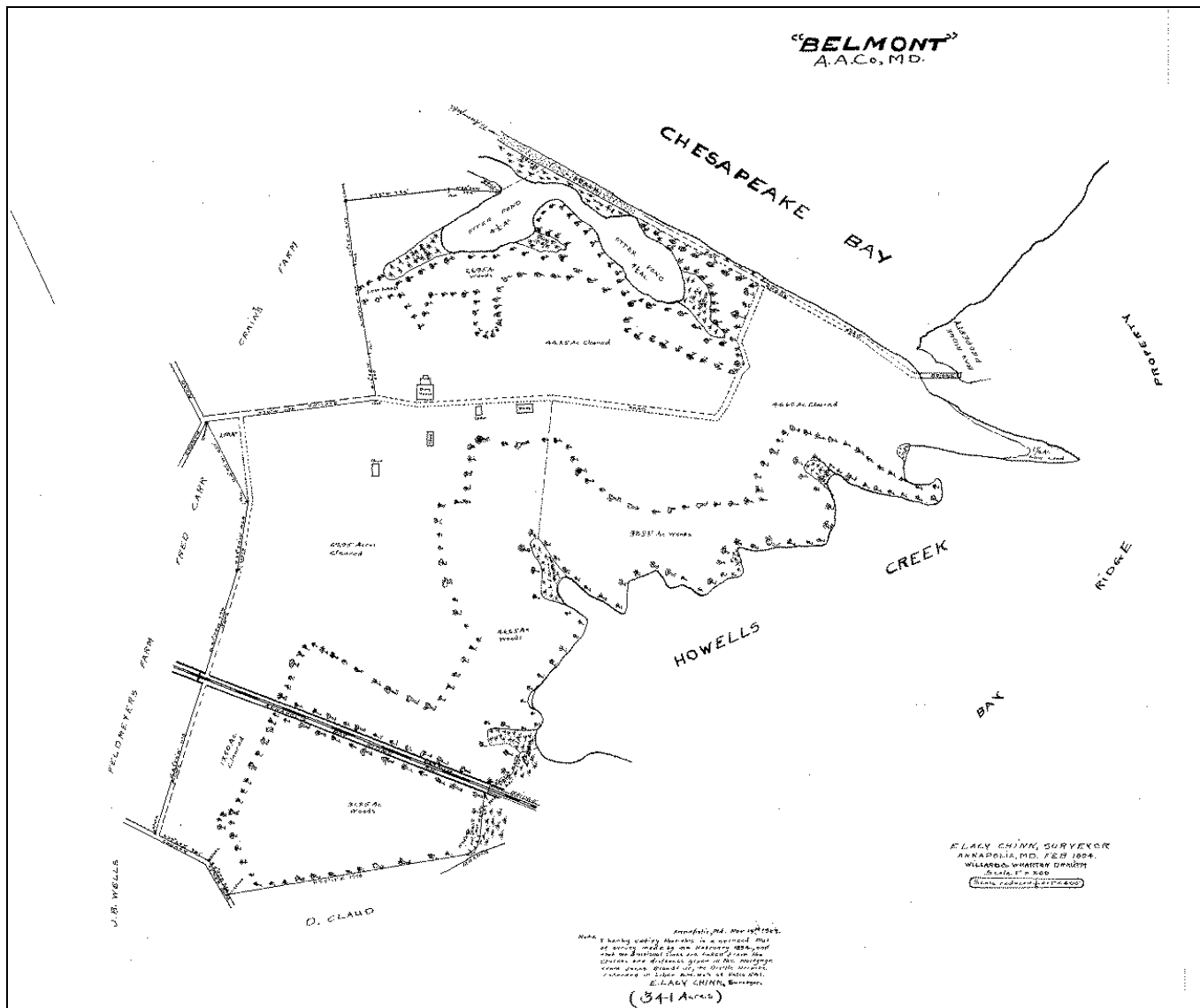


Figure 1-2. E. Lacey Chinn's 1894 plat of Belmont Farm.

The Chinn plat likely represents the farm that Paul Armstrong purchased in 1907, including the dwelling and barns, fields and woodlots. If Armstrong was active in managing the farm, it was only for a few years before he and his wife Rella Abell Armstrong separated (by late 1910) and then his death in 1915. Management fell to Rella. She was responsible for transforming Belmont Farm—first into a livestock farm³ on which she raised Hereford cattle, and then into Annapolis Roads—a modern automobile-based subdivision. And transformation it required, if an advertisement for its sale, published in the March 12, 1907, issue of *The Advertiser* (Annapolis) is any measure:

[T]he said land was never occupied as a home either by the said Testator [Orville Horvitz] or by any members of his family, but for a number of years was rented out to successive tenants and the buildings and other improvements gradually became so much out of repair that of late years it has been impossible to secure any responsible tenant and now, without prospect of improvement in its condition or value, the property not only produces no income, but is actually a burden and expense by reason of taxes, which the life tenants [Horvitz' four married daughters] are weary of paying.

Not a glowing prospect for the new owners perhaps, but at \$6,500 for 341 acres just outside of the state capital, Belmont may have been a good buy. Precisely why Paul Armstrong wanted it, or how he and Rella became aware of its availability, can only be guessed unless new information presents itself.

³ *The Baltimore Sun*, November 13, 1907.

Table 1-1. Chain of title for Belmont/Annapolis Roads.

Grantor	Grantee	Instrument	Reference	Date	Acres	Price
Club Estates	RDK & W Real Estate Company	Deed	1645/221	4/2/1963		
Club Estates	RDK & W Real Estate Company	Deed	2123/148	9/1/1967	19	
Club Estates	RDK & W Real Estate Company	Deed	2569/535	3/5/1973		
RDK & W Real Estate Company	Roy J. & Ray J. Shields	Mortgage	1629/85	1/22/1963		\$170,102
Roy J. & Ray J. Shields	RDK & W Real Estate Company	Deed	1629/76	1/22/1963		\$170,102
Roy J. & Ray J. Shields		Mortgage	1452/345	1/24/1961	Unsold parcels	\$13,106
Club Estates	Roy J. & Ray J. Shields	Mortgage	1452/327	1/19/1961	Unsold parcels	
Club Estates	Roy J. & Ray J. Shields	Deed	JHH876/46	10/1/1954		
The Equitable Company of Washington	Club Estates	Deed	JHH576/559	6/7/1950		
Thomas C. Willis, assignee	The Equitable Company of Washington	Deed	WMB128/522	5/28/1934		
Rella Abell Armstrong	Annapolis Roads Company	Release	FSR25/171	12/27/1927		
Annapolis Roads Company	The Equitable Company of Washington	Mortgage	FSR22/387	12/2/1927	341	\$10
Armstrong Company	Annapolis Roads Company	Deed	FSR22/387	12/2/1927	341	
Rella Abell Armstrong, trustee	Armstrong Company	Deed	WMB23/32	12/22/1925	341	\$40,000
Daniel R. Randall, Shellman B. Brown, and C. Nelson Dugan	Paul Armstrong	Deed	GW57/338	Nov 13, 1907	341	\$10,000
Bernice W. Gladden	Daniel R. Randall, Shellman B. Brown, and C. Nelson Dugan	Deed	GW56/72	May 13, 1907	341	\$10
James M. Ambler, trustee in Equity 2902	Bernice W. Gladden	Deed	GW56/30	May 13, 1907	341; two undivided thirds	\$6,500
Daniel R. Randall, trustee for Oliver Horwitz estate	Maria Horwitz, widow, et al.	Deed	GW53/11	Jan 25, 1907	341; three undivided thirds	\$1
Oliver Horwitz	Anne Arundel County Commissioners	Deed	SH30/328	March 26, 1887	30' wide right-of-way	\$5
Jacob Brandt	Oliver Horwitz	Mortgage	SH7/541	July 18, 1873	341	\$10,000
James W. & Elizabeth Allen	Jacob & Miriam Brandt	Deed	NHG13/209	10/24/1864	341	\$20,000
Samuel & Hester A. Ridout, Matilda Chase, Fanny Chase	James W. Allen	Deed	NHG4/628	8/31/1855	~ 400; not measured'	\$8,500
Jeremiah Chase	Matilda Chase, widow	Will	Life estate			
State of Maryland	Jeremiah Townley Chase	Patent	190	1817	794.75	Bellemont
Benjamin & Henrietta Margaret Ogle	Jeremiah Townley Chase	Deed	JG1/12	June 28, 1788	690	West Quarter

Chapter 2. Rella Abell Armstrong

There are no published biographies of Rella Abell Armstrong. Perhaps little enough material survives to fuel a book-length treatment, but the colorful life of the developer of Annapolis Roads offers the playwright more than enough for a dramatic work. That is fitting, because she would become a playwright and had a brief affair with one of America's most prominent novelists; but I'm jumping ahead of myself.

Rella's early years appear to have been unremarkable, but that changed when she turned 20 years of age. She was born in Mattoon, Illinois, on March 3, 1878 (she would trim two years off at age 44, asserting that she was born in 1880), but she lived with her family in Silver Cliff, Colorado, in 1880. A federal census marshal interviewed the Abell family in connection with the tenth decennial census. Melville B. (37) and Annabel (34; née Young) Abell had three children at the time: Rella (2), Portia (3 months and unnamed at the time), Melville W., junior (12), and William C. (9). How long the family remained in Colorado remains uncertain, but a state supreme court case places father Melville, a banker, in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1888.⁴ Several issues of *The Kansas City Journal* (available in the online resource *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers* created by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress) society column identify sisters Portia and Rella as frequent guests at card parties and dances.⁵

Two additional society notes reveal important aspects of Rella's life and interests, and also mark her transition from society girl to woman of the world, traveling in a circle of some of the most prominent artists of the day. The *Journal* in August 1896 reported "Miss Leona Conover and Miss Rella Abell return to the Art League in New York."⁶ More interesting is this note from November 1898:

Miss Rella and Miss Kittie Abell are studying art in Paris, under the chaperonage of Mrs. O'Kane, widow of the late Admiral O'Kane. Miss Rella Abell is studying mural painting under Whistler, and Miss Kittie Abell is studying under Grasette, with the intention of becoming a designer.⁷

The Abell sisters applied for passports, issued October 7, 1898, the applications asserting that they intended to travel abroad for two years. Portia ("Kittie") listed her residence as Silver Cliff, Colorado, while Rella specified Kansas City, Missouri, suggesting that the family retained ties with Colorado. An accompanying letter of support for the application from her mother places Mrs. Annabel C. Abell in Kansas City as well.

Rella's passport application provides a rare description of what she looked like, a description matched only by another passport application submitted 24 years later. In 1898, Rella was 20 years old. She described herself as 5'6" tall with a high forehead, brown eyes and hair, straight nose, small mouth, square chin, round face, and a "brunette" complexion.

⁴ Hamlin et al. v. Abell, Supreme Court of Missouri, Division 2. October Term, 1893.

⁵ *The Kansas City Journal*, 8/30/1896, p. 7; 10/18/1896, p. 10; 1/17/1897; 8/15/1897, p. 8; 7/31/1898, p. 14.

⁶ *The Kansas City Journal*, 8/30/1896, p. 9. The Art Students League of New York was founded in 1875 and has operated out of its current offices on West 57th Street since 1892.

⁷ *The Kansas City Journal*, 11/24/1898, p. 12; Admiral O'Kane should not be confused with the famous submariner of the 20th century.

Whether Rella ever studied mural painting under James Whistler at his short-lived art school (1898-1901) remains undocumented. We can be certain that she left for Europe in the autumn of 1898 and, on July 24 of the following year, married journalist and aspiring playwright Paul Armstrong in London. Armstrong was born April 25, 1869, in Kidder near St. Joseph, Missouri, northeast of Kansas City.⁸ He had worked for a Chicago newspaper and turned from police court reporter to a sports reporter specializing in boxing. In an interview in 1911, he attributed his facility for writing characters from the seamier side of urban life to his journalism experience.⁹ Whether Rella and Paul's was a chance encounter and crackling romance or a long-simmering relationship originating in Missouri remains uncertain. Armstrong was a practicing journalist, so tracking his movements through newspaper bylines would not be difficult; but Paul Armstrong, in many ways, is peripheral to the Annapolis Roads story, and his contribution to the development scheme might be framed best in the negative: his philandering destroyed his marriage and his early death left Rella and their three daughters to their own resources.

Paul Armstrong aspired to be a playwright in his youth and took up journalism because he could not sell his dramatic work. In 1905, he became a full-time playwright, eventually authoring and coauthoring several popular plays for the stage and screenplays for the nascent film industry. His better known works include: *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, *The Deep Purple*, *Salomy Jane*, *The Escape*, *The Heart of a Thief*, and *The Heir to the Hoorah*, as well as a number of popular melodramas.¹⁰ As a playwright, Armstrong often traveled to venues where he would help cast and rehearse his plays. One of his regular stars was a young actress from Baltimore named Kitty Cassidy (1890-1971), but who took the stage name Catherine Calvert. Their relationship was not confined to the stage, which Rella likely knew when she filed for divorce in Anne Arundel County on December 1, 1910, citing Paul for brutality and adultery. The case degenerated into a feud over the amount of alimony (he pleaded lesser means than Rella had asserted) and responsibility for attorneys' fees. Rella requested and was granted dismissal of the complaint on April 15, 1911.¹¹ Rella, however, again filed for divorce in 1912 or 1913, this time in New York City and specifically citing Catherine Calvert. New York State Supreme Court Justice Irving Lehman finalized the decree for divorce in September 1913, awarding Rella custody of the three children and alimony of \$7,500 per annum. Paul subsequently married Catherine. He died of heart failure only two years later, on August 30, 1915.¹²

Prior to the granting of the final decree, Rella (33) took her children Annabel (9), Myrell (8), and Elizabeth (7) to Europe, returning by way of Naples aboard the *Saxonia* on April 9, 1912.¹³ It was in Rome that she met eminent novelist Theodore Dreiser and for whom she

⁸ *The New York Times*, August 31, 1915.

⁹ *The Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, Sunday, September 24, 1911, section 5, p. 3; obituary in *The New York Times*, August 31, 1915.

¹⁰ Bordman and Hirschak's (2004) *The Oxford Companion to the American Theatre*.

¹¹ Anne Arundel County, Equity Papers 5/242.

¹² *The New York Times* December 10, 1913. Page 9; *The New York Times*, August 31, 1915; *The Writer: A Monthly Magazine for Literary Workers* 26(1): 1 January 1914; *Xenia (Ohio) Daily Gazette*, October 23, 1912. Justice Lehman was a prominent jurist, son of one of the founding members of Lehman Brothers investment house, and brother of two-term governor and US Senator for New York, Herbert H. Lehman.

¹³ The 1910 decennial census lists the three daughters, but records the same ages as those provided in the *SS Saxonia's* passenger list of 1912. A trust established for the children (Anne Arundel County equity 4023) cited in Land Record WMB23/32, dated 12/22/1925, reports the names as Vota Annabel, Fiorro [Myrell], and Madah Elizabeth, first names possibly added after Paul Armstrong's death and the return of the family from the 1912 trip to Italy. Land Record FSR25/171, 12/27/1927, provides the married names of the two eldest: Vota Annabel Armstrong Dalton and Fiorra [Myrell] Armstrong Perkins.

researched the Borgia family for one of his projects.¹⁴ Dreiser's diary entries for 1917/1918 reputedly refer to his romantic involvement with Rella. He remarked to his friend H. L. Mencken in 1916 that she was one of a few friends whose critiques he trusted. Ten years later, long after the affair ended, he briefly collaborated with Rella in the preparation of a dramatic treatment of his combined novels, *The Financier* and *The Titans*.¹⁵ Doubtful that such complex material could be brought to the stage, he demurred and discouraged Rella from pursuing the project.

Rella engaged in other playwrighting projects, the scale and subjects of which remain undocumented. She completed *The Little Saint*, a translation from Italian of Roberto Bracco's play, in 1919, and her own play, *Shake Hands with Shakespeare*, a three-act comedy, in 1936.¹⁶ A new passport application Rella filed in 1922 speaks to her literary ambitions. It is a curious document because it conveys two bits of misinformation to the US Department of State: Rella claimed that she had not previously had a passport, which of course she did in 1898, and she put her birth year at 1880 rather than 1878: 1880 was the year in which her sister Portia was born. She also put her deceased husband's place of birth at Alpena, Michigan, whereas a published obituary places it at Kidder, Missouri. Paul Armstrong reported his birthplace as Missouri to the census marshal in 1910. He also reported that his mother was born in Michigan, which may account for the seeming contradictions, and he may be the one-year-old son of Richard and Harriet Armstrong listed by the census marshal for St. Clair, Michigan in 1870. Paul appears to have been born in the one state and raised in the other.

The reasons for Rella's errors of commission probably are lost to history. She listed her permanent residence as 25 East 77th Street in New York City, which accords with a 1920 city directory entry, and her occupation as playwright. Her eyes became hazel, chin round, face oval, and height a half inch taller since her first passport application. At 42 (actually, 44) years of age she had to wear eyeglasses.¹⁷ The application includes a dark portrait photograph (Figure 2.1). Two affidavits attesting to her identity and loyalty accompany the application (ultimately issued April 21, 1922): one from her elder sister, Annabel Abell Lombard of 16 Maple Street, Bronxville, New York, and one from the firm of Bouvier, Caffey & Beale with whom she had conducted business since the year of her divorce. The company letterhead notes a Washington, DC, associate, William M. Williams, with an office in the prestigious Munsey building in the District.¹⁸ The Munsey Trust Company would play a prominent role in the Annapolis Roads story beginning five years after Rella Armstrong's passport application submission, but the connection as of this writing remains circumstantial.

¹⁴ Bardeleben, Renate von, editor. *Theodore Dreiser. A Traveler at Forty*, p. 807.

¹⁵ Riggio, Thomas P., *Theodore Dreiser: Letters to Women, New Letters: Volume II*. University of Illinois Press. Typescripts of Rella Armstrong's dramatization and Dreiser's comments survive among the Dreiser papers at the University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁶ Library of Congress, *Catalog of Copyright Entries, Part 1: Books, Group 2. New Series, Volume 16 for the Year 1919, Nos. 1-12 and Catalog of Copyright Entries, Part 1, Group 3, Dramatic Compositions and Motion Pictures: Volume 9 for the Year 1936, Nos. 1-12*.

¹⁷ Curiously, the ages of her three children reported to the census marshal in 1920 add two years to each over their ages as reported in the *SS Saxonia's* passenger list of 1912.

¹⁸ Designed by the internationally renowned firm of McKim, Mead & White for publishing magnate Frank Munsey, the Munsey [Trust] Building stood next to the site of the National Theater between 1905 and 1982, the year of its demolition.



Figure 2-1. Passport photograph of Rella Abell Armstrong, 1922.

Rella stated on her 1922 application that she intended to travel for six months in France, the British Isles, Italy, Switzerland, and Spain for the purpose of “literary work.” The letter from Bouvier and company provides a little more detail; here is the relevant passage:

To our knowledge she [Rella Abell Armstrong] has been engaged for some time in the business of writing and preparing dramatic productions for the stage.

In connection with this work she is desirous of going abroad for the purpose of securing certain dramatic material and obtaining employment in preparing the same for dramatic production; and we respectfully ask that your department offer her every facility.

Rella intended to sail on the *SS Homeric* from New York on May 22, 1922, apparently without her children, the youngest of which would have been Elizabeth at 19. The 1920 New York City directory listed both Elizabeth and Myrell as residing at their mother’s home at 25 East 77th Street. Rella returned to New York aboard the *SS Peninsula State* on June 23, 1922, having departed Cherbourg, France, a week earlier. Precisely what material she brought back with her after only two weeks in Europe and what she did with it remain undetermined. Four years after her return, Rella’s attention turned to another project of a non-literary sort.

Harkening back to the aborted divorce proceedings of 1910/11, the reader might wonder why this couple—one a practicing playwright, the other an aspiring writer—based in New York City found themselves in a Maryland court and particularly, a court in Annapolis. The answer is simple: they lived here on a 341-acre farm called Belmont, a farm they purchased in 1907 (for

reasons uncertain) and that would eventually become Annapolis Roads.¹⁹ Paul and Rella Armstrong farmed Belmont. The 1910 census records the couple as owning a farm, with a mortgage, and Paul working as a playwright. Rella appears as “Mertha,” as the marshal clearly mangled her name, aged 31, and three children: Annabelle (9), Myrille (8; again, mangled), and Elizabeth (7). The household also included an assortment of servants...an odd assortment of nationalities and occupations by local standards:

1. Saki (40), male, Japanese, waiter
2. Nakato (29), male, Japanese, butler
3. Michael Debonack (35), male, Native born, stableman
4. Helena Debonack (32), female, Native born, laundress
5. Litena Debonack (3), female, Native born, boarder
6. John Papp (33), male, German, gardener
7. Vina Papp (29), female, German, maid
8. James Maple (24), male, Irish, groom

Despite the fact that the Armstrongs...Midwesterners intimately involved in the New York literary community, with an entourage of Japanese, German, Irish, and native born servants... probably stood apart from most of their neighbors, they appear to have participated in local life. *The Lucky Bag*, the yearbook of the US Naval Academy, carried a story about Christmas festivities at the academy in 1908:

Mr. Paul Armstrong kindly allowed the use of one of his charming little plays, “My Wife’s Husband.” The manager of the Colonial Theatre lent the necessary scenery and the Naval Academy Orchestra furnished the music.

The editor described the play as “out of the ordinary,” and his cryptic remarks suggest that it was a broad farce, largely enjoyed by those in attendance. The production was the first in a series by “The Masqueraders,” a theatrical group formed by the midshipmen just two years earlier.²⁰

After divorcing Paul, Rella continued to run the farm—although largely in absentia and possibly through a tenant—and formulated the plan for its redevelopment. She actively engaged in the planning and financing of the project, but bankruptcy removed her from control, although not from continued participation until final foreclosure and sale in 1934. Rella Armstrong died on July 29, 1950, at Fort Baker in San Francisco and was cremated and her ashes interred at Woodlawn Cemetery.²¹ A clear picture of who she was, her place in the art and literary world of early 20th-century Europe and America, and the degree to which she participated in American theater remain unresolved.

¹⁹ Anne Arundel County Land Records, GW57/338, November 13, 1907; City Directory of Annapolis for 1910 lists Paul Armstrong as a playwright residing at “Belmont’ nr. Bay Ridge” (p. 8).

²⁰ *The Lucky Bag* 1908: 245; 1926: 241.

²¹ Halsted Mortuary Records, Halsted N. Gray – Carew & English Funeral Home Records (SFH 38), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Chapter 3. Olmsted Landscape Architecture

Rella Armstrong's development plans for Annapolis Roads (named for the anchorage off the City of Annapolis and on which Belmont Farm fronted) were elaborate and she sought out the top people in their respective fields to consult on the project. Unlike some clients who understood the prestige, but not the design philosophies, of these firms, Rella Armstrong had the artistic training and temperament to know what her consultants could contribute to her vision, and, perhaps, how they might help her develop her incomplete artistic vision. Preeminent among her consultants was Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects. To that company and its members we must turn our attention, for their contributions were the most significant in terms of what exists on the ground in Annapolis Roads today.

Frederick Law Olmsted's Design Principles

Readers will have no difficulty finding biographies of Frederick Law Olmsted, senior. A few highlights here will suffice, mostly drawn from Withold Rybczynski's *A Clearing in the Forest: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the 19th Century* and Laura Wood Roper's *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted*. His principles, as applied by him, his two sons, and their associates are of greater importance for the subject at hand.

Olmsted was born on April 22, 1822, in Hartford, Connecticut to a moderately wealthy family. His father, John, enjoyed experiencing the natural world and taking his young family on hikes through mountains and forests, and around the falls at Niagara. By standards of the day, he was permissive, shelling out significant sums for Frederick's fitful education and various aborted attempts at a career: clerking, a one year hitch as a sailor on a ship bound for the South Pacific; farming and arboriculture; travel writing; publishing (he co-founded *The Nation*); park designer and builder; journalist; the first chief executive officer of the US Sanitary Commission (created at the beginning of the Civil War to supplement a woefully inadequate US Army medical corps); mining estate manager in California; and finally, and foremost, landscape architect.

Olmsted's checkered career and unusual upbringing—his breadth of experience and wide reading—coupled with innumerable discussions with friends and acquaintances, many of whom were leading lights in the literary and art worlds, exposed him to a welter of contemporary ideas. He melded some of those ideas and found a means of expressing and implementing them through an art—a fine art, he asserted—that he called landscape architecture (a term with which he was never quite comfortable). His first venture was the design and construction of New York's Central Park with his partner Calvert Vaux beginning in 1857 and continuing sporadically into the 1870s. After the war, with Vaux and independently, Olmsted fulfilled a series of commissions, largely public parks.

Public parks were Olmsted's passion. Nearly a half-century before the fluorescence of the Progressive Era, Olmsted viewed the urban environment as corrupting and disruptive of family and community life. Americans increasingly viewed the home as the island to which families retreated from the competitive, commercial world. But urban life offered few opportunities to poor and working families to retreat amongst dirty, congested tenements. Parks were the answer. Places in which the therapeutic value of natural scenery—such as Olmsted experienced with his parents and siblings in youth and his wife and children during their time in California—could heal worn bodies and psyches and lift the spirit. Granted, those who might best benefit from the recuperative powers of a well-designed park on a Sunday or holiday returned to the sources from

which they received these physical, mental, and spiritual wounds: the competitive world of industry and commerce, and the cramped housing in which corruption and immorality bred.

In 1868, the Riverside Improvement Company in Chicago offered Olmsted and Vaux an exciting new opportunity: design an entire suburban community... create a cohesive, separate space in which small village relationships and strong families might grow just a few miles from the windy, gritty streets of Chicago. Landscape features and their artistic arrangement could provide the settings that would subtly influence those moving through the community, fostering the values Olmsted and many of his contemporaries espoused. Riverside, although not built out until some years later, embodied many of the features that would characterize Olmsted's few suburban "village" designs and the many subdivision designs of his sons, John and Frederick, junior: freehand drawn curvilinear roads and paths, cul-de sacs, limited access from outside of the community, small neighborhood parks, and well-conceived planting schemes, all brought together in a coherent design that combined the pastoral with the picturesque, the quiet and contemplative with the aesthetically stimulating. The design would influence behavior unobtrusively, subliminally to use a more recently coined term.²²

Cul-de-sacs and curvilinear roads have become standards in 21st-century subdivision planning, but generally executed with far less effect than those employed in Olmsted designs. Examining the many published Olmsted drawings—most of which are preserved at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline, Massachusetts—it is difficult to see why that might be so. The answer is simple: most of the *published* drawings lack contour lines that convey a sense of the topography of a site, but that more clearly illustrate the two-dimensional geometry of the plans. Olmsted designs are meant to be experienced in a three-dimensional world. The roads and paths don't merely curve to the left and the right; they dip and rise and bank, all the while revealing changing vistas. And that brings up other dimensions. Vistas changed during the course of the day, with changes in weather, and with the rise and fall of seasons. And the roads and paths curve throughout their lengths. Planners of the mid- to late-20th century preferred straight-aways to accommodate the maximum number of saleable lots and level surfaces that lowered the costs of building and maintaining infrastructure. The Olmsteds encouraged more varied topography and continuous curves for the aesthetic experiences they created, as well as the retention of stands of trees and interesting vistas, even if that meant fewer lots and lower profits. The Olmsteds also left small islands in the midsts of their cul-de-sacs, islands of trees that brought no profit and that raised issues of ownership and liability. Late 20th- and 21st-century designers solve the problem by paving the entirety of cul-de-sac circles, contributing to deforestation, impermeable surfaces, and stormwater runoff, and crating vistas of asphalt fringed by tract houses.

Frederick, senior, developed and refined his principles, first expressed in the design of Central Park in 1857, over the last 30 years or so of his career, ranging from 1866 to 1896. His sons applied them through many estate, park, and subdivision commissions for more than a half-century after his retirement.

Olmsted Brothers

For his time and class, Frederick Law Olmsted married late in life. He was in the midst of the Central Park work when, in 1859, he married Mary Olmsted, his brother John's widow, and adopted John, junior (7). In 1870, Mary gave birth to Henry, whom they renamed Frederick Law

²² For an excellent history on a local community designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, senior, including its responses to development pressures, see Melanie D. Anson's (1997) *Olmsted's Sudbrook: The Making of a Community*.

Olmsted, junior, seven years later, and who generally went by “Rick.” John entered the business after completing his education at Yale College in 1874 and became a partner in 1877. Rick Olmsted joined the firm during the last few years of his father’s participation in the firm. Olmsted, senior, was in the middle of two projects that were among his very largest and most prominent: designing the grounds of the 1893 World’s Columbia Exhibition in Chicago and those of George Vanderbilt’s Biltmore Estate near Asheville, North Carolina. Frederick Law Olmsted retired soon after the completion of the Chicago project and his sons completed his outstanding projects. After several years of declining health, Frederick Law Olmsted died in 1903.

Rick was thrown into the deep end of the pool, taking a leading role in the Biltmore project. Although his brother’s junior by 18 years, Rick proved the more talented and capable. He soon took a leading role in the firm. John died in 1920, but Rick continued to run Olmsted Brothers until his retirement at age 80 in 1950. He died in 1957. During the first half of the 20th century, Rick, John, and their various associates accepted many park and subdivision commissions. They were particularly active in and around Baltimore, producing park plans for the City of Baltimore, and landscape designs for the US Naval Academy and the communities of Roland Park, Guilford, Homeland, Gibson Island, Wardour, and Annapolis Roads. They continued to operate out of the offices that their father added to his house, Fairsted, which he acquired in 1883 in Brookline, Massachusetts. The site is now operated by the US National Park Service. Among their associates was Percival Gallagher, a horticulturalist who met Rick Olmsted during their student days at Harvard College.

Percival Gallagher

Rella Armstrong retained the Olmsted Brothers in 1926 to design a community of cottages surrounding a beachside hotel and golf course. Percival Gallagher was assigned the task. Between 1926 and 1931, Armstrong and Gallagher exchanged letters in which they discussed design ideas and the project’s progress. Not much is known about Gallagher, but Park Superintendent Lucy Lawliss of the National Park Service has provided some information.

Gallagher was born in Boston in 1874, and attended Harvard University, majoring in horticulture. He attended Fine Arts classes, where he met Rick Olmsted. After graduating in 1894, Gallagher joined Olmsted Brothers, where, except for several years employed elsewhere, he remained until his death in 1934. He worked on a variety of projects including redesign of the grounds of the US Capitol in Washington.

The Olmsted Brothers rarely credited individual designers—they worked collaboratively. The architects, park planners, and horticulturalists on staff shared a vision of landscape architecture as fine art, commensurate with painting and sculpture, and they emphasized the beauty and restorative power of nature. Only recently have researchers begun to study individual staffers like Percival Gallagher, drawing on project notes and, in Gallagher’s case, an obituary prepared by Rick Olmsted.

Gallagher’s strengths were his well-developed aesthetic sense, intimate knowledge of plants, and an ability to visualize planting arrangements through the seasons and from different perspectives. Rick Olmsted characterized him as modest and unassuming, qualities that served him well with colleagues and clients. A surviving photographic portrait suggests a quiet, earnest, cultured man (Figure 3-1).



Figure 3-1. Portrait photograph of Percival Gallagher, ca. 1930.

Gallagher employed these traits with Rella Armstrong. Their correspondence suggests that she had some impractical ideas for Annapolis Roads. Gallagher convinced her, for example, that a bridal path she wanted to build between a divided road was unwise, and that construction of an 18-hole golf course on the available acreage was not practicable. He steadfastly discouraged disrupting the community's views through over-development, and he supported the concept of a golf course around which the lots would be arranged.

Chapter 4. Charles H. Banks, Golf Course Architect

Annapolis Roads golf course was planned and built during the Golden Age of Golf Design (1910-1937) by internationally prominent golf course architect Charles H. Banks and Washington contractor F. Irwin Ray.²³ Banks, associate of and successor to Seth Raynor, and an associate of renowned links architect Charles Blair MacDonald, came highly recommended to the task: Percival Gallagher suggested Banks to Rella Armstrong in April 1926.²⁴

Charles Henry Banks was born in Amenia, Dutchess County, New York, on June 3, 1881. His mother Frances was a music teacher and listed in the 1892 New York State census as head of household. Banks described himself on his draft registration card as tall, of medium build, with blue eyes and light brown hair. He was a teacher at the time (September 12, 1918) at the Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut, founded in 1891 as a preparatory school for Yale College. Banks was a Yale alumnus, serving as Secretary of the Football Association (1904-1906) and President of the Hotchkiss Club (1906). He was still single in 1910 when the federal census of that year described Banks as 28 years of age and a teaching master boarding at the Hotchkiss School. While teaching at Hotchkiss, Banks met golf course architect Seth Raynor (1874-1926) who had been commissioned in 1924 to design a golf course for the school. Golf lore has it that the two hit it off so well, and Banks was so enamored with the kind of work Raynor was doing, that he abruptly ended his 15-year teaching career at Hotchkiss to work with Raynor.²⁵

The two worked together, but the partnership did not long endure, Raynor having died from pneumonia in 1926. Banks completed the outstanding projects and then sought his own commissions. On his company letterhead, Banks included the phrase, "Associate of the late SETH J. RAYNOR." He had moved to New York City, probably when he joined Raynor, and continued business on his own account from 331 Madison Avenue. He lived at 9 East 96th Street with his wife Agnes and their daughter Janet (b. 1918). Charles Banks died unexpectedly in 1931, aged 50 years.

Charles H. Banks and the Golden Age

In recommending Charles H. Banks as a golf course architect to Rella Armstrong, Percival Gallagher referred to Banks as the successor to Seth Raynor (1874-1926), the recently deceased doyen of golf course architecture. Banks worked with this Princeton-trained surveyor and engineer who had been recruited by the eminent links architect Charles Blair MacDonald (1856-1939) in his first major American design, the National Golf Links on Long Island in New York State. The MacDonald-Raynor-Banks association continued until Raynor's premature death. The newly opened Yale College course (April 1926) was among their most prominent successes. MacDonald provided a direct link to designs from the cradle of golf, St. Andrew's, Scotland, and that link was manifested in the reproduction of the 'Eden' hole of St. Andrew's at Yale's 15th hole and Annapolis Roads' 8th hole.²⁶ Reinterpreting on new American golf courses distinguished holes on Scottish courses was a hallmark of the three designers.

²³ The Munsey Trust Company, *Annapolis Roads on Chesapeake Bay: General Plan of Development and Golf Course* (1927).

²⁴ Percival Gallagher to Rella A. Armstrong, April 22, 1926.

²⁵ New York State Census, 1892; US Census, 1910.

²⁶ Geoff Shackelford, *The Golden Age of Golf Design*, 1999.

There was more to American golf design during its Golden Age, as dubbed by golf historian Geoff Shackelford in his 1999 book on the subject, than replicating Scottish settings. Amateur designers might concern themselves with locating well-drained, stoneless sites with fertile sandy loam, but professionals—according to Banks (1930a)—rarely built courses where topography and soil were perfectly suitable, or where those factors were even of primary importance. Golf course locations generally were selected in close proximity to large population centers or by real estate developers as “a means of attraction or a selling feature.” The guiding design principles of the time were aesthetic (Banks 1930b), the designer working to achieve a variety of unique local vistas without demanding excessive climbing. The principal vista might be that from the clubhouse. Banks (1930b):

Land which is partly open and partly wooded lends itself well to artistic treatment and is pleasing to players...[S]ome of the most pleasing and most typically golfing land is that which exposes the entire course or great stretch of it to the eye as one stands at the clubhouse or on various parts of the course...[Golf course locations are a] means of attraction or a selling feature.

Charles Banks’ views on landscape accorded well with those of the Olmsteds. Early on in the project, six months after recommending Banks, but more than a year before Banks was commissioned, Gallagher suggested moving the Golf Clubhouse to higher ground with a better view of the course than originally planned, anticipating Banks and his article on designing golf courses.²⁷ A later trend in golf course design, epitomized by perhaps the best known designer of the late 20th century—Robert Trent Jones (1906-2000)—emphasized strategic design, best expressed as: “every hole should be hard to play, but easy to bogey.”

Armstrong approached the Olmsted Brothers in 1925/6 with the concept of building a hotel and golf course at Belmont Farm. Preliminary plans devoted half of the 341-acre farm to an 18-hole course. But financing the project required selling residential lots and the land allocated for course construction continued to dwindle as the need for cash increased (about 70 acres today, not including the 6½-acre clubhouse lot). Architect Gallagher recommended a 9-hole course to Armstrong as early as May, 1927, and she agreed: they would build a smaller course and, at some later point, acquire additional land to build a second, full-sized course. “The automobile is in such general use today,” observed Gallagher, “that it is no burden to go a mile or two to a golf course.” The smaller course also would permit tennis and other recreational activities without crowding. Both courses could be maintained or the smaller abandoned and redeveloped as residential lots.

Following Gallagher’s recommendation, the Munsey Trust Company retained Charles H. Banks (1883-1931) in December 1927 to design a golf course at Annapolis Roads.²⁸ In a letter to Gallagher announcing his association with the project, Banks suggested that two or three holes might be erected along the south side of [Old] Bay Ridge Road (the old railbed of the Bay Ridge & Annapolis Railroad), but that the land was too small for a first-class 18-hole course. In an article he published in *American Golfer* three years later, Banks specified 120 acres as the minimum area necessary, with sufficient width to allow for the fairways and roughs and to eliminate the danger of stray shots hitting players on adjoining fairways: 150 acres would be better still (Banks 1930a). Gallagher summarized, in a letter of December 14, 1927, his exchange with Armstrong regarding the desirability of planning a 9-hole course. A plat of Annapolis

²⁷ Percival Gallagher to Rella Armstrong, October 4, 1926.

²⁸ Rella’s Armstrong Company contracted the Munsey Trust Company and its subsidiary, the Annapolis Roads Company, in May 1927 to run the project and Morgan Wickersham & Company as sales agents.

Roads printed by Munsey Trust in 1927 depicts eighteen holes, three of which lie along the south side of Old Bay Ridge Road; ultimately, however, Banks provided for only nine holes (Figure 4-1).²⁹



Figure 4-1. Annapolis Roads links in 1940 (left) and 2000 (right).

The Washington Daily News, in a piece dated June 12, 1946, that reported the impending auction of the partially realized development, characterized the golf course as “one of the best in the East.” An undated newspaper article (late 1950s) reporting the sale of the Annapolis Roads Country Club by Roy and Ray Shields to real estate speculator Edmund W. Dreyfus and associates of Washington, D.C., described the golf course, “with its elevated greens and cavernous sand traps” as “known throughout Maryland as one of the most challenging in the state.” Banks had earned the nickname “Steam Shovel” because of his use of machinery to create these features.

²⁹ In a letter addressed to Percival Gallagher, dated New York May 24, 1927, Rella Armstrong noted that Gibson Island commissioned a Boston firm to produce three-color prints of their plan for promotional purposes.

Chapter 5. Designing Annapolis Roads

When Paul Armstrong purchased Belmont Farm in 1907, the landscape included: 175.8 acres of open, cultivated fields; 135.4 acres of woodland (much of it steep); 4.5 acres of open water that, at the time, formed one body called Otter Pond; and seven acres or more of low-lying land and marsh. The Bay Shore Road that ran along the bay front of the property linking Bay Ridge, via a small wooden bridge at the mouth of Howell Creek (now Lake Ogleton), with Annapolis may still have been in place. The right-of-way held by the Bay Ridge & Annapolis Railroad, which ended service in 1904, separated the lower 44.75 acres of open field and woods from the main portion of the tract, but probably did not present a significant impediment to access and use of the land.

When Rella Armstrong acquired full title to the property she farmed it for more than ten years, raising Hereford cattle and probably hay and grain with which to feed them. Precisely when she decided to attempt a resort development or how well-formed her original idea was can only be surmised. Locally, several subdivisions had been platted, and their lots marketed. The nearby Bay Ridge resort (ca. 1880-1903) closed after several years of disappointing returns. It was on its way to becoming a summer beach community, the owners years earlier having platted the property in an orthogonal grid...the very sort of design the Olmsteds rejected. Baughers Beach, also known as Bay Ridge Beach, continued in operation and may have served as one of many models that influenced Rella. She wanted to earn a regular income from the project. From the outset, she wanted a hotel—the Belmont—and an 18-hole golf course to be the focus of a picturesque development, with surrounding residential lots, the sale of which would support the entire project. The popular resort at nearby Bay Ridge likely inspired Rella.³⁰

Rella Armstrong was aware of the nearby communities of Wardour (1907–1915) and Gibson Island (1923), both designed by the Olmsted Brothers (she was aware of the Gibson Island promotional plat). The firm’s naturalistic designs sought to “suggest and imply leisure, contemplativeness, and happy tranquility,” and that concept appealed to her. The many letters between Rella Armstrong and Percival Gallagher detail how the community’s layout developed, including: the intended overall effect, the layout and naming of streets, and placement of what eventually became the entry gate and gatehouse (real estate office), Beach Club or hotel, and Golf Clubhouse.

Gallagher worked largely with design concepts while awaiting the topographic drawings of local surveyor J. Revell Carr. (The Olmsted Brothers did not provide engineering services...they designed landscapes, arranging roads, lots, and plantings on drawings provided by others.) The Munsey Trust Company printed the first comprehensive plan for Annapolis Roads on September 12, 1927.³¹ The 32 by 28 inch plan depicted some of the hallmarks of Olmsted designs, including curving roads that followed existing contours and afforded interesting vistas of the land and water, while preserving the existing forests as much as possible (Figure 5-1).

³⁰ Jane W. McWilliams and Carol C. Patterson’s (1986) *Bay Ridge on the Chesapeake: An Illustrated History* offers a very readable and informative study of Bay Ridge in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rella Armstrong must have been familiar with the Bay Ridge Hotel which burned in 1915, eight years after Paul purchased Belmont.

³¹ Olmsted Plans & Drawings Collection, Plan #7591–25.

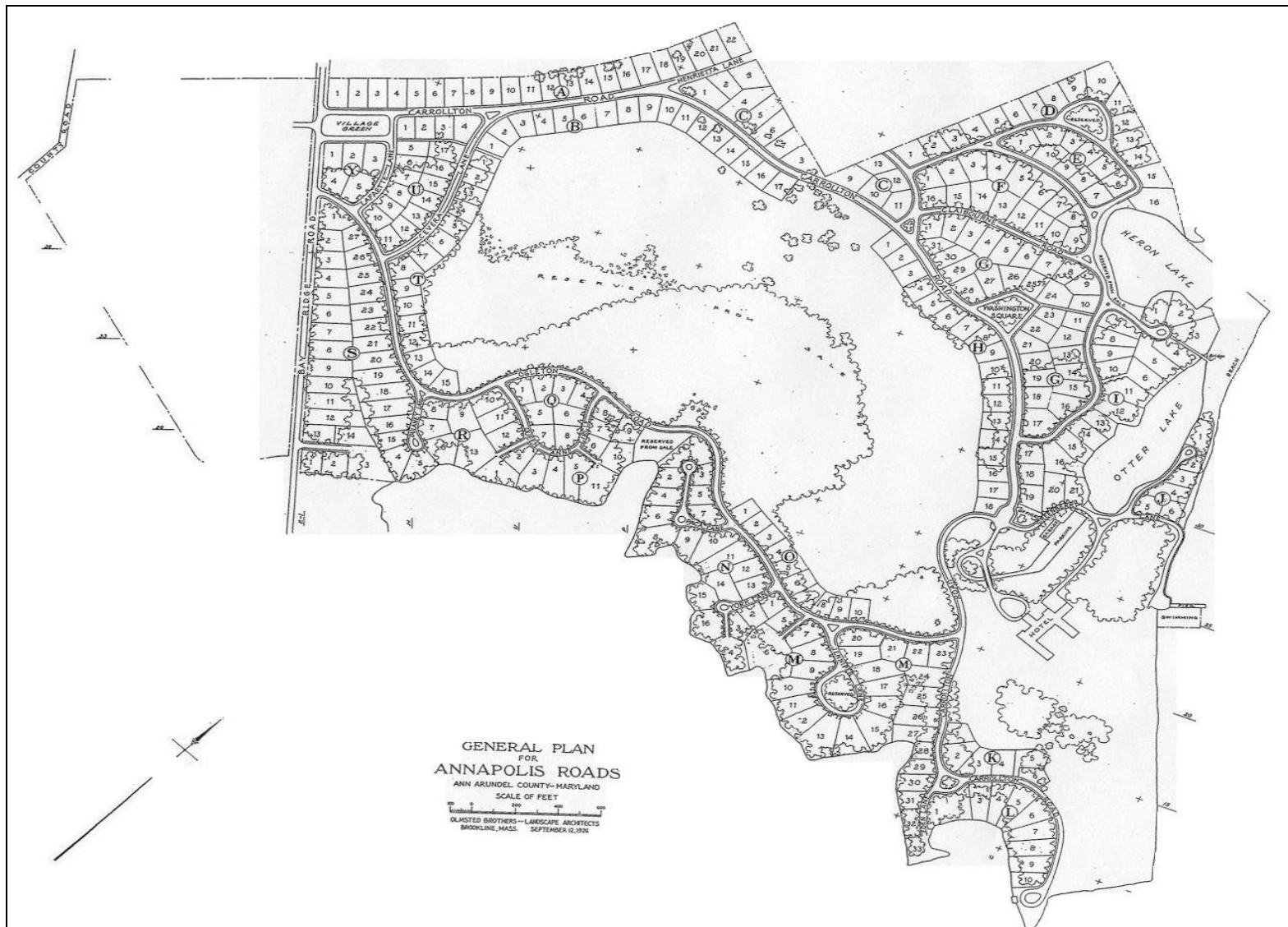


Figure 5-1. Olmsted design of Annapolis Roads, first iteration, 1927.

The curvilinear design with its several cul-de-sacs slowed traffic and created a park-like setting intended to contrast with the commercial, workaday road system outside of the community, instilling a sense of serenity and providing a haven from life's pressures. The plan provided for only one means of ingress and egress to prevent through traffic.

Rella Armstrong and Percival Gallagher planned numerous amenities and landscape features, some of which were realized and some of which never came to pass. The serpentine road system with its varied vistas was completed and remains substantially unaltered today, although a street grid, wholly out of character with the original design, was added south of Old Bay Ridge Road in the 1950s. On the 1927 plan, the land south of the abandoned railroad grade (now Old Bay Ridge Road) was slated for three holes of an 18-hole golf course. Armstrong, on a piece of stationery from the Stratford House in New York City, sketched the road layout, presumably from a sketch provided by Gallagher, and named each of the streets after figures important in Maryland's Colonial history (Figure 5-2). In April of 1926, the Olmsteds worked on grading plans for the main road (now Carrollton), planning a 50 ft right-of-way with an 18 ft wide graveled road bed, but noting that "as the place grows, it will be necessary to widen the 18-foot graveled space to at least 28 feet, in order to permit parking in front of each lot." Gallagher, in this letter, discouraged Armstrong in proceeding with her idea to have a bridal path flanked by incoming and outgoing lanes. The bridal path, he asserted, might best be run around the perimeter of the golf course. The concept of on-street parking also was abandoned.

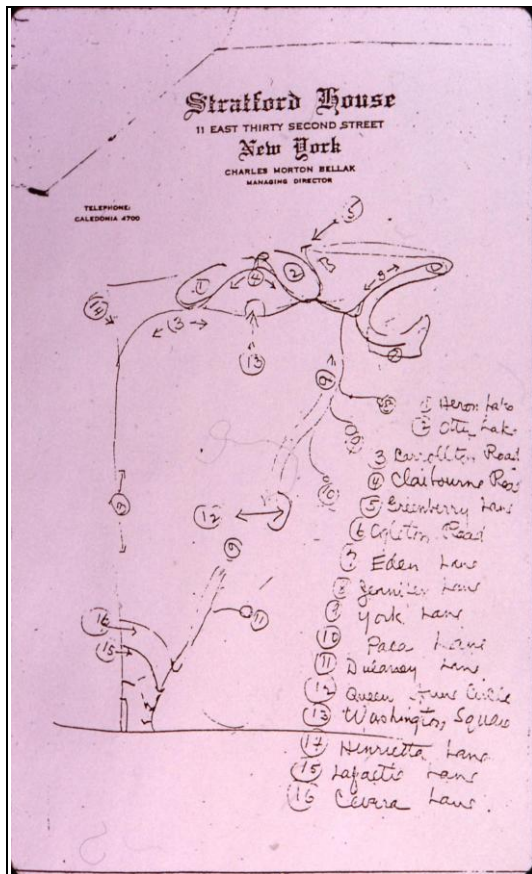


Figure 5-2. Rella Armstrong's sketch map naming streets, June 1927.

The golf course was built in the late 1920s. Gallagher had recommended golf course architect Charles H. Banks of New York City, with whom the Olmsted had several design projects in common. Both Banks and Gallagher agreed that an 18-hole course was not feasible with the land allotted, and advised Mrs. Armstrong that a larger course might be built in the future south of Bay Ridge Road and the Bay Ridge & Annapolis Railroad. (A portion of the railbed survives at the east end of Old Bay Ridge Road, at the head of Lake Ogleton, and extends eastward to the neighboring communities of Anchorage and Bay Ridge.) She settled for a well-designed 9-hole course, a clubhouse, and the beach clubhouse.

Gallagher suggested in a letter to Rella Armstrong, dated June 6, 1927, that lots 18–22 on the golf course side of Carrollton Road, probably just west of the west entrance to Claiborne, be reserved for the golf clubhouse. This was, according to Gallagher, “the site of the old house,” presumably the farmhouse bought and occupied by the Armstrongs after they purchased the farm 1907. Those lots eventually were sold and the golf club house built near the Beach Club house on the proposed hotel site. The clubhouse (demolished c. 1970) was a brick Colonial Revival building with a gambrel roof (Figure 5-3). The firm of John Russell Pope purportedly designed the Golf Clubhouse, along with the entrance gate walls and the now demolished gatehouse. Pope designed some of the most prominent American public buildings of the first third of the 20th century, including: the Jefferson Memorial, the National Archives, the National Gallery of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. According to the published plat of 1927, The Munsey Trust Company contracted Pope’s firm to review all house designs for the community. It is unlikely that they ever served in that capacity (few houses were built before the end of World War II), although they may have designed several or all of the planned amenities.



Figure 5-3. Golf clubhouse, ca. 1928.

Irwin S. Porter, a prominent architect in Washington, DC, is another candidate for the design of Beach Clubhouse/Belmont Hotel, Golf Clubhouse, and realty office. He specialized in

Neo-Classical architecture, the larger category under which Colonial Revival architecture might be placed, but which often involved rearrangement of Colonial elements and added flourishes not seen in true Colonial or Colonial Revival buildings. Porter's Maryland commissions included the Glenview Farm mansion in Rockville (erected 1926) and Beaumont House in Bethesda (erected 1929). Porter's documented connection to Annapolis Roads is that he was one of the first to purchase a lot in the community, eventually building a summer house on Eden Lane in the "Lands End" section near the east end of Carrollton Road (Figure 5-4). Porter and Pope, however, remain contenders for the title of Annapolis Roads architect. Additional research might discover that neither has a claim to the title.

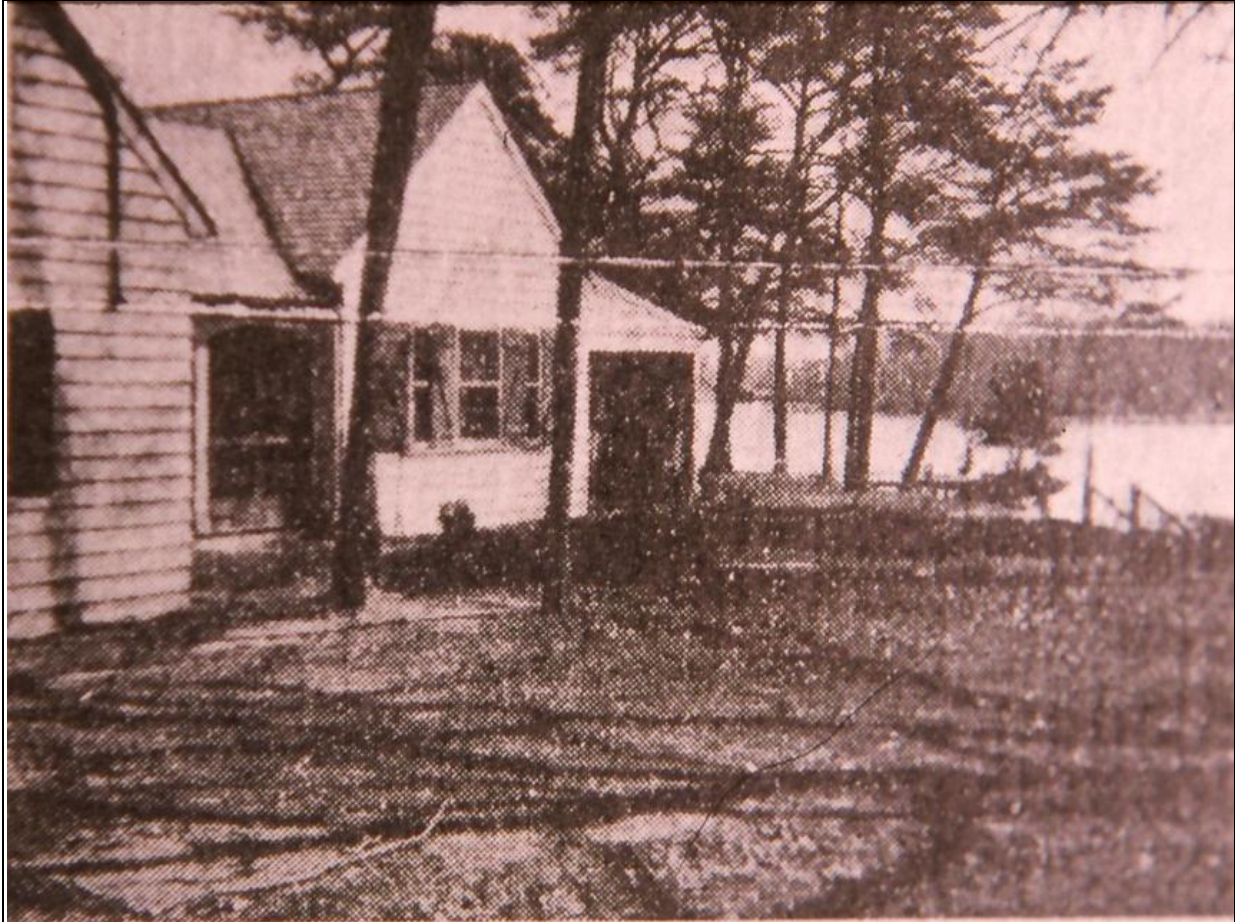


Figure 5-4. Irving S. Porter summer house, Eden Lane.

Regardless of who designed it, placement of the Belmont Hotel (the Beach Clubhouse) cannot be attributed to the architect. Percival Gallagher did that, in consultation with Rella Armstrong. The hotel was to be placed just back from the bluff on the site of what is now L'Altura at the intersection of Carrollton and Ogleton Roads, facing south of east "to avoid a too direct view of the tall towers of the government wireless station," Gallagher wrote to Mrs. Armstrong on March 1, 1926, "which, while interesting, rather hurts than otherwise the natural scene." The towers are the three remaining of eleven structures on the north side of the mouth of the Severn River at Greenbury Point. They are historically important in their own right, hence their preservation by the US Navy.

Originally intended to be the Belmont Hotel, the focus of Mrs. Armstrong's resort, the large, white, multi-tiered frame building on the beach housed a restaurant, snack bar, and a variety of other public spaces. It stood as a landmark on the shore of the Bay for a quarter century before succumbing to a spectacular blaze on June 8, 1953 (Figures 5-5 and 5-6). Fragments of tile from the shaded terrace still wash up on the beach. A part of a related retaining wall is currently eroding out of the bluff edge near the north end of the L'Altura parcel. The foundation of the dance pavilion also survives on a wooded lot on Lyon Drive (Figure 5-7).

Gallagher was a strong advocate for trees in the plan, both the existing forests, which he considered particularly important for the hotel site, and proposed plantings. Apparently disagreeing with Rella's inclination for planting cedars along the roads, a common feature of Southern Maryland plantations, Gallagher suggested a more complex planting scheme. In the Olmsted tradition of mixing colors and textures to create seasonally interesting prospects, he suggested clumps of cedars at lot lines and clumps of deciduous trees between the proposed curbs and sidewalks.³² Although not specific in his proposal, Gallagher clearly did not have in mind lines of trees defining lot lines and frontages. He would have considered such a planting scheme naïve and counter to the aesthetic effects of the curvilinear roads. In the end, the plantings were not realized. The curbs and sidewalks also did not materialize. (The subject of curbs does not appear elsewhere in the correspondence that I reviewed. The Olmsteds weren't keen on curbs, preferring shallow drainage ditches.) Large setbacks designed to create substantial front yards as transitional space between the public road and private home, enticing neighborly interaction, in some communities were insured through deed restrictions. The Olmsteds expected homeowners to plant trees in their front yards, providing some screening of houses if their designs were not altogether salutary.



Figure 5-5. Beach Clubhouse, undated.

³² Percival Gallagher to Rella Armstrong, September 21, 1926.



Figure 5-6. Beach Clubhouse ablaze, June 8, 1953.



Figure 5-7. Remains of dance pavilion on Lyon Drive, 2000.

Other parts of the community design never materialized. Gallagher recommended a well-defined entrance to the community by the Bay Ridge Railway tracks (now Old Bay Ridge Road) suggestive of a “small village green,” with the real estate office located at the entrance (Figures 5.8 and 5.9).³³ Armstrong’s realtors objected to the placement of the office, the site being too close to the dust and noise of the main road, and too accessible to “idle people and curiosity seekers.”³⁴ Their objections notwithstanding, the brick walls flanking Carrollton at the original entrance and a brick office, just north of the east wall, were built. The gatehouse has since been dismantled. A park with the provisional name “Washington Square” was sited on the north side of Carrollton Road, about halfway between the two entrances to Claiborne Road, but—like the sidewalks that were supposed to have lined at least the main roads—was never built (Figure 5.10).



Figure 5-8. Gate walls and realty office, ca. 1928.

³³ Percival Gallagher to Rella Armstrong, March 1, 1926.

³⁴ Rella Armstrong to Percival Gallagher, August 29, 1926; written on Carvel Hall stationery.

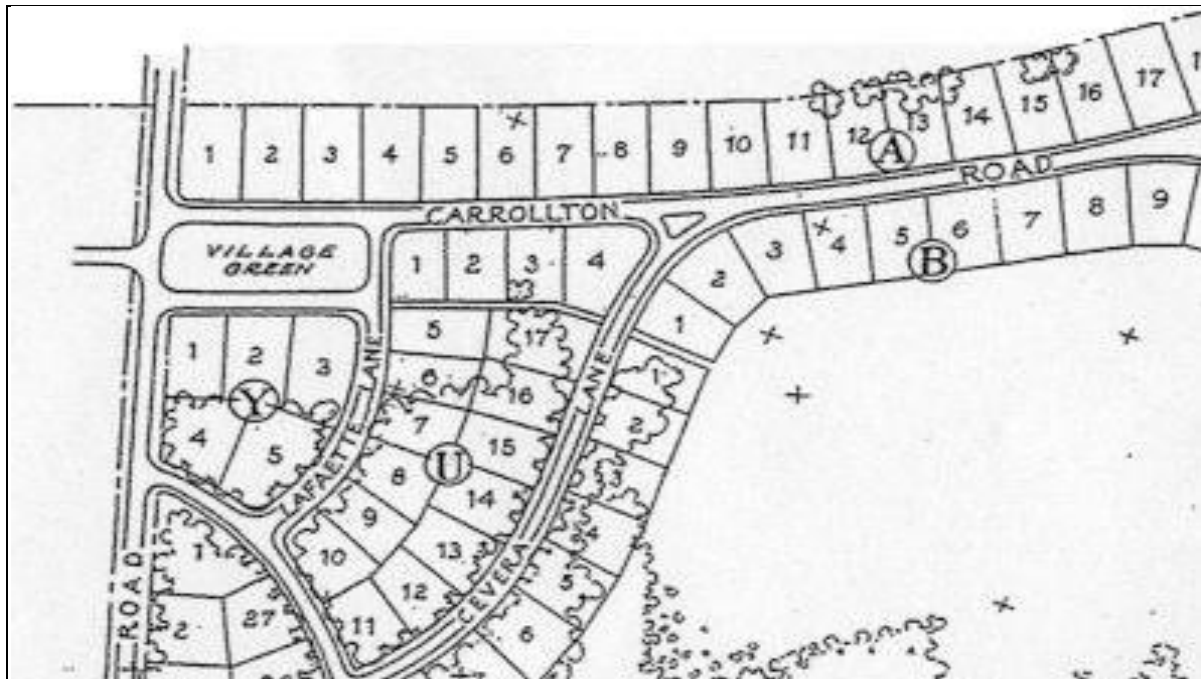


Figure 5-9. Original entrance plan showing village green, 1927.

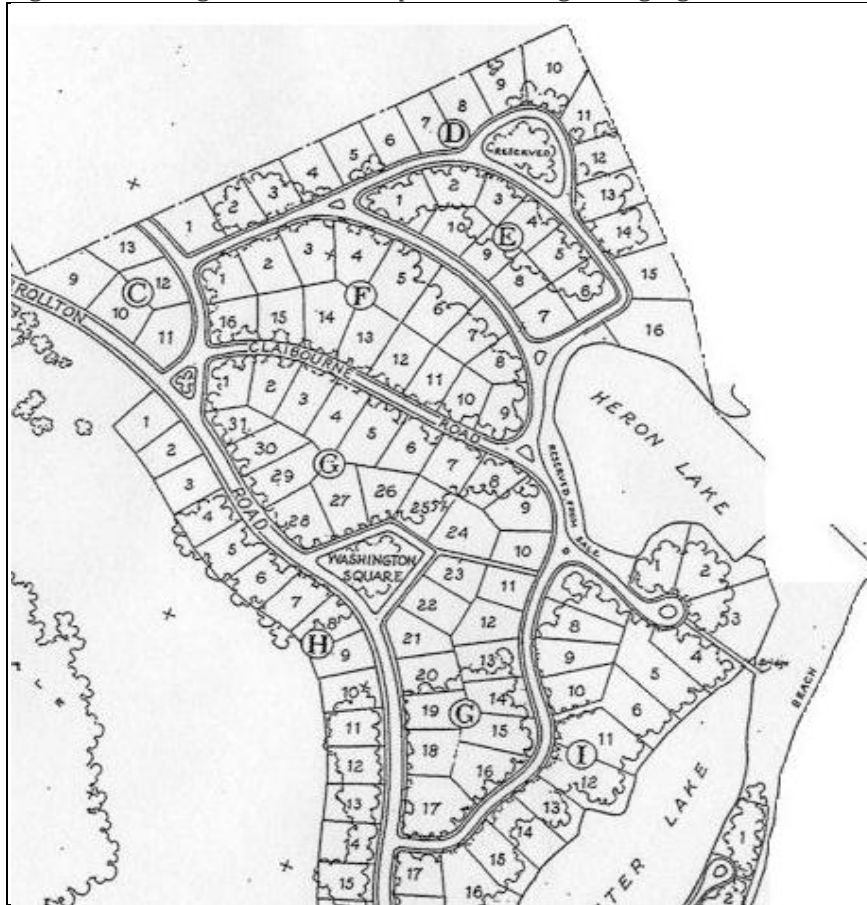


Figure 5-10. Original entrance plan showing Washington Square Park, 1927

Although Rella Armstrong was interested principally in building a resort community, she knew that the sale of lots for residences would provide funds for the larger project, and Percival Gallagher was responsible for dividing the one-time farm into as many building lots as possible, the lots averaging one-third of an acre. They expected those along the road to sell for 10 to 12 cents per square foot, or about \$1,600 per lot, while those in the Otter Lake section were offered at 14 to 18 cents (about \$2,500 per lot) and those along the shore of the bay were offered at 20 to 22 cents per square foot (about \$3,500 per lot). In a letter dated March 1, 1926, Gallagher recommended against residential development of so much of the rough, wooded land adjacent to Lake Ogleton: road construction there would be expensive and the proposed hotel called for “this natural wooded and picturesque water frontage.”³⁵ As financial pressures mounted, Mrs. Armstrong became keener on the creation and sale of lots. Difficulties of an unspecified sort between the Munsey Trust Company, contracted as trustees for the project in May 1927, and the Armstrong Company slowed the transfer of funds in an already sluggish real estate market, and a court-imposed payment schedule was set up in the early 1930s to satisfy the terms of the mortgage. In February 1934, within weeks of the death of Percival Gallagher, the Equitable Company of Washington, D.C., foreclosed on the mortgage and acquired the unsold lots, the confirmatory deed issued in 1938. The balance owed the Olmsted Brothers appears to have come out of Gallagher’s estate. Equitable continued with construction and maintenance until selling to the Club Estates in 1950.

I’ve discussed the planning of Annapolis Roads and turn to the growth of the community in the next chapter; but before doing so it is necessary to turn briefly to another subject... a delicate subject: deed restrictions.

The Olmsteds used deed restrictions to aid in the protection of their designs. Those restrictions governed such matters as setbacks and allowable uses of the property. The developers also planned on an architectural review committee, initially chaired by Rella Armstrong herself. Most of those restrictions were abandoned for reasons examined in the final chapter of this work. But one restriction was rendered unenforceable in 1948 as a result of a court case concerning a community in an entirely different state.

One of the earliest deeds issued by the Annapolis Roads Company, confirming one issued by the Armstrong Company the year before, was executed for Irwin S. Porter on November 20, 1928. The deed included six covenants and restrictions.

1. Manufacturing and commercial operations, and multi-family housing, were expressly forbidden and the erection of outbuildings, septic systems, light poles, and other auxiliary structures required the approval of the Annapolis Roads Company.
2. No construction or building modifications could be effected without the approval of the Annapolis Roads Company.
3. “Neither, during a period of ninety-nine years from the 20th day of November, 1928, shall said land, nor any premises erected or to be erected thereon be used, rented, occupied, leased, sold, demised (read *devised*), transferred or conveyed unto or in trust for any person or persons of negro blood or extraction, or unto or in trust for any person or persons of Hebrew race, origin, or extraction, except where the occupancy is by a domestic servant or servants employed by the owner;” nor shall the property for 15 years hence be conveyed without the approval of the Annapolis Roads Company.

³⁵ All of the surviving correspondence between Rella Abell Armstrong and the Olmsted Brothers, including drawings, are preserved at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Fairsted, in Brookline, Massachusetts. Microfilm copies are available at the Library of Congress, Special Collections.

4. “The Annapolis Roads Company, its successors or assigns, reserves the right at any time to trim trees, shrubbery, lawns, or underbrush on any property or lot in the aforesaid subdivision in order to improve or preserve the views of land and water and to maintain the general landscaping plan for the best interests of the entire community.”
5. The Annapolis Roads Company has the power and authority to assess property owners for one-half of the value of all road and sidewalk improvements adjoining their lots, provided a majority of the effected owners consent to the improvements.
6. All of these covenants and restrictions shall remain in full force for a period of 25 years unless otherwise stipulated.

For its part, the company “agreed to set aside certain beaches and public parks as indicated on the plat and survey made by the Olmsted Brothers for the perpetual use of the residents of Annapolis Roads” and it retained ownership of all riparian rights and road beds. A successor to the company—The Club Estates, Inc.—relinquished Carrollton Road to Anne Arundel County in 1955 and various other community roads to the Annapolis Roads Property Owners Association in 1956.³⁶

I have quoted items 3 and 4, or parts thereof, verbatim. Item 4 almost certain is, or was modeled on, language used by the Olmsteds in other communities. It enabled the corporation to protect the landscape design. Presumably, any such improvements to a lot were assessable to the lot owner, although the restriction lacks language to that effect. Item 3 contains language that appeared in the deeds of many designed communities around the Chesapeake Bay. The proscription against conveyance to, or non-employee occupancy of lots by, African Americans and Jews, including those of African or Jewish “extraction,” is emblematic of widespread American views at the time. The 1920s represent the height of the implementation of “Jim Crow” laws, state sanctioned racial discrimination. The period also marked the rise of the eugenics movement that espoused the concept of European racial superiority. The movement declined rapidly in the early 1930s in the face of German fascism and its claims to “Aryan” racial superiority; however, until that time, eugenics philosophies were widely held by many, including many politically and socially prominent individuals.

In 1948, Item 3 became a dead letter. Thurgood Marshall and Loren Miller argued the case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* before the US Supreme Court. The plaintiffs, an African American family, purchased a house in St. Louis, Missouri. A 1911 deed restriction prohibited “people of the Negro or Mongolian Race” from occupying the property. The court ruled that the state would violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution if it enforced the covenant. Private parties could abide by any restrictions to which they mutually agreed, but the state could not enforce those restrictions. That decision did not end racial segregation, but it denied the state a role in using its powers to support restrictions preventing purchase or occupancy of a property based on race.

All of the covenants on Annapolis Roads lots eventually were voided after the community passed through its most intensive growth in the 1950s through early 1970s, and a new influx of families brought different priorities, including a safe environment for raising children. Momentous developments in the desegregation of schools, particularly in nearby Washington, DC, and Baltimore, also may have played a role, although I have no documentation as of this writing to further explore that issue.

³⁶ Land Records Book 917, page 219 and Book 1058, page 40, respectively.

Chapter 6. Annapolis Roads Development, 1926-2003

New York City has its brownstones, Levittown its Cape Cods, and northeast Washington it's turreted and pinnacled Queen Annes. Why doesn't Annapolis Roads have a signature architectural style? It does, or rather it has several, and those styles represent the episodic growth of the community. Unlike the Levittowns that sprouted along the East Coast after World War II and the development of entire city blocks over the course of a few years, Annapolis Roads grew in four distinct spurts over nearly 80 years. Here is a brief account of those building booms and of their characteristic building styles.

Figure 6-1 charts the number of new houses built each year from the community's inception in 1926 until the end of 2003, for a total of 328 dwellings organized around the final configuration of Annapolis Roads (Figure 6-2). I have taken the dates from tax records that are available on the website for the State Department of Assessments & Taxation. Dates after 1950 appear to be accurate; earlier dates are less certain, but probably approximate the true dates of construction. Tax records, for example, date the Spalding house on Eden Lane to 1925, but J. Revell Carr didn't survey the land until the following year. The graph illustrates two early periods of development, with eight houses constructed at the end of Carrollton, on Eden Lane, and on Claibourne between 1926 and 1930, and five houses built on Carrollton, the corner of Ogleton and Old Bay Ridge, Claibourne, and Paca between 1944 and 1950. Between the years 1953 and 1973, Annapolis Roads experienced sustained growth with 209 new houses, an average of ten per year. The latest growth spurt occurred between 1988 and 2003, with 65 new builds averaging five per year.

With the exception of one house on Ogleton, all of the pre-1950 houses were built near the Annapolis Roads Beach Club house. Claibourne and the "Land's End" portions of the community were the first sections platted; Rella Armstrong intended the proceeds from lot sales to support construction of the hotel and golf course. She needed the money. Perhaps reflecting the conservative aesthetic of Pope, and certainly the historical interests of Armstrong (she named all of the streets after prominent Colonial Marylanders), the earliest houses had a decidedly Colonial look, as did the gambrel-roofed golf clubhouse and the gatehouse, both razed in the early 1970s. Colonial Revival had become a fashion craze, especially in architecture and home furnishings, since the centennial anniversary in 1876 and the closing of the enormously popular Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The late 1920s also marked the beginning of the great project to archaeologically explore and recreate Colonial Williamsburg. The English ivy that, unfortunately, pervades the forests in the community, damaging trees and choking out indigenous species, reputedly was first planted in Annapolis Roads with cuttings taken from Mount Vernon: an homage to the nation's first president, but detrimental to forest stewardship.

Most, if not all, of those Colonial Revival houses have been modified over the years. Slow sales, expensive design consultants, inadequate capital, and the Great Depression bankrupted Armstrong's Annapolis Roads Company in 1934. With each subsequent upswing in house building, new design fashions were employed; hence, the apparent jumble of architectural styles.

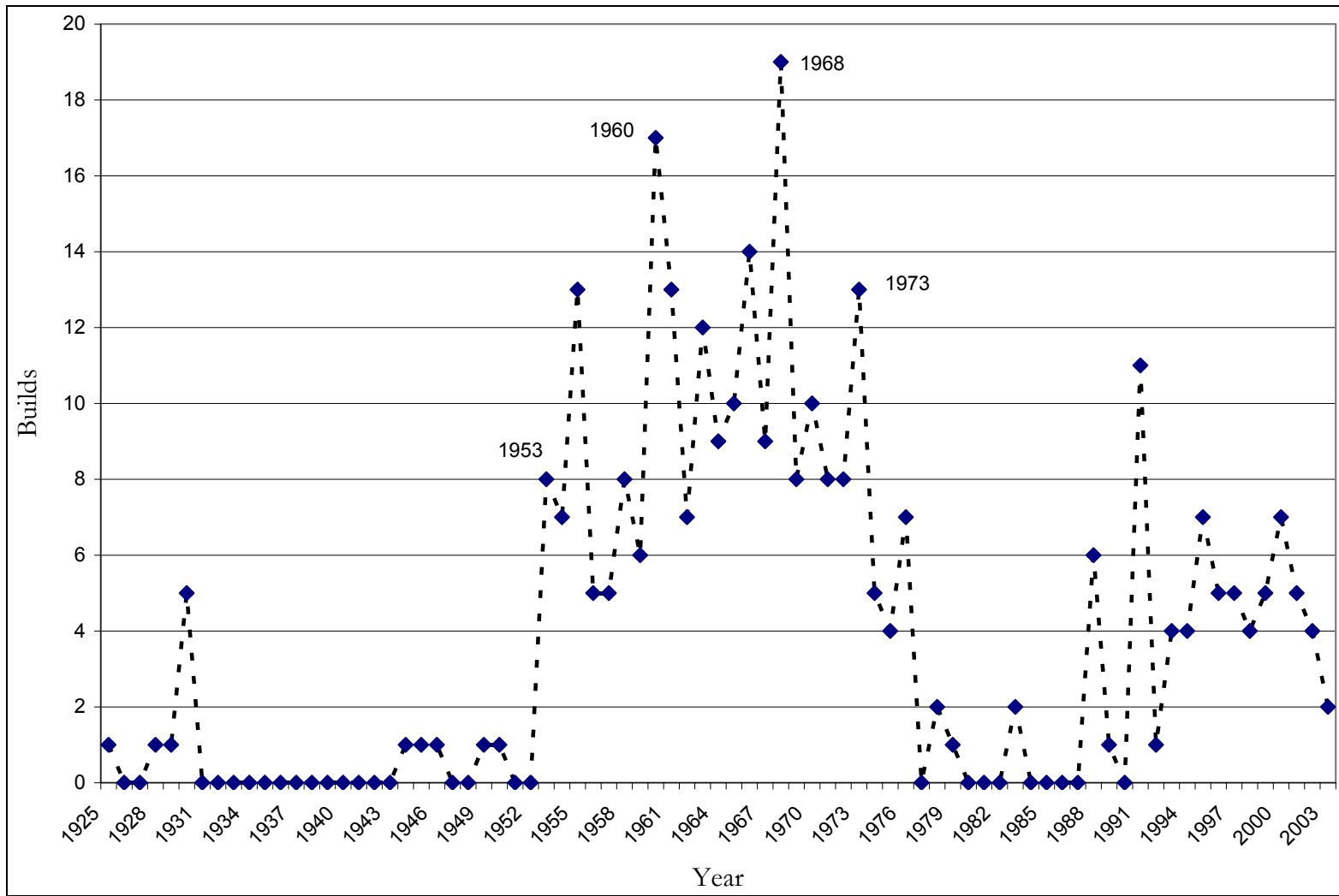


Figure 6-1. Graph showing new builds, by year, 1926-2003.

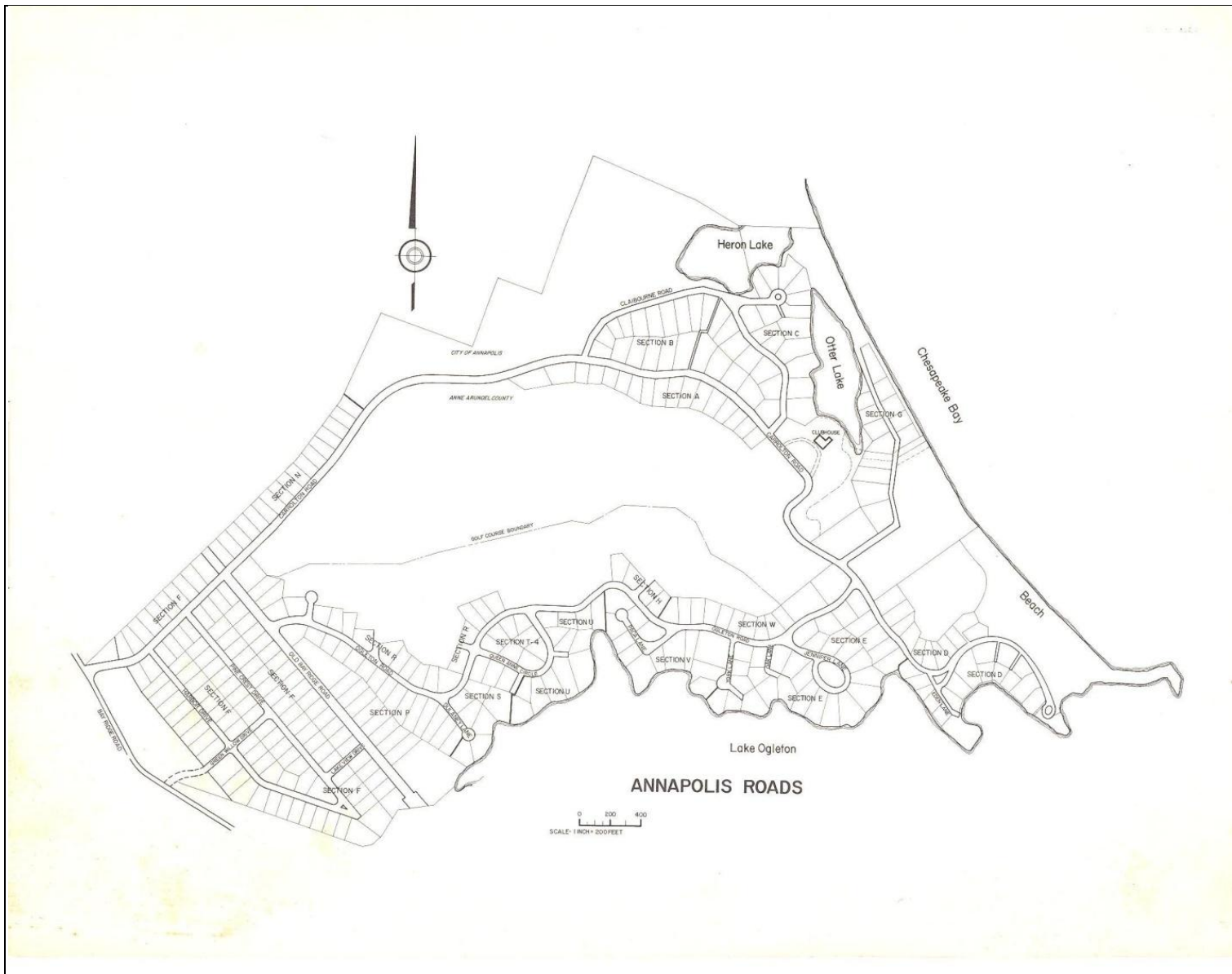


Figure 6-2. Map of Annapolis Roads.

The lingering depression and World War II rationing effectively stalled further development until the late 1940s. It wasn't until after 1950, when Roy and Ray Shields, and Paul S. Anderson, purchased the unsold lots and clubhouses (forming the Club Estates, Inc.), that the building boom began in earnest. Lot development occurred mostly along Carrollton Road until 1960, at which point Ogleton Road rapidly developed. Between 1960 and 1973, almost twice as many houses were built along Ogleton (59) as opposed to Carrollton (31). Lot purchasers on the smaller streets built houses on their properties during this same period. Most of the houses on Jenniper were built between 1953 and 1963. The newer portion of the community (Section F), south of Old Bay Ridge, was not part of the original Olmsted plan, which accounts for its rigid grid layout of streets, rather than the curving roads and cul-de-sacs favored by the Olmsteds. Platted in 1952, Section F grew steadily throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Small, single-story ranches epitomize the style built during the 1950s and 1960s, and they may constitute the predominant architectural style of the community. Beginning in the 1970s, two-story ranches became more popular. Little construction occurred during the late 1970s and 1980s, possibly due in part to the protracted law suit (1974-1987) between the Annapolis Roads Property Owners Association and developer Stanley Rosensweig, and partly because of nationwide economic problems. The last wave of development began upon settlement of the suit, continuing the trend of two-story ranches and, in the late 1990s, introducing to the community what might best be described as the northern Virginia suburban tract house. These two-story houses have a prominent central gable and larger volume to footprint ratios than their predecessors. Construction of these recent houses has completed infilling along most of the streets. While some individual lots remain undeveloped, most of the undeveloped land lies between Ogleton Road and the golf course, and between the rear lot lines along Harbor Drive and Bay Ridge Road. The Annapolis Roads Property Owners acquired those forested properties after 2000, effectively preserving the aesthetics Gallagher championed and the buffer between the community and the main road that is a feature of Olmsted designs (Figure 6-3).

The correlation between architectural styles and development periods is not perfect. Some Colonial Revival houses were built after 1950, and not all houses built between 1950 and 1973 are small one-story ranches. But there is a pattern that, in the main, holds true. Certainly the episodic character of Annapolis Roads' growth accounts for some of the diversity in style and the abandonment of what developer Armstrong had envisioned: a community of Colonial Revival houses encircling a resort constructed in the same style.

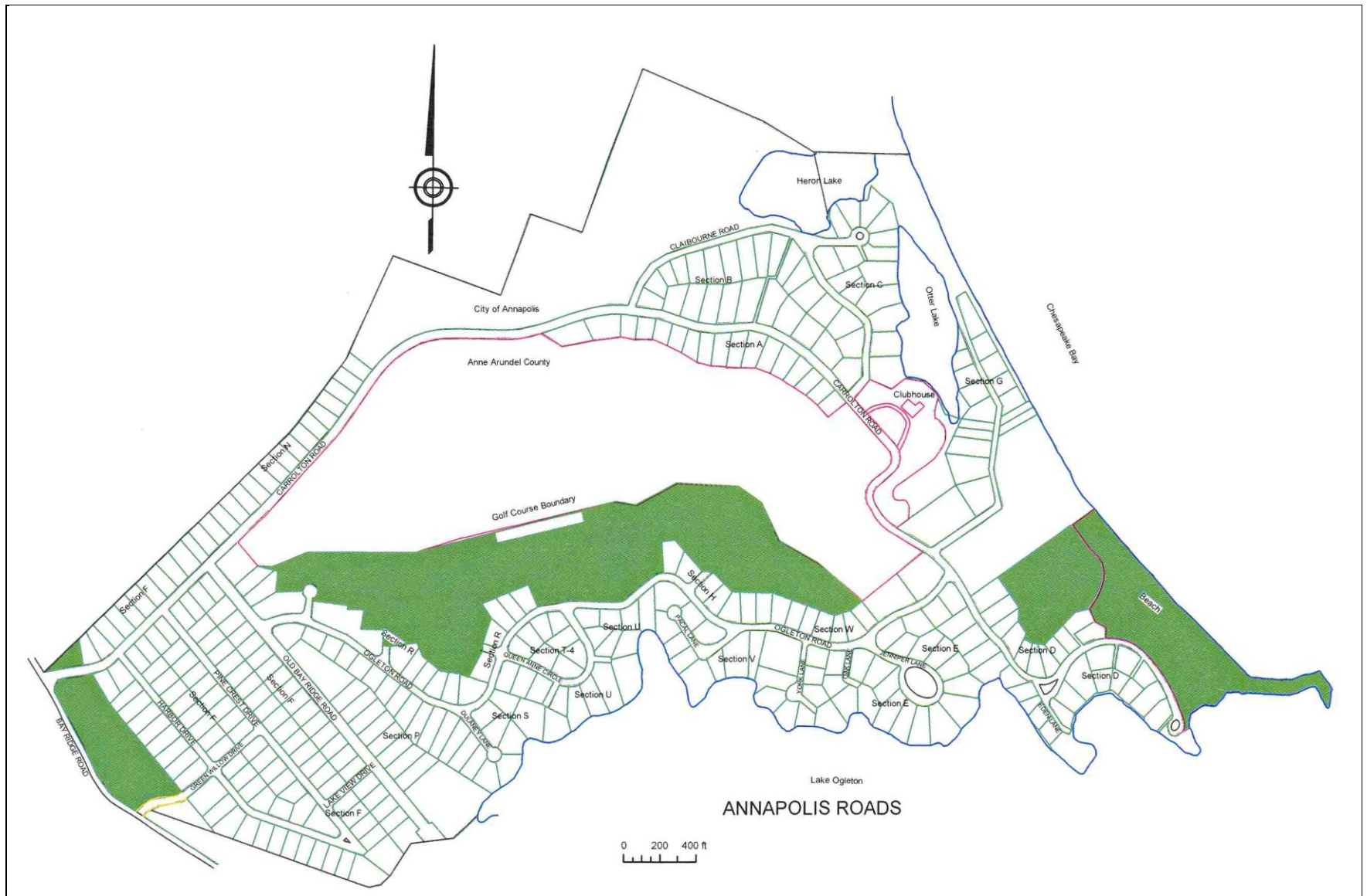


Figure 6-3. Major ARPOA land acquisitions, 1987, 2005.

Chapter 7. Life in the Roads

Annapolis Roads rocked! Probably not as much as some residents have recalled, and much of the fun probably occurred during the summer and on certain holidays. The Roads was, and remains, a working community. It also has been a community faced with the pressures of modern life, particularly real estate development. Munsey Trust and Club Estates accentuated through promotional literature and positive press the fun; court cases, the strife (Figure 7-1). In reality, the fun far outweighed the strife into the 1970s, and family life outweighed—for most—the time and energy devoted to protecting the integrity of the community’s design and the community’s quality of life. Over the previous chapters, I have built a case for the close relation between design and quality of life. In this, the final chapter, I relate aspects of the community’s history, the lawsuit between the Annapolis Roads Property Owners Association (ARPOA) and Stanley Rosenzweig, et alia (the “Syndicate”) forming a great divide. However, there is no neat boundary between the resort community and the general workaday community that emerged from the 1970s: the notion of era is a simple heuristic, a tool that makes the past easier to conceptualize and discuss. The issue of design, however, remains very much at the heart of events.


Annapolis Roads as Beach Community

The character of Annapolis Roads during its early years is manifest in the graph of new builds each year between 1926 and 2003. Until 1953, the year the Beach Clubhouse burned, only a dozen or so houses were built. Certainly the Great Depression of the 1930s and the war years of 1942 to 1945 sidelined the community’s development for more than 15 years. The amenities, however, flourished. Of course, this ran counter to Rella Armstrong’s expectations. She wanted to sell as many residential lots as possible to fund the building and operation of the Belmont Hotel and the golf course. Ultimately, she expected her steady income from the operation of those facilities. In the end, outside capital funded the amenities and the sale of residential lots became the most important source of profit.

In a pair of pieces for the *Anne Arundel County History Notes* on local dance halls, local historian Roger White referred to a special section of the *Evening Capital*, published in the spring of 1929.³⁷ The newspaper printed photographs of both the Beach Clubhouse and the Golf Clubhouse, and it noted that Washington, Baltimore, and Annapolis society dined and danced there throughout the winter. Surviving photographs depict the Beach Clubhouse as a lavish building perched on the bluff as Percival Gallagher had planned it, facing the expansive, open bay with an unobstructed view of Kent Island and the Eastern Shore. (The Chesapeake Bay Bridge was built between 1949 and 1952; the second span was completed in 1973.) It sported a lengthy pier that took bathers to deep water and that greatly expanded the area for sun bathing (Figure 7-2). The waterside had a cool, tiled esplanade whence guests could view the scenic bay. The club offered dining and dancing. White also stated that the facility was renamed “The New Annapolis Roads Club” in 1934, probably a marketing ploy after the initial foreclosure and purchase of the property by The Equitable Company.³⁸

³⁷ Roger White (1989) Saturday Night at the Dance Hall-Part II. *Anne Arundel County History Notes* XXI (1): 1-6.

³⁸ Purchased at auction per Equity Case 6683 on January 22, 1934; confirmed with Deed Book WMB 128, page 523, May 28, 1938.

Golf
Water Sports

Tavern
Beach Club

Annapolis Roads

on Chesapeake Bay

THE Munsey Trust Company announces that Annapolis Roads is now ready for allotment of home sites to a restricted class and limited number of people. Lying on Chesapeake Bay between Lakes Ogleton, Heron and Otter, two miles from Annapolis, this is the closest Bay frontage to Washington.

IMPROVEMENTS now being installed for which funds have been advanced: *Golf Course, Landing Pier, Roadways, Electricity, Telephones, Automatic Water System, Tavern and Bath Houses.* Except the Golf Course, the tract is densely forested with mature timber. The hard white sand beach is nearly a mile long and partly shaded.

LANDSCAPING and subdivision by *OLMSTED BROTHERS*; Supervising Architect, *JOHN RUSSELL POPE*; Local Consulting Architects, *PORTER & LOCKIE*; Golf Architect, *C. H. BANKS*, successor to Seth Raynor; Golf Construction, *F. I. RAY*; Home Construction, *BRADBURY & MOHLER*.

MAINTENANCE of Restrictions and installation of improvements assured by The Munsey Trust Company. For information as to requirements for property ownership or Beach Club, Golf Club or Yacht Club membership, apply to

THE MUNSEY TRUST CO.
Real Estate Department

Munsey Bldg. Main 8080.
 Drive through Annapolis and Eastport on concrete highway.
 Agents on property Saturday and Sunday.



Figure 7-1. Munsey Trust advertisement (1928) and Club Estates brochure (ca. 1950).

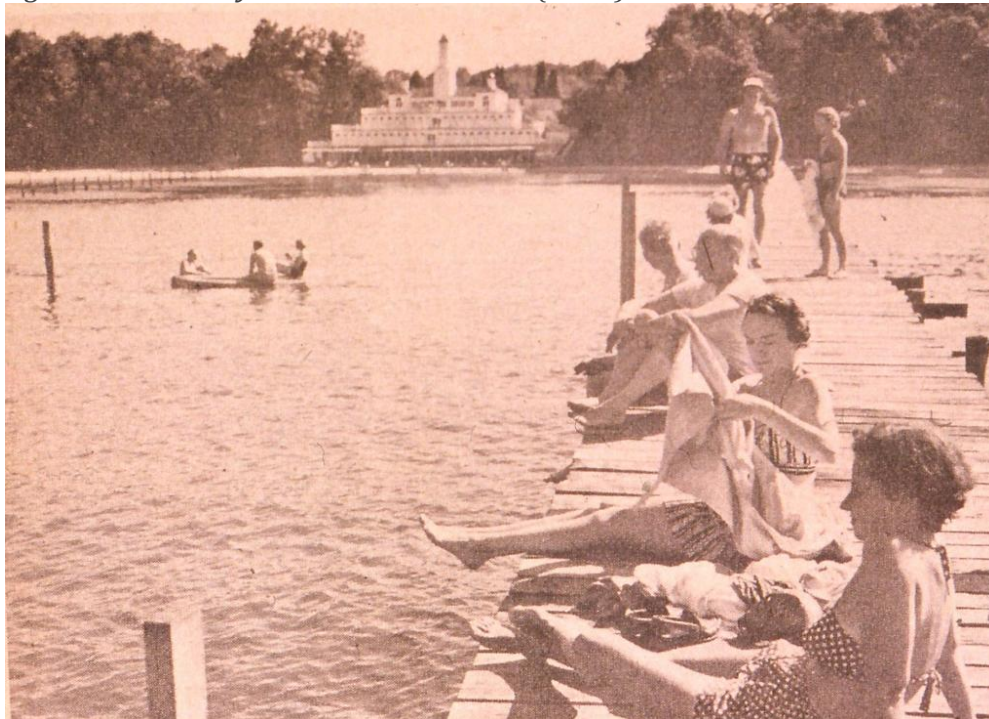


Figure 7-2. Pier and Beach Clubhouse.

In a 1978 issue of the *Bay Breeze*, the community newsletter, then editor Gene Youtz reprinted scenes and some text from a promotional brochure published by The New Annapolis Roads Club, Inc. It includes views of the front gate and gatehouse, the Beach Clubhouse, the Golf Clubhouse exterior and interior, and a panoramic view of part of the golf course (Figures 7-3 through 7-4). The introduction reads as follows:

On the fine white sand beach, stretching in a mile-long crescent within thirty miles of Washington or Baltimore, has been built the NEW ANNAPOLIS ROADS CLUB, INC., bringing to this part of America for the first time the charm and color of the magnificent beach clubs of Biarritz, Lido, Florida and California.

Here members may enjoy in strict privacy the comfort, pleasure and relaxation afforded by canopied terraces, beach swings and hammocks, lounging chairs under gay umbrellas, private dressing rooms and lockers, spacious sun decks and tiled esplanade for bridge, tea and dancing.

The editor reported the memory of long-time resident, Seeley Feldmeyer of Carrollton Road who worked at the Beach clubhouse in his youth: “He remembers many diplomats and ambassadors who came to the club from Washington in their limousines. It was ‘pretty ritzy,’ he said, and one time someone gave him a five-dollar tip, which was more than his weekly pay.”



Figure 7-3. Golf Clubhouse interior. Note painting of Beach Clubhouse in background.



Figure 7-4. Party playing green at Annapolis Roads golf course.

The Washington Daily News reported on June 13, 1946, that the Annapolis Roads Club had been offered for sale that day. The article makes much of this “Piece of the Roaring 20s,” now to be sold to the highest bidder, and that alone suggests hyperbole and statements that should be checked for their veracity. None the less, the article is worth some scrutiny, if for no other reason than that it conveys a sense of the club’s history at that moment in time. The following introductory sentences set the tone for this brief item:

The fabulous Annapolis Roads Club is up for sale today.

Back in the 20s, there was no more fashionable spot in the Washington area on a grander scale, nor with such high restrictions. The club’s initiation fee was fantastic, and the dues were snobbishly high.

Perhaps no club was ever started in this area on a grander scale, nor with higher restrictions. There were no honorary memberships, and even the Navy Secretary and the British ambassador were required to pay membership fees if they wished to golf on a Sunday. Scores of such low fellows as US senators and diplomats were turned away. ...

The white sand beach looked out on the Chesapeake Bay roadstead for the Navy’s battleships and, in the 20s, you could always find a prince or two, and a couple of ambassadors, playing in the sand.

At the end of the long pier, the ocean-going yachts of the ultra rich tied up between seasons of the North-South cruise year. Those who bought summer property were compelled to build cottages costing \$10,000 to \$100,000—but first to have the plans approved by the office of John Russell Pope, then a nationally famous architect. Landscaping was done by Olmsted Brothers, a Brookline, Mass., firm.

The market crash of 1929 eroded financial support for the undertaking and the Equitable Company, holder of the Annapolis Roads Company mortgage, foreclosed.

Since then, the beach and golf club[s] have been operated as leased concessions. The restrictions have been relaxed to the point where even Government workers are now admitted. ...

Real estate men think the tract still has tremendous possibilities as a summer resort—but one on a more realistic scale than the original project.

It would profitably be turned into a subdivision of small cottages, they say—with the golf and beach clubs available to the cottagers.

An unattributed newspaper article, probably dating to 1950, notes that brothers Roy and Ray Shields, and Paul S. Anderson, had formed the Club Estates, Inc., and purchased the unsold parcels of Annapolis Roads. They planned to develop 300 residential lots, offering free one-year club memberships to the each household. After the first year, households could purchase annual memberships or pay per use. The Shields brothers, it claims, had been associated with the property since 1939, and remained so continuously except for the four war years while it was closed. The club reawakened under the Club Estates, but a watershed event occurred in 1953: in a spectacular fire, the Beach clubhouse burned completely. The project's fulcrum turned to ashes.

The Shields brothers, in effect, bought out Paul Anderson when they bought the remaining parcels and facilities from the Club Estates in 1954. The following year they built the Olympic-sized swimming pool (Figures 7-5 and 7-6), and it was around the pool and the golf course that the rapidly growing community revolved, particularly around the pool. Growth by 1957 occurred mostly at the west and east ends of Carrollton Road and the east end of Ogleton Road. The US Geological Survey map for that year, contrasting with that of 1904, depicts the houses, notes the swimming pool, and labels the point of land along the eastward extension of Carrollton Road as Lands End (Figures 7-7 and 7-8). With the demise of the Beach Clubhouse, Annapolis Roads began its transition from regional attraction to a more neighborhood focused, family focused community.



Figure 7-5. Golf Clubhouse and pool (undated).



Figure 7-6. Greens with Golf Clubhouse and pool (post-1954) in foreground.

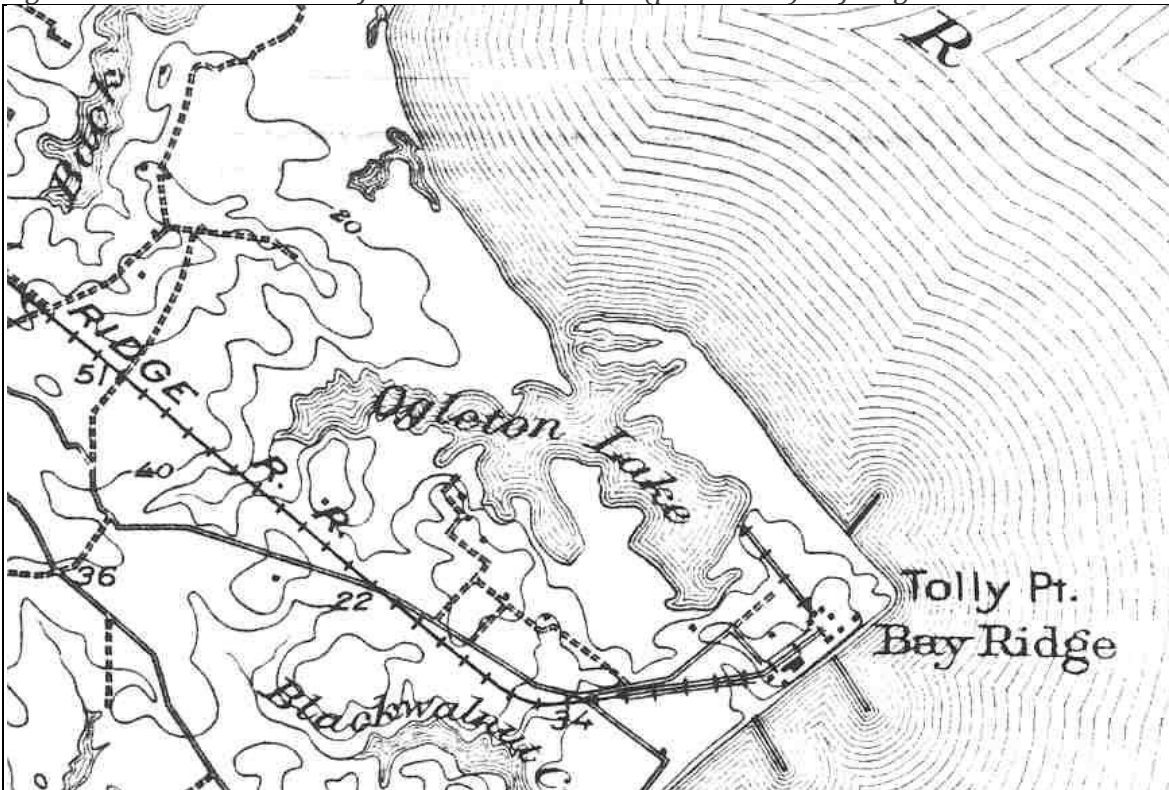


Figure 7-7. US Geological survey map, 1904.



Figure 7-8. US Geological survey map, 1957.

Annapolis Roads as Bedroom Community

For reasons not readily apparent from available documents, the Shields brothers sold the Annapolis Country Club and remaining parcels to RDK & W Real Estate Company of Washington (Edmund W. Dreyfuss, principal). They held the purchasers note in the amount of over \$170,000.³⁹

In April 1973, Stanley Rosenzweig and associates filed two quiet title suits in equity against the Annapolis Roads Property Owners Association and all of the property owners individually. Contrary to the wishes of the community, the plaintiffs wanted to redevelop the golf course and 17 additional acres, planning what locals described as “high rise condominiums.” The “syndicate,” as they were called locally, asserted full and absolute ownership and the right to dispose of the land in any way they saw fit. To that end they sought to quiet title. The community claimed long held rights to those same lands and proffered four arguments:

1. Since 1927, Annapolis Roads was “developed pursuant to a uniform plan,” and the owners of the parcels in question were aware of the plan when they purchased the land from Club Estates, Inc., in 1963;
2. Property owners in the community purchased their lots with the understanding, promoted by the lot sellers, that as property owners they had rights to the use of those parcels in question; specifically, but not exclusively, the golf course and beach front;

³⁹ Purchasers included Edmund W. Dreyfuss, Joel S. Kaufmann, Jerry Wolman, and Stanley Rosenzweig.

3. Property owners exercised those rights since the creation of the subdivision , “establishing an equitable easement to the continued use of the land by virtue of adverse possession;” and
4. The plaintiffs’ chain of title to the golf course and beach demonstrated that those lands are subject to specific written restrictions, whereby the Annapolis Roads Company and its successors “agreed to set aside certain beaches and public parks as indicated on the plat and survey made by the Olmsted Brothers for the perpetual use of the residents of Annapolis Roads.”

After years of litigation, the parties reached an out of court settlement legally entered as a Declaration and Restriction On Use, dated June 3, 1987.⁴⁰ The agreement restricted use of the golf course to eight possible scenarios:

1. A golf course, with or without a club house and/or pro shop;
2. Other recreational uses;
3. Horticultural nurseries;
4. Conservation uses;
5. Accessory uses, including vehicular parking, in connection with the uses in items 1 through 4;
6. Rights of way and/or easements to provide for access to inaccessible areas;
7. Temporary and permanent, primary and accessory structures for the uses listed in items I through 6; and
8. No use.

The agreement allows that “the Annapolis Roads Property Owners Association, Inc., its successors and assigns and/or any person or person owning a residential lot(s) in the subdivision of Annapolis Roads may prosecute any legal proceeding to enforce this Declaration and Restriction On Use provided the only relief sought is that of an injunction against the violation of the provisions thereof.” ARPOA received the beach lot and, with the individual lot owners, disclaimed all right, interest, or title in the golf course and golf clubhouse parcel, apart from the interest in the covenants placed on the golf course.

A dozen years of litigation took its toll on the community. Some questioned the value of expending tax dollars on the case, as reported in an article published in *The Washington Post* soon after resolution of the case:

“Some people wanted to know what we stood to gain by continuing to fight,” said Bob Savin, who was a two-term president of the property owners’ association. “From time to time, a lot of people would call me saying, ‘Gee, what’s this lawyer doing for us?’⁴¹

The upshot, however, has been preservation of the design of the community and, by extension, of its quiet, family-focused character. Add to that the beach and overlook parcel, a useful amenity for the community and the site of the annual picnic and recently established “Fall Classic,” a casual gathering of neighbors for conviviality and the annual children’s Halloween costume parade.

⁴⁰ Land Record Book 4362, page 895.

⁴¹ Cornelius F. Foote, jr., Annapolis Community’s Place in Sun: After Long Battle, Residents Able to Curb Development, *The Washington Post*, Saturday, August 29, 1987.

Unfortunately, tired of conflict and loathe to spend more community funds, ARPOA did not purchase the 70-acre golf course when it became available. Purchase might have averted subsequent clashes, first an attempt by developers to build on the woods fringing the golf course along Ogleton Road with the concomitant transformation of the golf course into an athletic complex by St. Mary's School (2005), and then an effort by The Key School to expand its campus onto the golf course (2011-2013). Strong ARPOA board leadership and overwhelming community response led to the acquisition of the 33-acre Ogleton Woods parcel, foiling the St. Mary's effort. The Key School plan, as of this writing, remains in litigation, a motion for injunction having been filed by Preserve Annapolis Roads, Inc., against The Key School, Ribera Construction, and George and Linda Graeffe, the golf course owners since 1989.⁴²

Outside development pressures have not been the sole source of discord in Annapolis Roads. A sewer system was installed throughout the community in the 1980s, but not without disagreements over the need and apportionment of costs. Property disputes involving private lot owners and ARPOA rights-of-way also have been at issue, creating deep rifts in the community. These events remain too close for objective historical writing.

⁴² Land Records Book 4811, page 733, and Book 4939, page 392.

Chapter 8. Looking Back, Looking Forward

Frederick Law Olmsted thought that intelligent, artistic landscape designs could positively influence those experiencing them, and that influence was best achieved if done subtly, visitors vaguely aware of their physical and mental revival and unaware of the cause. He developed these ideas at a time when landscapes were often created to impress, assert, and even to cow. His approach ran counter to centuries of efforts of some individuals to direct the lives of others, from baronial castles that asserted ownership to land, to the baroque designs of Paris and Rome and London that asserted the centrality of church and government, to the intricate, geometric gardens of men like William Paca in 1750s Annapolis that claimed their right to power by expressing good taste, learning, and wealth. In many ways people still use landscape and architecture to assert, claim, and command. Olmsted's vision was very different. Landscape architecture for him and his associates was a fine art, intended to elevate and inspire, never to control.

In the pages above, I have examined the Olmsted approach and its interpretation by several individuals in designing Annapolis Roads. I've suggested a change in how that design was used after World War II, and especially after the demise of the Beach Clubhouse in 1953. The resort, which Rella Armstrong expected to fund from house lot sales and hoped would provide her with a regular income, sapped her assets. Outside capital completed the country club. With the destruction of the Beach Clubhouse, a key element of the club, the focus changed. Perhaps it was the post-war baby boom that demanded housing, or maybe increasingly affordable air travel that drew vacationers to more exotic settings that diminished the prospects of the Annapolis Roads Club. When the Shields brothers elected to build a pool instead of rebuild the beach clubhouse, and when they increased their commitment to lot sales and development, perhaps they reconceived their business model: family became the focus. The scattered houses of the pre-war period gave way to intensive development on the original Olmsted plan, individual family homes structured in a community with a golf course, clubhouse, and pool at its core. Elite, adult dining and dancing gave way to family meals, kids in the pool, and parents on the links. The Olmsted design fostered both the isolation of families—giving them the opportunity to develop with minimal outside interference—and their joining together in a community of families sharing amenities.

One of the more important, if underappreciated, qualities of the Olmsted designs is the range in size and quality of lots. They were not obtuse: they knew different lots could be sold at higher prices, netting a greater return for the owners, because of location, setting, and size. For Annapolis Roads, the differences were measureable in price per square foot, the higher end lots worth nearly twice per square foot as the lower end lots. Such differences attract households with different means. But the differences are relatively small and can be expressed quantitatively in terms of degree rather than magnitude. Wealth differences in the community probably are smaller than the general level of the community's wealth compared to that of neighboring communities. In other words, the residents of Annapolis Roads are much more alike than different, at least in terms of wealth and general background.

Similarity in wealth is mirrored in other sociological categories, most notably race. Annapolis Roads developed as a white, middle class community, and has remained so as of this writing. One might blame restrictive deeds of the past, but the racist restriction was emasculated in 1948, before residential development began in earnest. I suspect that the relative lack of racial diversity today results from rapid development during the 1950s through 1970s, a period of

highly charged racial conflict nationwide. Desegregation as public policy, informed and guided by interpretation of the US Constitution, was felt throughout Maryland. Segregated beaches closed rather than admit people of color. School desegregation and busing of students prompted many white middle and upper middle class families to flee to the suburbs. To some extent, the rapid growth of Annapolis Roads may be attributable to these larger events and trends. Given the high degree of residential stability and a pattern of children returning to occupy the houses of their youth or neighboring houses perpetuates the lack of diversity. In the end, however, the lack of racial diversity does not follow from the Olmsted design; it is a sociological phenomenon arising from historical circumstances engulfing the community and the country.

Despite the many commonalities shared by Annapolis Roads residents, the community has not been without conflict, and some of that conflict...or the forms it has taken...may be attributable to the community's design. I have observed that tensions have been due, at least in part, to geography. An unintended byproduct of the Olmsted plan has been the creation of various neighborhoods within the community, enclaves that do not always share interests with the others. Needs and interests of those living in the 1953 platted portion of the community, which does not conform to the original Olmsted plan, differ from those living on Queen Anne's Circle, which differ from those living on Land's End, Lyon Drive, York, or any of the other small enclaves that comprise Annapolis Roads. Some means of overcoming the handicap of dispersal must be found to insure the quiet, prosperous future of the community. Small community parks such as the centrally located Washington Square Park in the original design would complement the beach and Overlook as places in which neighbors might congregate and quietly converse. A similar amenity on Ogleton would provide balance, and each would serve as a destination for those living on opposite sides of the community. Sidewalks, as originally planned, would offer a safe means for residents to walk around Annapolis Roads, meeting neighbors without having to dodge traffic. Running might actually become a healthy, rather than a daredevil, activity.

Facilities that promote consensus, not conflict, cooperation, not competition, may help residents live the values that Olmsted and most of us espouse.

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