Vera Filby

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The History of Friendship

The local history of the area that is the home of the Annexes

Groups of NSA people have been moving into Friendship Annex since 1967. Not so long before that, the land our buildings now occupy was farm and woodland; now it sometimes takes us 10 minutes to make a left turn into it. If you came to the Baltimore-Washington area from elewhere, as most of us did, you probably know little about the place where you spend most of your working days; so next time you find yourself waiting in traffic to make that turn, you might like to relieve the tedium by thinking about where you are and what was here before you.

Well, where are you?

The location of this place on earth is approximately 39°11'45"N 76°41'10"W and it lies about 100 feet above sea level. The property is on Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, and our name for it is based on its proximity to Friendship Airport. The names preserve some of the story of the land for those who understand them. Friendship, for example: where did the name come from? If you are a newcomer and were asked to guess, you would probably make up a plausible and attractive story; but you would be wrong. The airport was named for Friendship Methodist Church, which stood in about the middle of the site acquired for the airport. The church cemetery is still there, and when the airport was new it was a local lovers lane and a place to visit on summer evenings to watch the airplanes come and go.

Elkridge Landing Road: what does its name signify? We think of its traffic morning and evening and we see the continual construction; but once it was a rolling road, and down it hogsheads of tobacco were rolled to the wharves at Elkridge Landing for shipment in sailing vessels to ports in England. During our days at work here we have little awareness of the nearness of salt water, but from the air you can see how close it is and understand why the region developed as it did. In the early days, Elkridge Landing was the port for this roadless hinterland, and through it and because of it the region was settled.

Friendship Cemetery

When the European settlers first came they found a fine, broad estuary, and at the head of it a beautiful stream tumbling through a long gorge. In colonial times a tide of five or six feet washed the port at Elkridge Landing. Now the river is shrunken away, sunk in foulness, and nearly dead.

We call the river Patapsco, a corruption of the Indian name, which some authorities interpret as "back water" and others as "at the rocky point," a reference to the limestone rocks in the river at the mouth of Rock Creek. On the earliest maps it is shown as Bolus flu, a name given by the first explorer to record his visit, Captain John Smith.

On his first voyage up the Chesapeake Bay, from Jamestown, in June 1608, he and his party sailed along the cliffs of the western shore, and after anchoring for the night, "30 leagues we sailed more Northwards, not finding any inhabitants: yet the coast was well watred, the mountains very barren, the vallies very fertil, but the woods extreame thicke, full of Woolues, Beares, Deare, and other wild beasts." The first inlet they found they called Bolus "for that the clay (in many places) was like (if not) Bole-Armoniacke." The reference was to a reddish clay used for medical purposes; the clay they saw was probably one of the many deposits of iron ore, which were later to become the basis for industry.

The Friendship Church

But the days of mines and forges and furnaces lay in the future, and for many years after the bayshore settlements of St. Mary's and Annapolis were established, few white men penetrated the forested wilderness. Even the red men had no permanent settlements there. As late as 1909 a journalist could write that the Chesapeake shores in the early days "were infested by hordes of red men" (at this further distance in time it strikes us as cruelly prejudiced to see these doomed people as "infesting" their own country), but in fact Captain John Smith had found the Patapsco "a river not inhabited." It was then a territory of contention between the peaceable Patuxents and other Algonquin tribes to the south and the aggressive Susquehannocks, an Iroquois tribe, whom Captain John Smith described as "a gyant-like people," to the north.

One of the earliest records of land near the FANX area is dated 1677, when "Charles Absolute Lord and Proprietary of the Province of Maryland and Avalon Lord Baron of Baltimore" granted to Nicholas Painter "all that Parcell of Land called Andover lying in Baltimore County on the South side of a River called Patapsco River in the woods beginning at a bounded red oak and running with the Line of the Land of Anthony Holland and the Line of the Land of Robert Lockwood west northwest . . . ." For this grant of 1640 acres Nicholas Painter was to pay "yearly unto us and our heirs . . . at our city of Saint-Maries at the two most usual feasts in the Year Viz. at the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and at the feast of St. Michael the Archangel by even and equal portions the Rent of Three Pounds & five Shillings & Seven pence Sterling in Silver or Gold . . . ."

The border between Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties at that time and until 1722 ran along the water divide between the Patapsco and Magothy Rivers, with its western terminus described as the Three Notch Pines, or the Girdle Pines. On the Martenet map of 1886, two centuries later, the old county line is traced, and near the end of it, at a point a mile or so east southeast of Annapolis Junction, are three marks, with the label Three Marked Pines. The spot would probably now be somewhat north of the interchange of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Savage Road (Annapolis Junction Road, Route 32).

Andover is now the site of Linthicum Heights, but the name survives in Andover Road and elsewhere. Andover did not extend to our FANX area, but it adjoined property which did. The FANX site can be traced back, though not without difficulty, through many changes of ownership, to the mid-nineteenth century, when the Conway family owned properties which still retained their old names of Walker's Inheritance, Caple's Fancy, and Poplar Spring Garden. The exact outlines of these tracts are now difficult to place, defined as they were in the deeds and wills in terms of such landmarks and measurements as bounded red oaks and perches. But local memory can tell us that one of the Conway houses was near the present Airport Road underpass, and names of surviving features can help us keep our bearings.

Land grant records describe "Capells" Fancy, a tract of 100 acres, "beginning at Two bounded white oaks and two bounded red oaks standing by a branch called Kettens branch . . . ." This would be Kitten Branch, which rises in what is now Friendship Airport and flows northwest along the Westinghouse taxiway, under Fort Meade Road (Route 170) near the sequence flasher approach lane, and on into Stoney Run. Kitten was the name of a family long since gone; but records show that a property called Kittens Chance "on the north side of the main branch of Stoney Run" was surveyed for Theophilus Kitten in 1708 and patented to Edward Kitten in 1743.

The Map of Capt. John Smith

Walker's Inheritance, "Lying and being in Ann Arrundell County upon the south side of Patapsco River & on both sides of those Drafts of Patapsco River called Deep Run & Stoney Run," was a resurvey for Dr. James Walker of older tracts "to correct the original surveys and add vacant land." Dr. Walker acquired these properities in 1755 and sold them, along with part of Andover and other properties on the south side of the Patapsco as far east as Curtis Creek, to Thomas Harrison in 1758, at the same time acquiring from him a property called Scott's Folly on Elk Ridge. Walker's Inheritance contained 1730 acres and included Cupola Hill, Maccubbin's Discovery, and Mineral Ridge. Cupola Hill, which lay between Deep Run and Stoney Run, was granted in 1743 "unto James Macubbin of Annarundell County Gent." Maccubbin's Discovery was surveyed in 1744; its 41 acres adjoined a tract called Stoney Run. Mineral Ridge was a resurvey of tracts called Old Man's Folly and Neglect. With vacancies it comprised 660 acres, about 30 cleared, and its "improvements" included "1 Old Loghouse 18 foot by 12 / 400 panels old fence most of them saplin poles and Very rotten / 12 old scrub apple trees." This was part of the granite ridge which runs south from Elkridge Landing toward what is now Laurel, and in later years it was to become a summering place for wealthy families from the Landing and Annapolis.

Walker's Inheritance has had a confused history complicated by several lawsuits, and some of the transfers of all or parts of it, possibly including the earliest and certainly the latest, were for speculation.

In 1753, John Worthington paid four shillings a year rent for Cappells Fancy. In 1802, "certain lands being part of Walker's Inheritance" were sold for 17 shillings an acre. In 1833, Andrew Ellicott bought Caple's Fancy, Walker's Inheritance, and Poplar Spring Garden for $3.00 an acre. And in 1967, a parcel of that land cost $50,000 an acre.

In between, the land has been logged, farmed, and probably mined, and now it is being very rapidly industralized. The probability of mining, though not necessarily for iron, is shown by the name Mineral Ridge, and evidence appears in the indenture for the sale of the properties to Jesse Conway immediately after their purchase in 1833 "reserving nevertheless to the said Andrew Ellicott Junior his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns being proprietors of the Iron works now owned and used by the said Andrew Elicott Junior at or near Elkridge Landing the absolute right and propriety in all sands and other earths in said lands which may be suitable and proper for mouldings."

Underlying much of the area is the Arundel formation, which was and still is rich in iron deposits. The importance of iron in the Elkridge region is still reflected in placenames like Furnace Road and Furnace Avenue, at the bottom of Elkridge Landing Road, and local people can still tell you where traces of iron workings are to be found. Iron ore, with its bulk and weight, made a good companion cargo with tobacco, which was the basis of Maryland's economy even in regions where the soil was not really suitable for growing it. Tobacco was the cash crop. Tobacco was wealth. Tobacco was currency: fees and salaries were paid in tobacco; goods could be bought with tobacco. The Assembly in 1696 authorized four rolling roads to be marked and cleared for the rolling of tobacco to the ports of Ann Arundel County. In 1763 more than half the county's tobacco crop was shipped from the wharves of Elkridge Landing.

One of the few records of Elkridge as a seaport is a log kept by Charles Dorsey, master of the snow (a square-rigged ship) *Baltimore Town*, on a voyage from London to Virginia and Maryland in 1757. She had called at Hampton Roads, Annapolis, Hawkins Point, and Baltimore and had delivered the last of her cargo. Here are a few of the December entries:

Remarks on Munday Decemb^{r} 19th 1757
Strong frosty weather had 4 hands Rattling the Shrouds fore and aft took in two flatt Loads with Iron one with 9 tuns and the other with 8 tuns the flatt Returned Back without tobacco the River Being frose up and we have Ice all Round us but not fast yet had 4 carpenters & two hired man at work

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Remarks on Satturday Decemb^{r} 24th 1757
sent a flatt and four hands to town carpenters came on board with 98½ pounds Bolts and Spikes Received on board 20 hh^{ds} of Tobacco had 4 carpenters at work Better than half a Day a fresh gale of wind about SW — Elkridge frose up

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Remarks on Munday Decemb^{r} 26th 1757
all hands at work sum stowing in the hold won Spinning Spunn yarn old patrick on shore carpenters finish the fore Top got him over the mast head had one hired man Half a Day in the hould Elkridge Open

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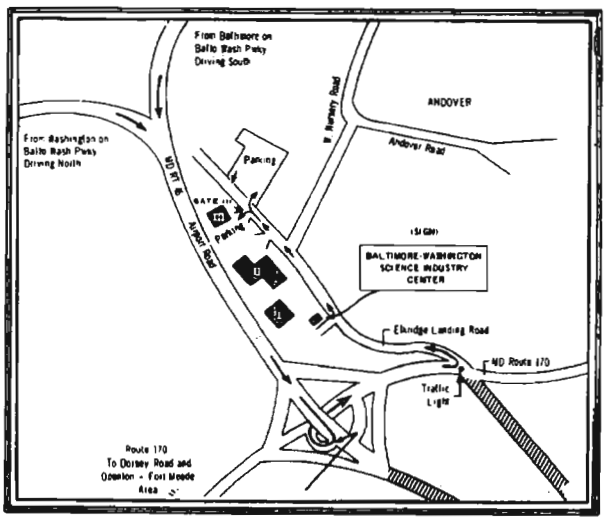
Remarks on Wednesday Decemb^{r} 28th 1757
fine moderate weather got the furick [futtock?] shrouds up Reved most of our Guning Ropes about the fore yard had 2 carpenters most of a Day and three hired men all Day got 10 hh^{ds} of tobacco from town and eight from Elkridge came on board about 9 or 10 clock at Night



The Friendship Annex area

The hogsheads of tobacco were hauled down the rolling roads to the Landing. In earlier days, when the plantations were near the river and had their own wharves, sailors from the English merchant ships had to move the planter's tobacco and load it aboard. This was no hardship then, but as new plantations were established farther from navigable water, the system became burdensome, and in 1727, in response to the complaints of the London merchants, the Assembly passed a law requiring the planters to deliver their tobacco to a convenient wharf. Thereafter the planters used slaves or indentured servants or muleteams to roll the heavy hogsheads down the rolling roads to the river.

Tobacco and iron, then, built the port of Elkridge Landing. And tobacco and iron killed it.

Tobacco is a ruinously greedy crop, and so is corn, which the planters also grew. The soils of the region soon became depleted, and runoff from the cultivated fields began to wash down into the streams and the river. Timber was cut to make charcoal for the iron foundries, and the cutover hillsides eroded. To the increasing accumulations of silt in the river was added ballast dumped overboard from the merchant ships. Many of them came from England carrying brick, which was cheap there and made a steady ballast, and many a colonial house was built of English brick. But often the ships had to take on sand or stone for ballast after unloading cargo. By mid-century the river was dwindling and the channel filling with silt. In an effort to control the deterioration the Assembly in 1763 decreed that "No earth, sand or dirt was to be thrown into or put upon the beach or shore of the Patapsco or any navigable branch thereof below high water mark except when secured by stone wall or dove-tailed log-pen from washing into the river. Under a penalty of five pounds current money." (No doubt some of the merchants did what some do today—they continued to pollute and when caught paid the fine, since it was trivial compared to the profits.)

The pattern of agriculture began to change in 1774 with the arrival of the Ellicott brothers, Joseph, John, and Andrew, Quakers from Pennsylvania, who planned to establish a flour mill at one of the rapids in the gorge of the Patapsco. Like other settlers before and after them, they arrived at Elkridge Landing, the only port of entry for upper Anne Arundel County, and they had their machinery and other equipment shipped in to the Landing and then carried over the rough trails to the mill site. The brothers encouraged the shift from tobacco to wheat so successfully that by 1783 they began to export flour. They shipped it, however, from Baltimore, which was growing rapidly, while Elkridge was declining.

The Landing had reached the climax of its development before and during the Revolution. The Ellicotts had found a prosperous town. Beautiful manor houses, some of which survive, had been built in the surrounding hills, and a wealthy gentry supported a trade in fine English linen, silk, furniture, chinaware, tea, and other luxury goods. With the Revolution, the English factors went home, but a wartime economy kept the port busy. After the war a trade developed with Germany, but soon there were willow thickets and swampy ground and meadows where formerly ships had sailed, and Elkridge Landing died as a port.

(Continued next issue)

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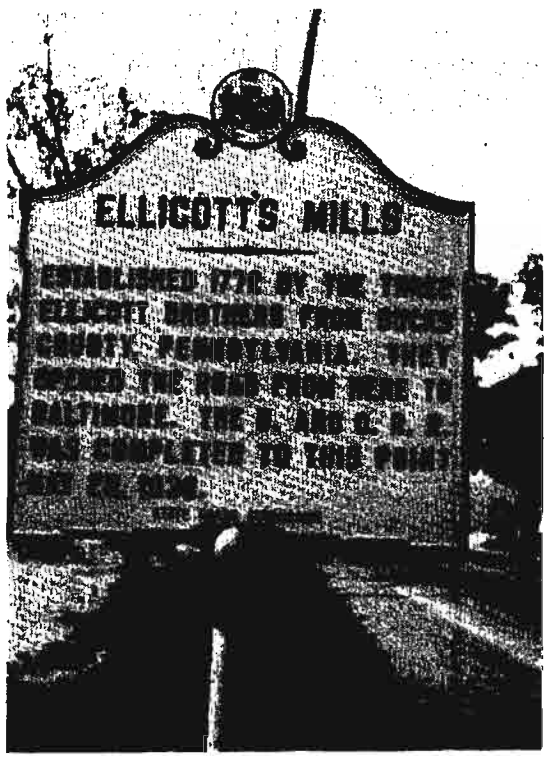
The History of Friendship

II

By the early and middle eighteenth century the country south of the Patapsco was a sparsely settled region of large farms, some of them poor, some abandoned. A picture of what part of it must have been like emerges from a traveler's diary in 1864. Isaac Van Bibber, a Baltimore lawyer, was on a journey through Maryland to collect money to build a church in Westminster. In his entry for Thursday, 14 March, he wrote:

"About 9 o'clock I again started upon my way, having picked up about $40.00 at Ellicotts Mills. I rode along the romantic bank of the Patapsco as far as Elkridge Landing, about 8 miles, where I knocked at the door of Dr. Worthington's house, to inquire for the Episcopal clergyman residing there. No one coming to the door after I had knocked repeatedly, I rode on two miles further, when finding it 12 o'clock, I stopped at a tavern to have my horse fed, and to take a little snack on my own account. Here I was told that the road to Annapolis was very difficult to find, but that I could obtain conveyance for my self and horse upon the rail-road, about 10 miles distant. Thither, I repaired after a slight meal of eggs and crackers. When arrived at the relay house, I was told that there was no car suitable for transporting horses, but that I might send a boy from Annapolis & have my mare ridden down by the country road. This plan being the only one left me, I set out in the car for Annapolis and reached it, though distant twenty miles, in less than an hour. The rail-road appears to be very well constructed; but passes through one of the dreariest and most poverty stricken countries I ever saw. The appearance of an abundance of pebbles in the soil, between this & Elk-ridge, shows that this part of the country was originally under water . . ." And he then proceeded to indulge in the geological speculation that interested so many educated gentlemen of his day.

The railroad must have been the Annapolis and Elk-Ridge Rail Road, which was under construction in 1839. It connected with the Washington Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio at Annapolis Junction "near the 18 mile stone from Baltimore in the vicinity of the Savage Factory" and crossed the Washington Branch of the Baltimore & Potomac at Odenton. The latter branch ran almost due north from the junction and alongside Stoney Run, as it still does, now as the Penn Central.



About a mile east of the Baltimore & Potomac on a tract of land called Timber Ridge, a grant to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a Methodist church was built in 1840. The inclusion of Negro members in the church records for many years, though separately listed, suggests an amicable relationship, but resolutions in the minutes of the meetings

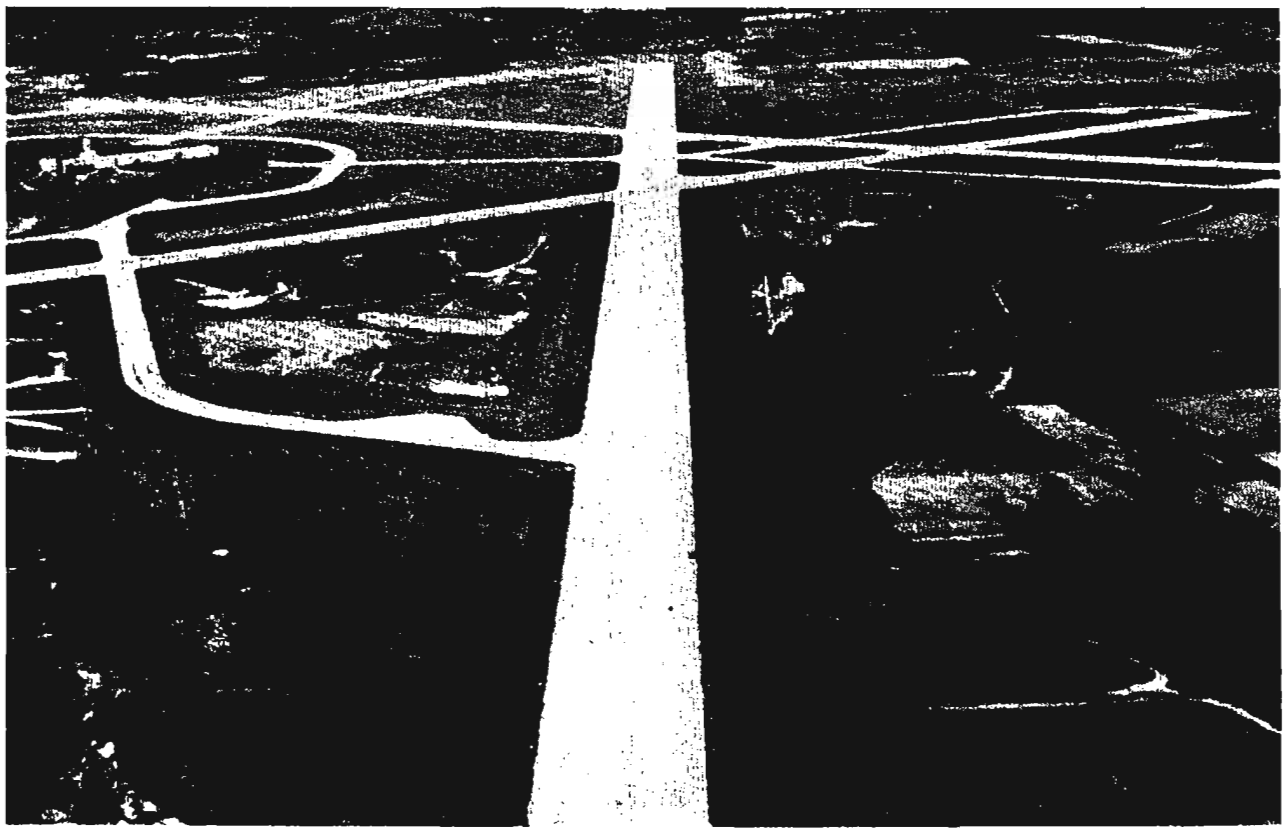
by the 1860's begin to reflect the split that later tore apart the church, the community, the state, and the nation. The Civil War and Reconstruction completed the rupture, and some of the members of the Timber Ridge Church withdrew and established their own group, which came to be known as Friendship Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was the presiding elder who had suggested the name Friendship, because of the friendliness and congeniality of the membership. For a time the congregation met in a tent while they erected their first building across Telegraph Road from Timber Ridge Methodist Episcopal Church, whose congregation later moved to Patapsco Methodist Church. In 1900 the Friendship congregation built its second church, where they worshipped nearly half a century, until construction of the airport began. The last service was held on Easter Sunday 1948. By then the three branches of the Methodist Church, Northern, Southern, and Methodist Episcopal, had united, and at last the Timber Ridge and Friendship congregations were reunited as Wesley Grove. A new church building, incorporating the stained glass windows from Friendship, was built on Dorsey Road near Ridge Road and was consecrated in November 1951. Installed in the foundations were the cornerstones of the old Friendship churches, one dated 1866 and the other 1900.

Throughout most of its years, the Friendship Church had served a mainly farming community. The countryside thereabouts was not rich, as Isaac Van Bibber had observed. Some glimpse of the lifestyle of the region is reflected in the inventory in 1919 of an Elkridge Landing Road farmer who had died. It included a safe, a walnut stand, 10 chairs, a watch, guns, farming implements, market wagons, a harness, a mowing machine, a hotbed sash, one horse, and two mules. These last, together worth $100, were the most valuable property listed.

Though tobacco continued to be raised, the nearness of the expanding Baltimore urban market favored the development of truck gardening, a form of agriculture better suited to the variegated sands and clays, Sassafras loams, and Norfolk sand of the region. An apparently effective and mutually satisfactory urban-rural system for harvesting the market garden crops developed by the 1870's and continued into the 1930's. Farmers drove their wagons, later their trucks, to the Polish neighborhoods of Baltimore to fetch the women, children, and older men who had been recruited to work on the farms, where they were housed in "shanties," with straw for bedding. The younger men stayed at their jobs on the docks and elsewhere in the city, but on Sundays they came out by train to visit their families, and there was feasting and music and dancing. In time some of these people acquired land and became farmers themselves.

In a system perhaps unique to northern Anne Arundel County the farmers paid the pickers in brass tokens called picker checks. About the size of a penny, they were engraved with the farmer's initials on one side and a denomination on the other representing the amount picked, in quarts or pecks or bushels. Often the shapes of the tokens indicated the crop—round for peas, octagonal for beans, scalloped for strawberries, among others. The

How "rolling roads" got their name. Here a hogshead is pulled by one horse and one ox.



Friendship Airport opening day—June 1950.

pickers later redeemed them for cash from the owners or used them for money in the local stores. Even a few Baltimore shopkeepers accepted them. In recent years caches of picker checks left from those days have been made into charm bracelets and sold for the benefit of local institutions.

And so, by the beginning of World War II, this was a region of tobacco fields, market gardens, orchards, pastures, woodlands, and small streams flowing through wooded valleys. (Stoney Run was described in a state survey of water resources as late as 1951 as a "sucker stream" and Kitten Branch as a "dace trickle.") About a mile northeast of Friendship Church was the intersection of Elkridge Landing Road and the road called at different times Telegraph Road, Old Annapolis Road, Camp Meade Road, and Fort Meade Road. This was Wellham Crossroads, named for a family descended from John Wellham, who was born at sea of English immigrant parents in 1797. It was near this crossroad, once the site of a country store and the local post office, that the nine-story airport terminal building was later to rise.

During World War II, it became obvious that Baltimore's Harbor Field would soon be inadequate as the city's airport, and in 1944 the Baltimore Aviation Commission recommended acquisition of a site 9 miles south of Baltimore centered on Friendship Church. They selected this site because its position on a plateau rising to some 190 feet and its sandy soil permitted good drainage of air and water. The site was referred to as Friendship from the beginning. Other names were proposed, including Baltimore City Memorial Airport, but the matter was settled in January 1948, when Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr. wrote the following letter to Walter F. Perkins, Chairman of the Airport Board:

Dear Walter:

Thank you for your letter of January 26th reporting to me on the meeting held in the office of the Association of Commerce on Friday afternoon at which plans for having the new airport designated as co-terminal with Washington were discussed.

I concur in your views regarding the use of the City's name in connection with the airport which might, as you

say, jeopardize and perhaps cause opposition to the efforts to secure co-terminal status. To me the name Friendship International Airport is ideal and I heartily approve of it.

With warmest personal regard, I remain,

Sincerely yours,
(signed) Tommy

In 1947 a contract was let for relocation of Fort Meade Road. Soon clearing of the runways began, and aerial photographs in November and December show great, broad, pale, star-shaped smudges across the landscape, as if an immense stamp had been slammed down to mark it CANCELLED. Elkridge Landing Road, which had wandered across the countryside eventually to become 5th Street in Glen Burnie, disappeared into one smear and reappeared out of another. Wellham Crossroads had been obliterated. The houses scattered over the 3,300 acres of the airport property, some of local historical interest, had to be removed; a few were reestablished elsewhere, but most were destroyed.

The airport acreage also contained 17 cemeteries, most of them the small family graveyards so typical of the area. (You have probably seen them on your way to work, whether at FANX or the Operations Building. A pathetic memento in one tiny woodland burial plot beside Savage Road not far from the Operations Building is a rough stone with the letters MOTHER crudely scratched on it.) By spring of 1949 only two were left. One was Friendship Cemetery, which is still there. The other, situated beside Kitten Branch between the west and northwest runway ends, was Holy Trinity, a Russian cemetery. The city of Baltimore moved it to a new site off Elibank Road in Howard County, where only a few years later it was again threatened, this time by construction of Interstate 95. It was spared, however, and remains there on a grassy hill surrounded by thick woods, Cyrillic inscriptions on many of the gravestones, photographs of the dead on some.

When the airport was finished, at a cost of $12,758,000, it was 4 times the size of LaGuardia, 5 times the size of National, and considered by *Engineering News-Record* "the world's best airport." It was officially opened by President Truman in June 1950. A month later, on the first day of scheduled flights, hordes of spectators 80,000 strong turned out and created traffic jams backing up for miles.

Since then the story of Elkridge Landing Road has been one of accelerating industrial and business development. For a time a Nike site crowned the hill where the Marriott establishment is now, but Nikes proved to be ephemeral features of the landscape. With the construction of the Baltimore Beltway, which opened in 1962, the road was further segmented, and now you can't get to Elkridge Landing on Elkridge Landing Road. Since then what has sprung up along the road are small plants and multipurpose buildings like ours at the Baltimore-Washington Science Industry Center (35 Science Drive, though hardly anyone but the Linthicum post office seems to know the address), with a more recent trend to high-rise office buildings. The FANX buildings and some of their neighbors are investment properties of the Dickinson enterprises.) There seems to be every reason to expect continuing growth and construction, with the airport and its satellite installations as a focus. The airport itself is a major employer, and its value by 1970 had increased to $150 million.

And so we have scanned the story of 300 years from forest to incipient megalopolis. But immense though the changes have been, the one basic fact remains unchanged, here and everywhere, that the land's peoples must try to solve the same problem of how to get a living from it—whether directly as did the Indians, the subsistence farmers and early iron makers, or increasingly indirectly as we do today in business and government—without destroying it. The small population of Indians in the region lived as best a Stone Age people could in a tidewater woodland environment. Destructive enough in their own way, they were probably as nearly a natural part of the climax forest as the elk whose presence is recorded in Maryland names like Elk Ridge, Elk Neck and Head of Elk. They hunted the deer and small game and waterfowl. They caught the herring and shad during the spring runs and all the other abundant fish at all seasons. They dug clams and oysters. Some of them built houses of bark in palisaded villages and planted corn in burnt clearings. To us it seems they must have lived a happy-go-lucky life, when they weren't fighting, rather like a perpetual camping trip. But happy or not, that life was doomed when the white man came. And the Patapsco was doomed too. In the Indians' time the effects of floods were mitigated by the capacity of the natural vegetation to absorb and hold water. But with settlement and cultivation much of this cover was lost, as the surviving islands of field and forest are being destroyed today. The great flood of 1868 washed out what little had remained of the port at Elkridge Landing. The ravages of tropical storm Agnes in June 1972 left the low areas along the streams even more vulnerable and subject to flash flooding than they were before. So our numbers continue to increase, we know we are part of the conflict that must some day be resolved, but few of us have any idea how the resolution will come about.

Acknowledgments

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