

### EARLY FAIRFIELD

An interesting article published recently gave some reminiscences of early Fairfield, the industrial community at Curtis Bay. But it shed no light on how the place got its name.

**JUL 2 1941**

Fairfield, the community, is less than sixty years old, but the place name goes back to the late Seventeenth Century, when it was the home of John Cromwell, who came to Maryland between 1670 and 1680.

Miss Anne Armour Perkins, 1402 Park avenue, has in her possession a frayed and faded "journal" kept by her grandmother, Mrs. Elizabeth Cromwell Corner, wife of William Corner. Mrs. Corner was born at Fairfield in 1802 and died in Tennessee in 1851. The journal covers the period from 1830 to 1837.

John Cromwell, the first owner of Fairfield, had three sons—Richard, John and Thomas Cromwell—who were all born and reared at Fairfield. Richard Cromwell married Elizabeth Waters of Bellegrove, Anne Arundel county. Thomas Cromwell married Ann Waters, a half-sister of Elizabeth, and settled in Pennsylvania.

**BALTO. NEWS-POST**

John Cromwell, Jr., became a physician and was one of the founders of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty. He died in 1832, and his tombstone, removed from a family burial lot, is in old St. Thomas' Churchyard, Garrison Forest.

Mrs. Elizabeth Cromwell Corner, who wrote the journal, was the daughter of Richard, Jr., son of Richard of Fairfield, who died in 1804.

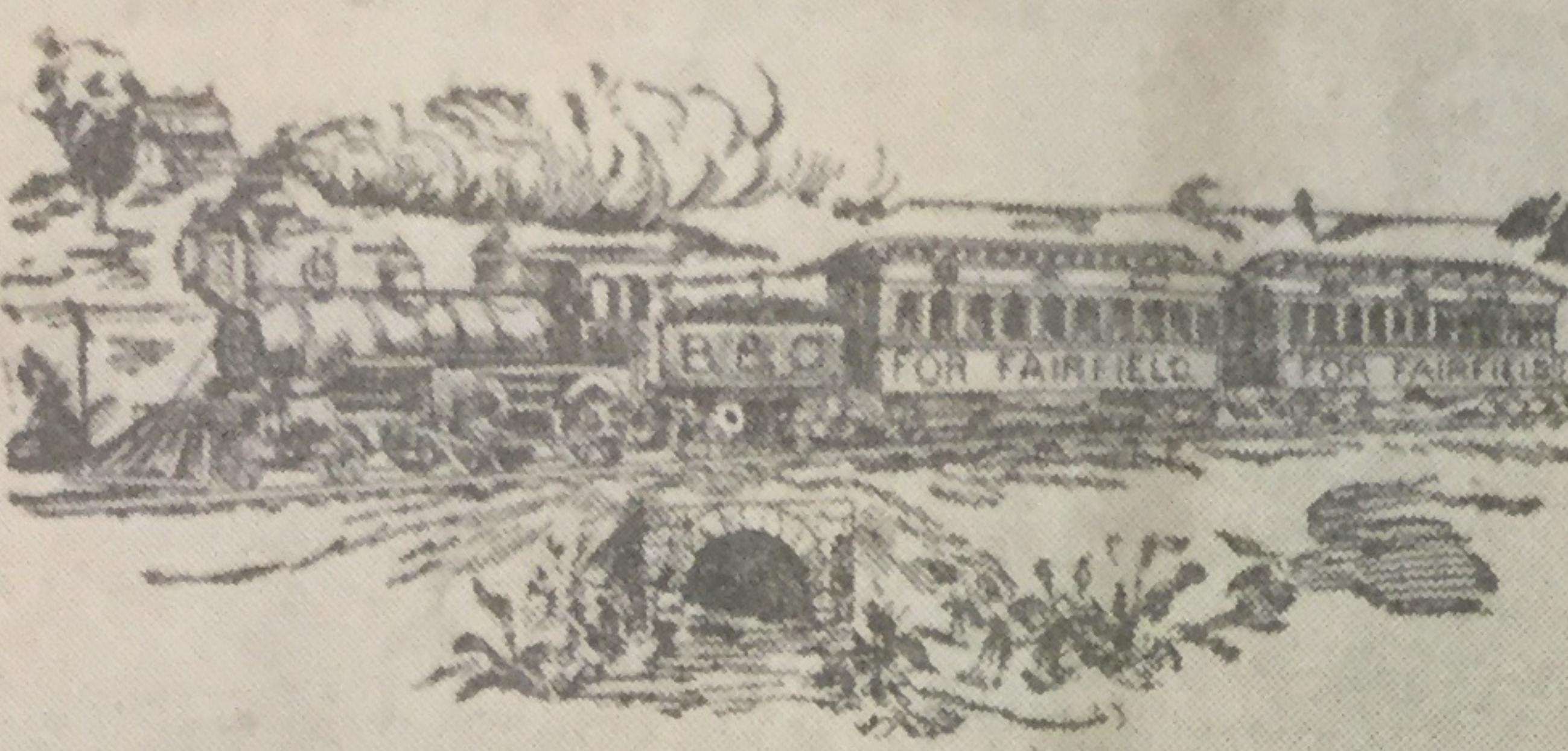
The old home at Fairfield disappeared many years ago and Miss Perkins does not know where it stood.

## Fairfield Reminiscences

P. 26.

(Baltimore)

JUN 26 1941

Industrial Area Looks Back  
On Its Almost Pastoral Past

ACROSS LONG BRIDGE.

Perhaps no place around Baltimore is better off than Fairfield. It is easily accessible by steam railroad, electric railroad, by boat and by easy driving.—The *Fairfield Journal*, 1893.

Mr. and Mrs. William Potts moved to Fairfield fifty-three years ago after they had visited "the prettiest, healthiest and most delightfully located suburban town in the South" on a Sunday excursion.

When Mrs. Potts traveled to Baltimore from her new suburban home she pushed a baby carriage to Long Bridge, paid 5 cents for crossing and took a street car at Ferry Bar.

When she wanted to shop on Broadway she crossed the river on a scow pulled by a tug that was used to transport workmen to and from the plants in Fairfield.

But that was fifty-three years ago.

## Had Nine Factories

It was in the days when Fairfield had nine factories which employed only 2,100 men and tiny poplars lined the few main streets. The population in those days, according to the *Fairfield Journal*, was, "Adult males, 62; adult females, 46; under 21, males, 51; females, 60; total, 221."

Today Fairfield is a growing town and within six months two enterprises—a sixteen-way shipbuilding plant and an expanding ship repair yard—will give additional employment for approximately 10,000 men.

The poplars arch several of the main streets, and the people of Fairfield are talking about regular metropolitan streetcar service.

## No Longer Uses Scow

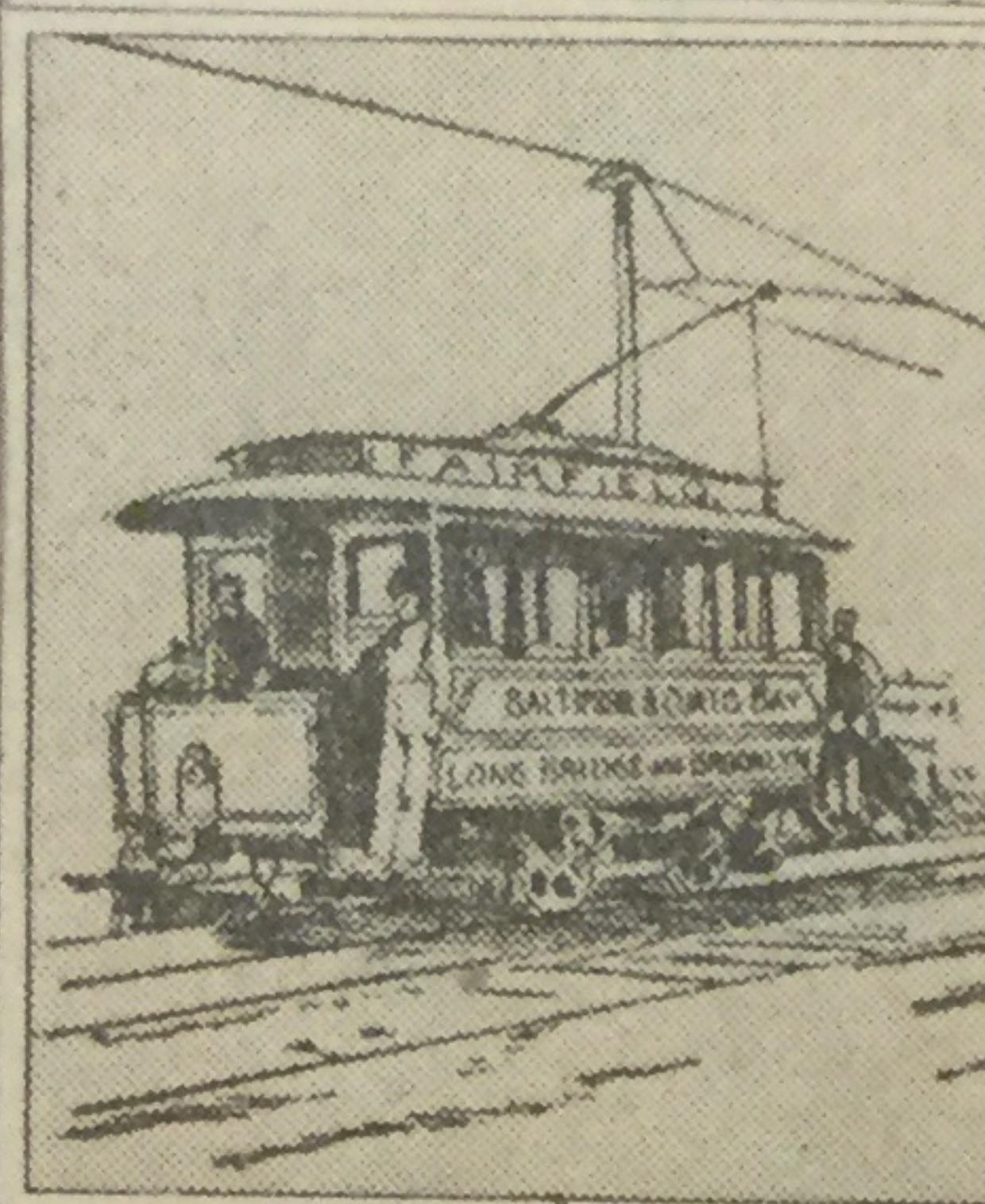
Mrs. Potts, who is now 78 years old, still lives in Fairfield but she no longer comes to Baltimore on a scow.

Attuned to the times, she asked, "Why don't they put in busses instead of old-fashioned streetcars?"

Fifty-three years ago there was no need for fast, mass transportation.

In those days Fairfield was linked with the city by occasional "excursion" steam trains of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and a two-round-trip a day improved ferryboat service across the harbor to the foot of Broadway.

The excursionists were shown around the small village by real estate



—Fairfield Journal, 1893

agents and many were persuaded to settle there.

A thirty-foot lot was advertised for \$150, and a frame two-story house, 15 by 40 feet, sold for \$500.

## Taxes Put At \$6.50

Taxes were estimated at \$6.50 a year, interest on investment at \$39 and insurance at \$1.66 a year to make the nominal cost of the six-room dwelling \$47.16 a year.

The early settlers were attracted by opportunities to work in the then Rasin Chemical Company, the Baltimore Chrome Works and the Monumental Acid Works.

Entertainment was provided by a hostelry that promoted pig barbecue and free shows. A competitor put on prize fights.

Mr. and Mrs. Potts built the fifth house in the community after living for a year in a company house. The house still stands on Remley street. The street was known by another name when Fairfield was first plotted, but Mrs. Potts has forgotten that one detail.

## Clear As Yesterday

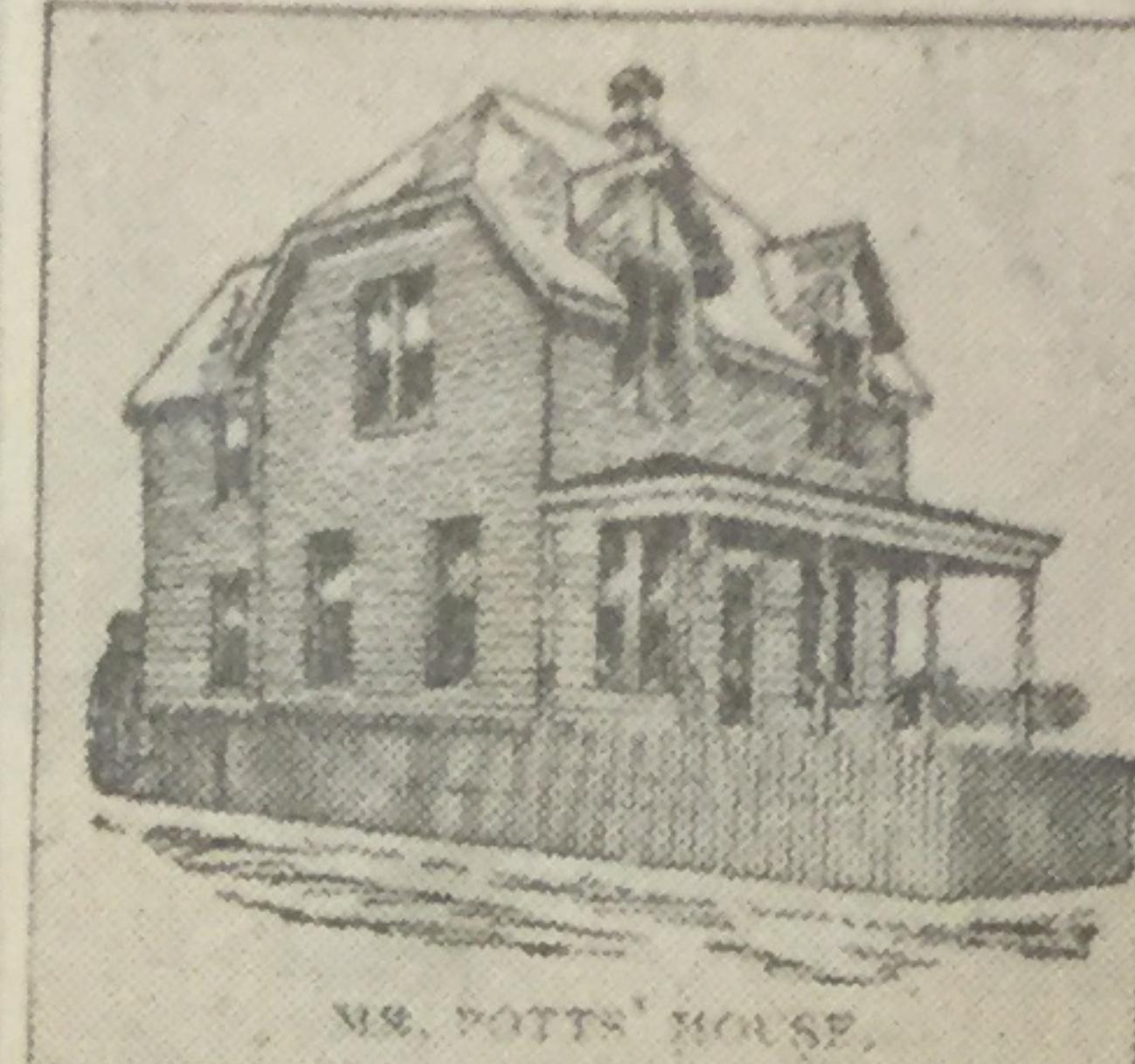
Everything else she remembers as clear "as it was yesterday."

Mr. Potts had steady work, "times

were good," said Mrs. Potts yesterday, "and at \$8.25 a week we raised a family of five children and had some money left over."

"This was a great place in the early days," she continued. "Why on Sundays the road (Shell road it was called then; it is now Chesapeake avenue) was black with people walking and with all sorts of horsedrawn vehicles. They had come to this lovely spot to spend the day in the woods, fields and along the shore."

"People walked a lot then. It was



MR. POTTS' HOUSE.

—Fairfield Journal, 1893

good for them. But now we need faster means of transportation."

In those days a marine hospital occupied the site that is now being developed into the biggest shipyard on the Atlantic seaboard—the Bethlehem Fairfield Shipyard, Inc.

Discussing the old hospital, Mrs. Potts said, "It was known far and wide for the great number of victims

of dreaded smallpox that we sent there from the city to die, and its great cemetery was a sight never to be forgotten."

The Potts family has taken all the modern improvements in stride.

## Pump Still Serviceable

The old well with its hand-pump is still in serviceable condition, although city water now runs at the turn of a faucet. The Potts home was one of the first to be wired with electricity. Yesterday Mrs. Potts laughed as she recalled how Mr. Potts said he would never submit to such "contraptions going into my house."

But the days of old have passed for Fairfield. It is thoroughly modern today and growing fast. What it wants today, more than anything else, is street cars.

Fairfield Famous For Farms  
For More Than Sixty Years

JUN 29 1941

But Tank Farms Replace Fields Of Peas, Beans And  
Cantaloupes Of The Past

Founders of Fairfield, the industrial suburb, on which the shipbuilding and ship repair businesses are concentrating heavily, envisaged a complete transition from agriculture to industry, but after sixty years the community is still famed for its farms.

But instead of fields of peas, beans, cantaloupes and melons that went to make up Anne Arundel truck farms, the Fairfield district is now known for its vast tank farms—great aggregations of steel tanks in which petroleum products are stored.

## Equal To Tankship

The tank farms cover acres and acres of what were once rich farmlands, creating a great reservoir of lubricants, liquid fuels for heating planes and Diesel engines, gasoline for automobiles, airplanes and tanks and bunker fuel for oil-burning steamers.

Some of the tanks, measuring 130 feet in diameter and 35 feet in height, are being used to stabilize the earth barriers.

## Goats And Sheep

The tank farms have animals, too, and in particular goats and sheep maintained as the "best and cheapest grass cutters" the petroleum industry has yet found.

For the grass must be kept cut and trimmed, otherwise it would become tall and dry and defeat the purpose for which it has been planted. Then, too, these roots hold the levees together, curbing erosion and stabilizing the earth barriers.

# FAIRFIELD (BALTIMORE)

P.33

Eve Sun DEC 5 1958  
Correction! Correction

WHEN this Diary said (on November 25) that there is not now a street named Tyson row in Fairfield, it was dead right. When it said there apparently never has been a Tyson row, it was apparently right—because there is no record of such a street in the archives of Baltimore city, of Anne Arundel county or of the State Land Office. But before 1921, there was a string of eight two-story, frame houses in Fairfield called Tyson's row, and this correction comes to us by courtesy of George Pattinson, former deputy sheriff who served court orders there between 1914-18.

Mr. Pattinson is now an assistant to the Clerk of Baltimore City Court. He worked in Tyson's row when the vicinity was called Masonville and before it was annexed to Baltimore.

There was also a Tyson's Wharf for Anne Arundel county farm produce, Mr. Pattinson recalled the other day. But he remembers Tyson's row especially well because the front doors of the houses faced the Patapsco River, and all visitors, including process servers, walked in and out the back doors.

Tyson's row was demolished almost 40 years ago; so it should not be listed in the most widely circulated private street guide to Baltimore. Having implied that it was never a street at all, though, this Diary regrets the error. The city, county and State records will presumably be corrected accordingly.



# Neighborhood that City Hall wishes would go away

TO FIND BALTIMOREANS who live in much the same primitive conditions as those prevailing 250 years ago, when the city got its start, it no doubt would be possible to track down some really bad housing situations. I personally know of a family that managed to get through a whole winter with the gas and electricity turned off, no heat other than from scrap wood and trash burned in a fireplace and, as it turned out, no plumbing in working order. This comes pretty close to a throwback to 1729.

Drawings of early Baltimore, though, show a scattering of frame houses in a rural setting, and the only place in the modern-day city which comes readily to mind as being like that is Fairfield, a small, black community among the oil and chemical tanks in the lower reaches of south Baltimore. Fairfield has a scattering of frame houses, many of them in a makeshift state of ill-repair, and the setting is at least semi-rural as tasseled corn rises from flourishing vegetable gardens. The streets are pitted and broken, without curbs or sidewalks, and on a recent morning Fairfield road ended in mud puddles so deep that householders used planks to reach their front steps.

But by now even Fairfield has advanced beyond primitive conditions. Only a few years ago it had no sewers, and I remember stopping one fall to talk with an elderly gentleman who expressed his dread of cold snowy mornings when he would have to shovel a path to the outhouse to relieve himself. Shoveling took too much out of him, he said. The next spring when I asked for him, he had died that winter.

For the past several years Fairfield has had sewers, and more recently than that, street lights. But a decade of community appeals to City Hall has not substantially changed Fairfield's aura of being an early settlement that Baltimore has put out of sight and mind. Nowhere else in my wanderings have I known city government to be quite so tolerant of assorted junk, shoulder-high weeds and defunct buildings that should be demolished. Quite plainly, the city regards Fairfield as industrial, the way it is zoned, and not residential, the way it humanly happens to be. Junkyards may expand, but new houses are forbidden, so the future course of the community is downhill, despite sewers and lights.

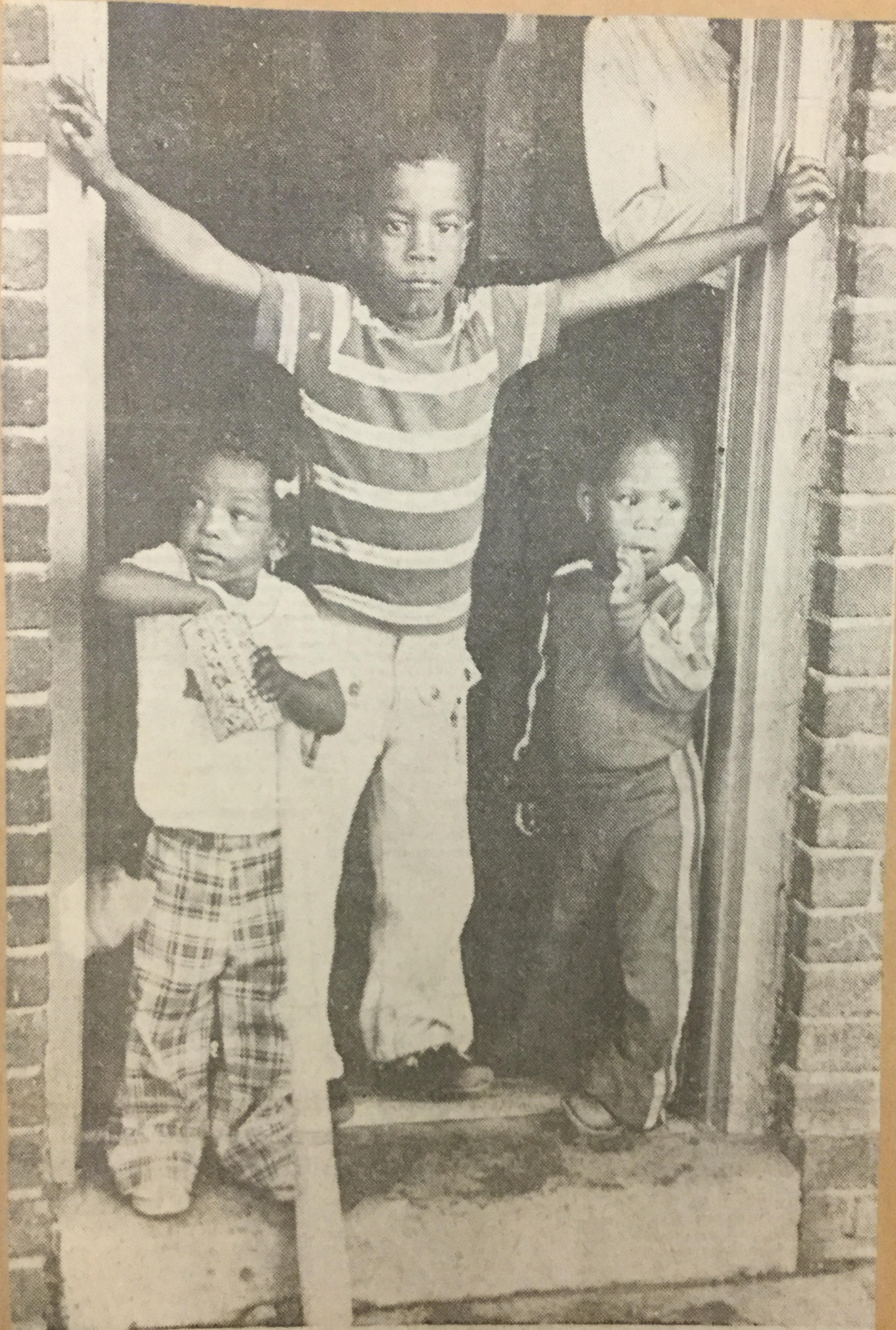
Jennie Fincher, who lives on partially abandoned Remley street, remembers Fairfield back when householders had oil lamps.

She and her husband, Robert Fincher, have no intention of moving. Mr. Fincher calls Fairfield a "sweet place to live," a place untroubled by break-ins, where people can walk the streets, different from the city where people are "scared to death." He doesn't want to move to a rowhouse or project when they own good land right where they are.

Mrs. Fincher is head of the Fairfield neighborhood association, which has about 50 active members, and her list of community needs is fairly simple. Fairfield wants street paving, storm drains, curbs and sidewalks to equal the improvements the city has recently made in nearby Wagner's Point, a white settlement. Fairfield residents also want a food store to spare them the inconvenience of having to shop in Brooklyn; and, having been awarded a grant for a community grocery, they don't want to be told that in an industrial zone they can only have a carryout food shop.

More broadly speaking, Mrs. Fincher and her friends want city government to recognize and fully serve Fairfield as a residential community, despite the looming presence of huge oil tanks. With its revenue-sharing funds in jeopardy this past June over alleged racial discrimination in municipal services, City Hall did, in fact, sign an agreement with federal officials either to bring Fairfield up to snuff or relocate its residents. Toward this end, Mr. Fincher says, the city has conducted a survey to see how Fairfield residents would feel about receiving \$10,000 above the assessed value of their houses, if they'll move.

The Finchers say that others share their determination to stay, so the fight will continue over a rural enclave within city limits that may be zoned industrial but is a garden spot for those whose other choices are slim.



The News American — James Kelmartin

**FEAR FOR THE CHILDREN:** It is for the young residents of Fairfield that parents in the heavily industrialized south Baltimore area are concerned. They are afraid for the safety of, from left, Shartrice Bradford, 2, Gerald Johnson, 6, and Lakisha Stover, 2, because railcars like the ones that derailed last week continue to run through the community.