

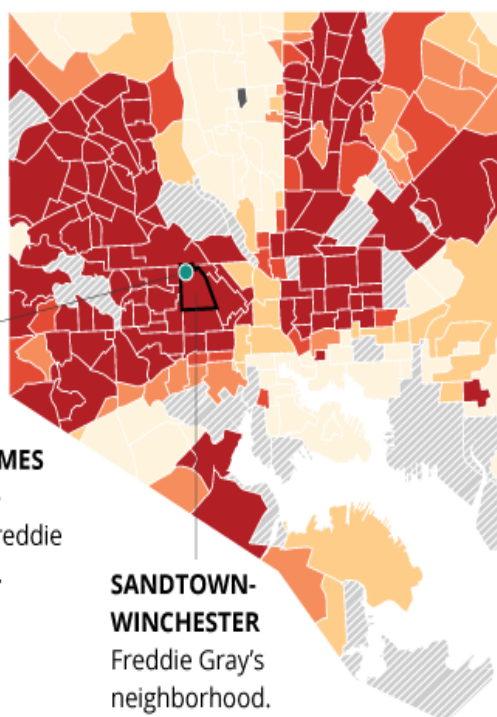
The Historical Geography of Racial Segregation in Baltimore

Joseph S. Wood
University of Baltimore and
The American Geographical Society

PERCENT OF RESIDENTS WHO ARE BLACK, 2010

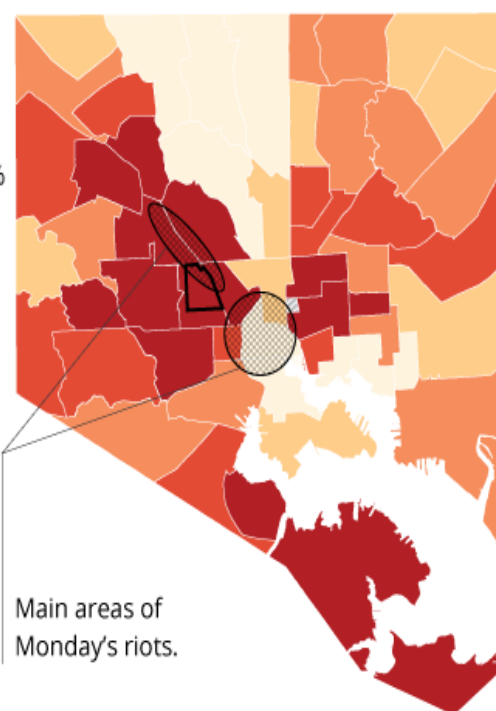
Industrial area/park (no residents)

- 0%
- >0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- 80-100%



PERCENT OF POPULATION 16-64 THAT IS UNEMPLOYED AND LOOKING FOR WORK, 2009-2013

- 2.8-5.4%
- 5.5-8.3%
- 8.4-10.5%
- 10.6-13.2%
- 13.3-17%



Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
University of Baltimore

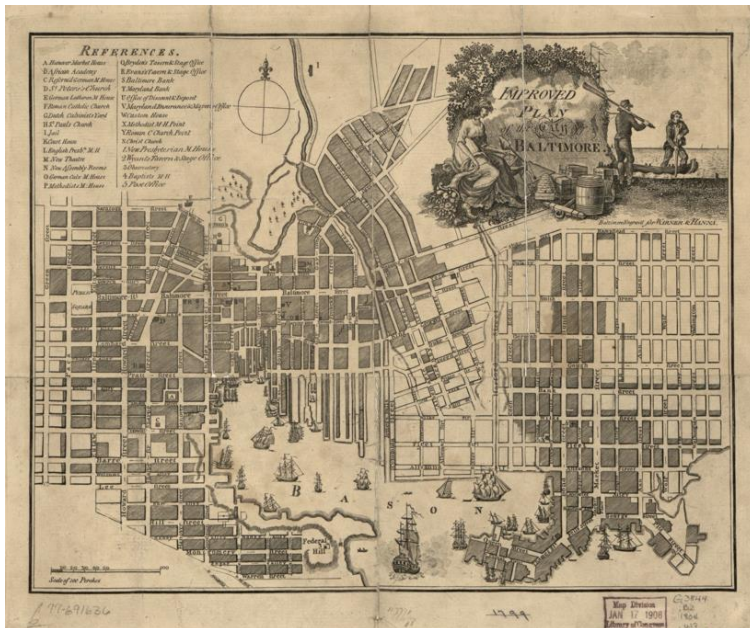
Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/28/baltimore-segregated-maps-riots_n_7163248.html

Historical Geographical Overview of Racial Segregation in Baltimore

How did the geographical patterns and relative locations illustrated in this guide’s cover-page maps of Baltimore in April 2015 develop, and how and why have they been perpetuated? The best way to understand this process deeply, and the factual basis for much of what follows, comes through the work of Antero Pietila: *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (2010) and *The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins: The Life and Legacy that Shaped an American City* (2018)—see the bibliography at the end of this guide.

I approach this guide from the perspective of structural racism—the assessment that historic discrimination with respect to housing policies, often highly intentional, created the present-day pattern of racial segregation and inequity. In particular, these historical acts of housing discrimination, intersecting with discrimination in education, employment, health care, transportation, criminal justice, public accommodation, etc., were efforts at controlling, confining, and criminalizing Baltimore’s African American population, thereby undermining the ability of many to accumulate inter-generational family wealth and forcing them into geographically concentrated poverty. In this approach, cultural, social, and economic behaviors are a consequence of discrimination, not a justification for it, although some scholars assert that the two—structure and behavior—play off of and reinforce one another—see William Julius Wilson, *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City* (2009).

From this premise of structural racism, the following offers a brief historical geographical orientation to and explanation of racial segregation and its perpetuation in Baltimore:



Warner and Hanna, 1804

*Baltimore started as a port that consolidated Baltimore City (1729) and adjacent Jonestown (at the mouth of the Jones Falls) and Fells Point (to the east) into a single city around the Basin, today’s Inner Harbor. The focus in this guide is largely the original Baltimore, the west side of the city, but the process of segregation played out on the east side of the city as well.

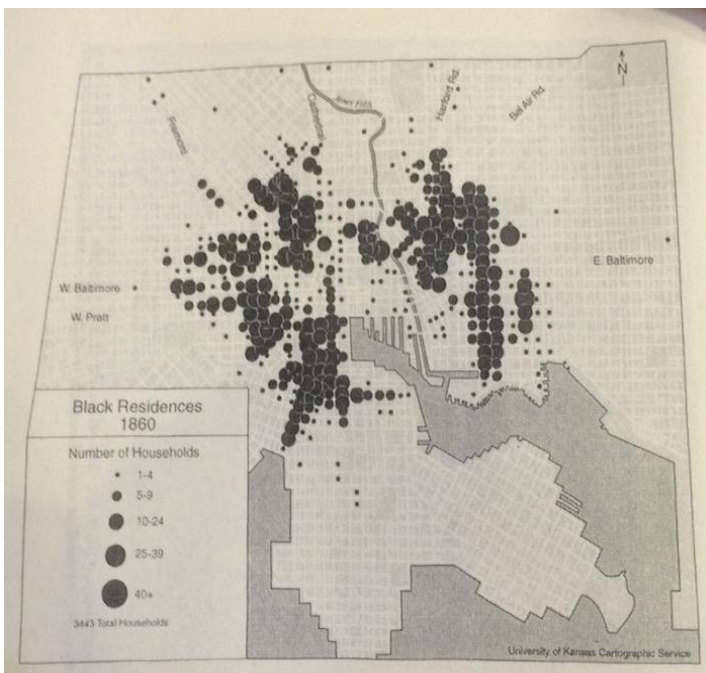
*As early as the 1830s Baltimore was a major railroad city. The Baltimore & Ohio was developed in an effort to catch up to and jump ahead of cities with canal access—New York, Philadelphia, and Alexandria. It employed thousands of workers in Baltimore from the mid-19th

to mid-20th Centuries, and living nearby was important to workers who walked to work, as most did when railroads thrived.



B&O Mt. Clare Works (started in 1830s). The circular Passenger Car Shop (1884) and Mt. Clare Depot (1851) are located in center right. Left: Passenger Car Shop and Paint Shop (1870). Buildings demolished after 1971: Lower right: Grain Elevator (1910). Top left to top center: Blacksmith Shop (1866), Brass Foundry and Iron Foundry (1864).

*Mt. Vernon (with the original Washington Monument) was Baltimore’s original affluent neighborhood, developed by the 1830s and still the locale of some of the city’s finest nineteenth-century architecture. It offered higher ground away from the Basin and the Jones Falls, and its location shaped what became the Charles Street corridor, today a National Scenic Byway that divides less affluent and now largely black Baltimore into two halves, east and west.

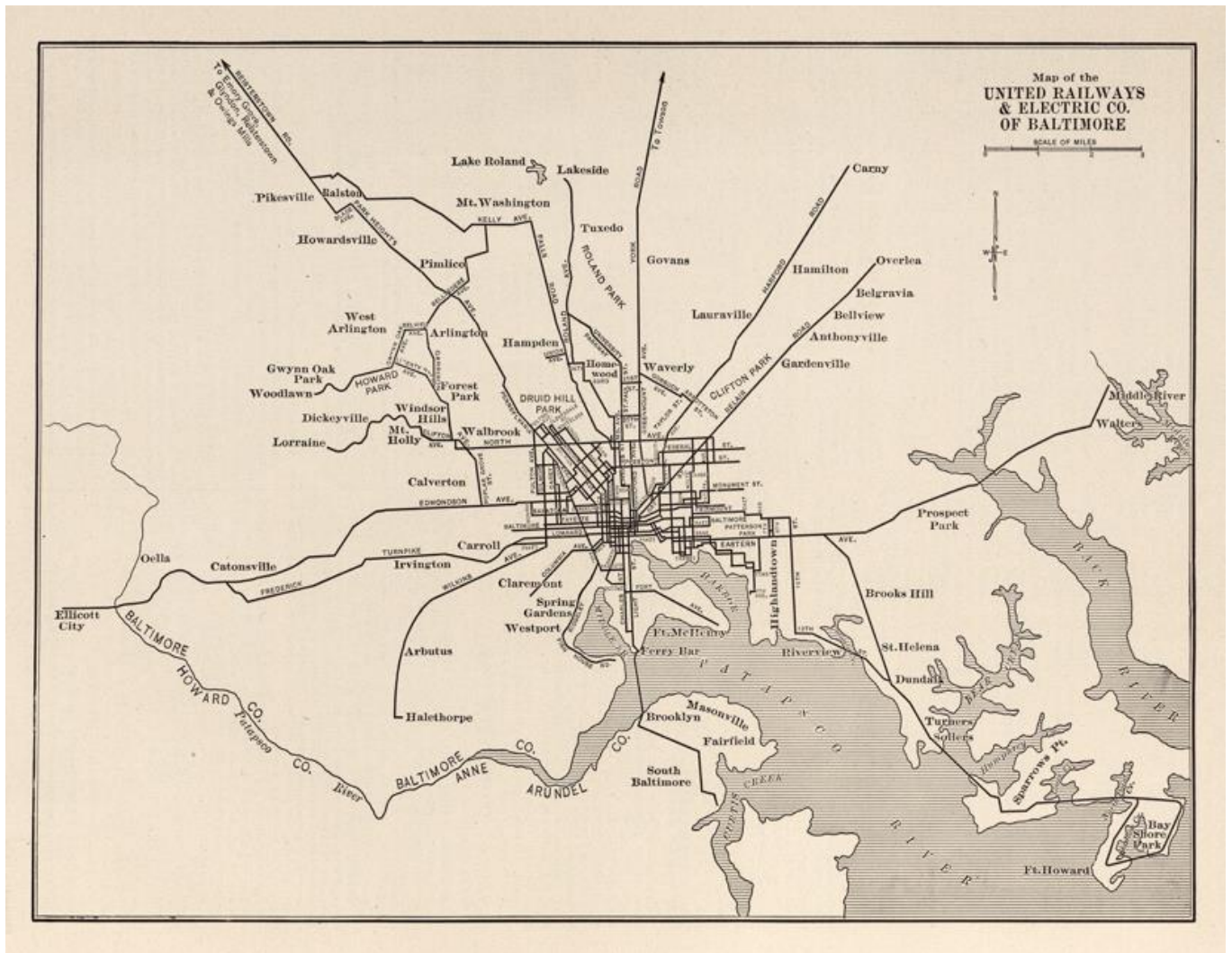


*As the northern-most Southern city, or southern-most Northern city—take your pick—Baltimore had more free blacks than any other city in the US by 1860. In a walking city, blacks were generally distributed around the city but especially close to the Basin and west of the Basin toward the B&O railyards. Segregation meant whites lived on streets and blacks on alleyways.

*Baltimore’s black population grew dramatically after the Civil War. By 1890, Baltimore had the highest percentage of African Americans of any major city and, consequently, the lowest percentage of foreign-born persons. In the late 19th Century,

expanding railroads and industry along the waterfront at the Basin and eastward and rail lines coming in from the northeast and headed out to the southwest had begun to eliminate close-in residential areas and push blacks out of the immediate downtown. Still much segregation remained at the micro scale—blacks in alleyways, whites on the streets, because most people still walked to work until advent of the streetcar.

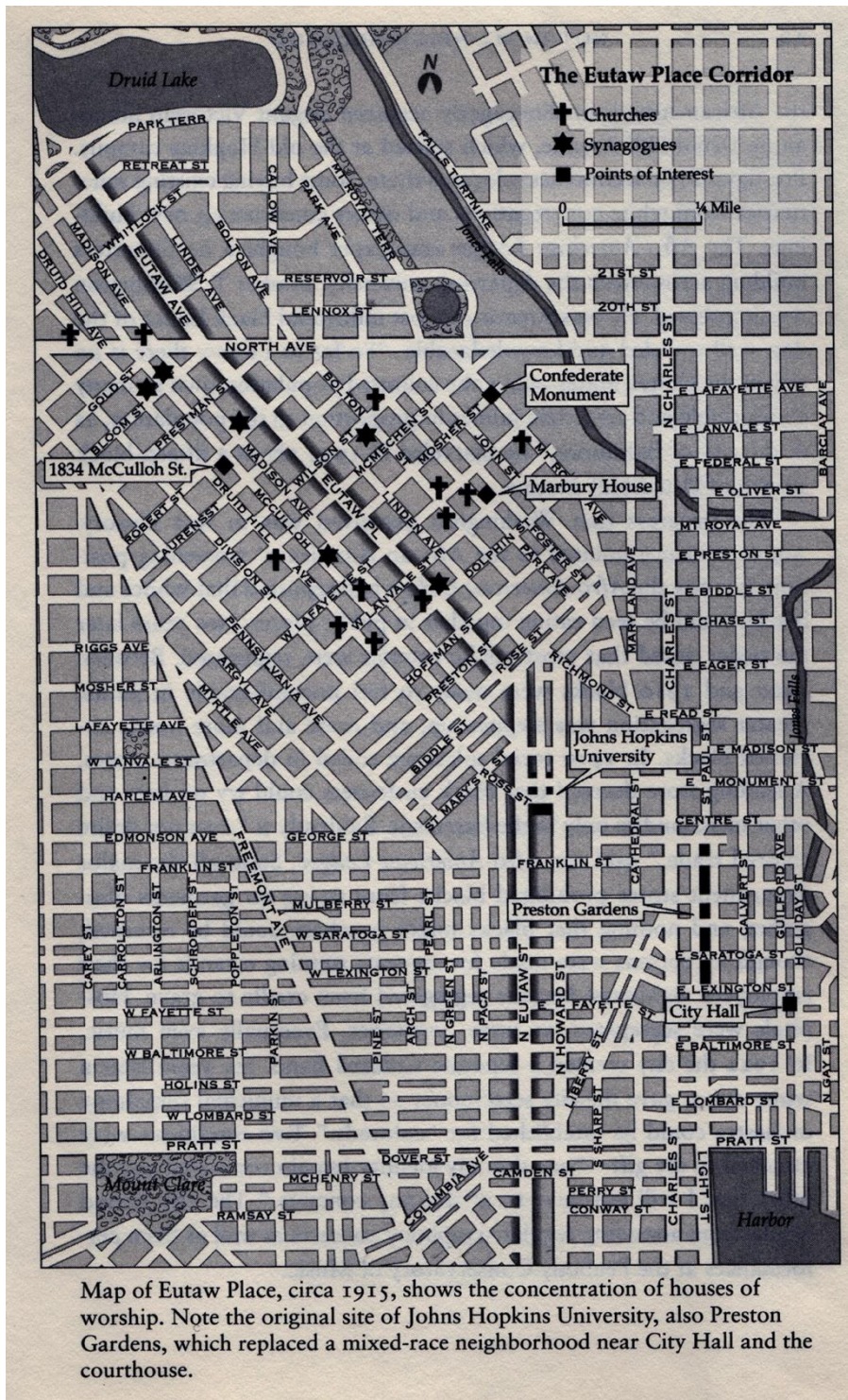
*Baltimore's radial and interconnected cross-town electric streetcar system dates to 1885 and continued as the city's primary mover of people until the general demise of streetcars after WWII. It served to generate early streetcar suburbs along radial routes—Roland Park in the 1890s, followed by, among others, Homewood, Northwood, and Guilford, today's most affluent city neighborhood. All were developed to exclude Jewish people and African Americans, hence concretizing what was evolving as a three-tiered housing system. (An exception was Morgan Park (1917), a black-owned and developed suburb where Morgan State University is located today on the east side. W. E. B. DuBois lived there in its early days.) This guide focuses on largely the area of densely concentrated streetcar lines just north and west of downtown (in the map below), especially the neighborhoods along the radial Pennsylvania Avenue set at a 45-degree angle to the prevailing Euclidian grid.



*The Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) ensured legal segregation in streetcar Baltimore—residential neighborhoods, public accommodations, education, health care, churches, fraternal organizations, etc.—as industry expanded and the growing population pushed and the streetcar systems pulled white people

outward. Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1876 on Monument Street between Howard and Eutaw Streets, announced in 1901 that it would move from Mt. Vernon to its present campus in Homewood, reshaping affluent residential patterns: Faculty members, for instance, lived north and west of the original campus along Eutaw Street and on toward Druid Hill Park—an original streetcar park, one designed for city people to take the streetcar to the park on days off.

*The Fire of 1904 and subsequent condemnation accelerated residential expansion. The city cleared out downtown to create a new civic center and developed Preston Gardens, further pushing blacks outward and especially toward Pennsylvania Avenue, one of many radial turnpikes leading out of the city. This “negro removal” largely led some to declare a “negro invasion” along

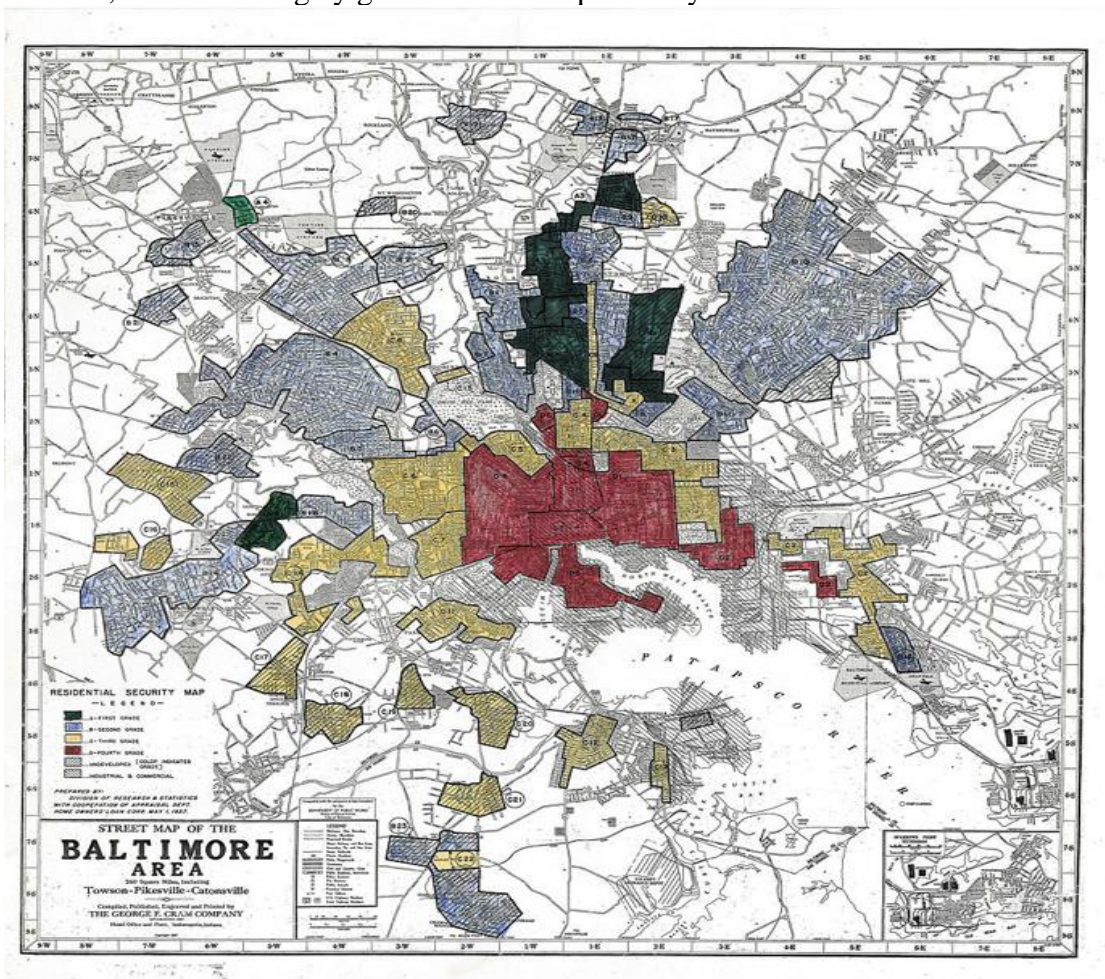


Pietila, 2019, p.13

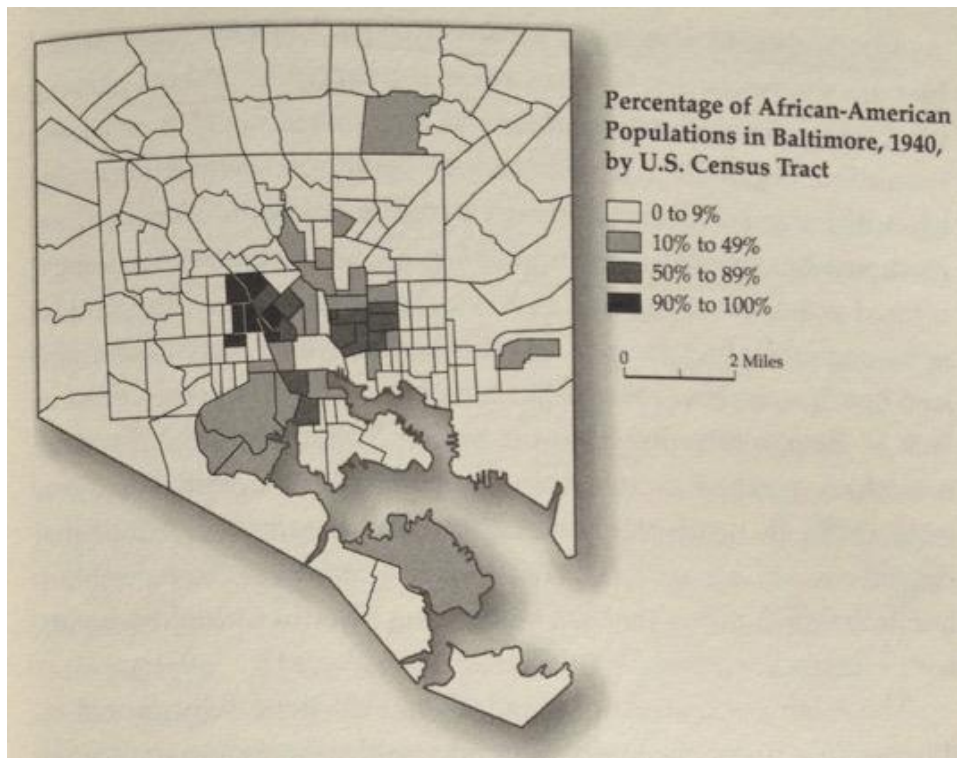
Pennsylvania Avenue, especially when in 1910 black lawyer Ashbie Hawkins purchased a house at 1834 McCullough Street in the Eutaw Place Corridor and the *de facto* black-white housing divide to the east of Pennsylvania Avenue. Whites, followed by Jewish merchants and manufacturers, moved still farther out toward Druid Hill Park, a process that set the sectoral pattern of controlled expansion for whites, Jews, and blacks for the next century.

*Hawkins’s action precipitated a 1910 municipal segregation ordinance informed by eugenics and limiting black purchases to blocks on which blacks were already a majority, and white purchases to streets on which they were a majority. The Supreme Court overturned the ordinance in 1917 arguing that municipal government could not keep whites from selling to whom they wanted and thus ensuring that residential covenants would continue to confine blacks to certain neighborhoods just as the Great Migration of African American workers from the agricultural south to northern industrial cities started. *Shelley v. Kramer* (1948) established that covenants could not be enforced by the courts; not until 1968 Fair Housing legislation did covenants become illegal.

*The 1930s Home Owners Loan Corporation Maps effectively codified segregation. Baltimore’s map (1937) “redlined” an area bounded by Fulton Avenue on the west, Patterson park on the east, and North Avenue on the north. It also ‘redlined” Federal Hill and Locust Point to the south of downtown, areas now largely gentrified due to proximity to the Inner Harbor.



*WWII led to massive expansion of steel production, shipbuilding, and manufacturing of railroad cars and other durable equipment in Baltimore—and massive labor requirements and consequent housing shortages. War housing was segregated. Appalachian whites settled on the northeast, east, and far east sides of the city, close to the burgeoning industrial activity and 1940s large scale demolition for public housing on the east side near John Hopkins was intended to stabilize employed white families. The effect, of course, was to destabilize former residents of demolished black neighborhoods. Some public housing was built for blacks in “waste areas,” including Cherry Hill, south of the Patapsco River.



Pietila, 2010, p. 69.



*Meanwhile, Pennsylvania Avenue emerged as Baltimore’s black downtown, the place where blacks shopped and found entertainment, including Billie Holiday, into the 1960s before decline. The Avenue, here in the 1940s, remains the center for much of black Baltimore. It was the center of the 2015 uprising and is now a Main Street Project. Residents continue to have strong attachment to it and its adjacent neighborhoods, despite relative destitution and large swaths of vacant housing. Many have hopes they might make it an arts and cultural district that would lead to community revitalization, but not gentrification.

*In 1943, blacks made up 20% of the city’s population but were confined to 4 of the 78.6 square miles of the city—under 5% of the city’s area and mostly on the west side. Baltimore’s population has declined from over a million during the war years to barely more than 600,000 today, of which 64% is black and now spread over a much larger area of the city. Importantly, post-war efforts to improve blighted housing for blacks, subsidize suburban housing for whites, and reduce discrimination spurred much of this demographic and geographical change.

Year	Population	Year	Population
1790	13,503	1900	508,957
1800	26,514	1910	558,485
1810	46,555	1920	733,826 (Annex 1918)
1820	62,738 (Annex 1818)	1930	804,874
1830	80,620	1940	859,100
1840	102,313	1950	949,708
1850	169,054	1960	939,024
1860	212,418	1970	905,787
1870	267,354	1980	786,775
1880	332,313	1990	736,014
1890	434,439 (Annex 1888)	2000	651,154
		2010	620,961

*In particular, the Baltimore Plan (1951-1955) was intended to fight housing blight. Home owners were caught between having to fix municipal code violations (e.g. indoor plumbing, etc.) or moving. Few blacks could find financing to improve or move, even as few neighborhoods welcomed them anyway.

*Predatory lending exacerbated the problem: As late as 1968, two-thirds of all black real estate sales in the city were rent-to-buy lending schemes, in which a single missed rent payment could cost one one’s house in which one had no equity until fully paid for. Ownership gave stability to neighborhoods but at a cost of transferring modernization liabilities for sub-standard housing to black owners—referred to as a “black tax.” Inability to upgrade housing fostered “slumification” and wide-scale vacancy across parts of the city.

*Meanwhile, with white suburbanization subsidized by the federal government—GI Bill, suburban housing and transportation infrastructure, etc., Baltimore experienced fairly rapid white flight and consequent rapid expansion of black neighborhoods, especially on the west side, from the late 1940s and through the 1960s. Urban renewal, the Baltimore Plan, speculative blockbusting, and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which led Baltimore immediately to consolidate its two separate school systems, all accelerated devaluation of older housing—a “white tax”—and white flight in a predictable geographical pattern. In particular, the large presence of previously segregated Jewish homeowners in West Baltimore who were moving to

the suburbs opened neighborhoods for blacks trying to flee neighborhoods increasingly deteriorating because of lack of investment, devaluation of housing, and increasing vacancy.

*In 1945, the first white neighborhood west of Fulton Avenue opened to black buyers, beyond what had become Baltimore's traditional black district, largely for black professionals and intact families. In 1949, Willie Adams, a former numbers runner and unofficial banker to fellow blacks, bought a house in largely Jewish Lake Ashburton, exemplifying a pattern of Jewish owners selling to blacks as they themselves moved outward in a sectoral fashion along radial highways, especially Reisterstown Road (a continuation of Pennsylvania Avenue) and Liberty Heights Boulevard. However, suburban discrimination against Jews trying to buy in the suburbs continued to keep many city neighborhoods off the market for blacks well into the 1970s.

*The 1950s construction of a new State Office Complex adjacent to the old Armory near Eutaw Place led to major urban renewal and added to the push of blacks outward in the city, as did 1950s and 1960s highway plans for North-South and East-West freeways intersecting downtown. The west side highway plan was to extend I-70 through Baltimore and connect it to I-95 on the east side of the city. Eminent domain from the 1960s through 1980 pushed 44,000 thousand blacks out of the proposed right away and devalued housing in a wide swath. Known today as the "Highway to Nowhere," a small portion of the highway was constructed, a process that pushed white Catholics and Jews to the northwest and into Baltimore County. Continuation of I-70 would have been along the eastern waterfront, site of many trendy neighborhoods today.

*Following are examples of neighborhoods and shopping areas that underwent de-segregation, if not integration, in the 1950s and 1960s as whites fled to the County:

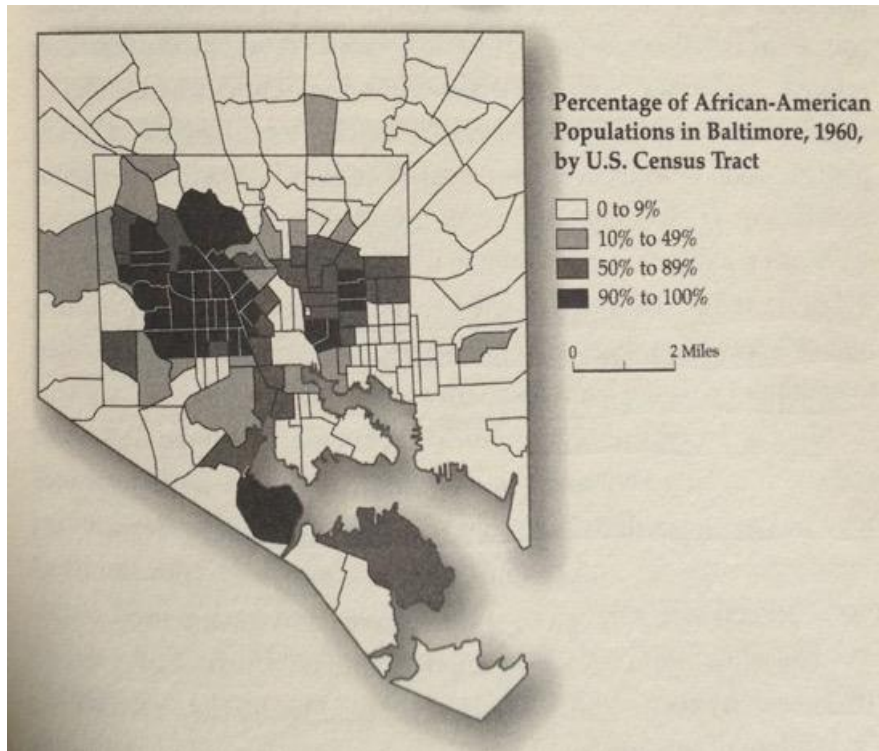
>Edmundson was founded in 1916 as a predominantly Catholic working-class streetcar suburb not far from south Baltimore rail-related industries. It was 1955 before the first black families began to move in. Edmundson Village Shopping Center dates to 1947, but blacks could not frequent it until 1960: <https://baltimoreheritage.org/redline/edmundson-village/>

>Windsor Mills, founded in 1895 and Jewish by the 1930s, had its first black resident in 1955.

>Gwynns Falls was integrated in 1959. The Gwynn Oak Amusement Park was integrated in 1963 after a struggle that gained national attention: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwynn_Oak_Park

>Liberty Heights was not integrated until the 1960s. Baltimore City Community College—founded as Baltimore Junior College for returning GIs in 1947 and located at Baltimore City College—moved to Liberty Heights in 1959. Liberty Boulevard became the westward path of black middle-class expansion from the 1960s on.

>Mondawmin Mall, a 1956 Rouse project named after a local estate, did not serve blacks until after 1960. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mondawmin_Mall



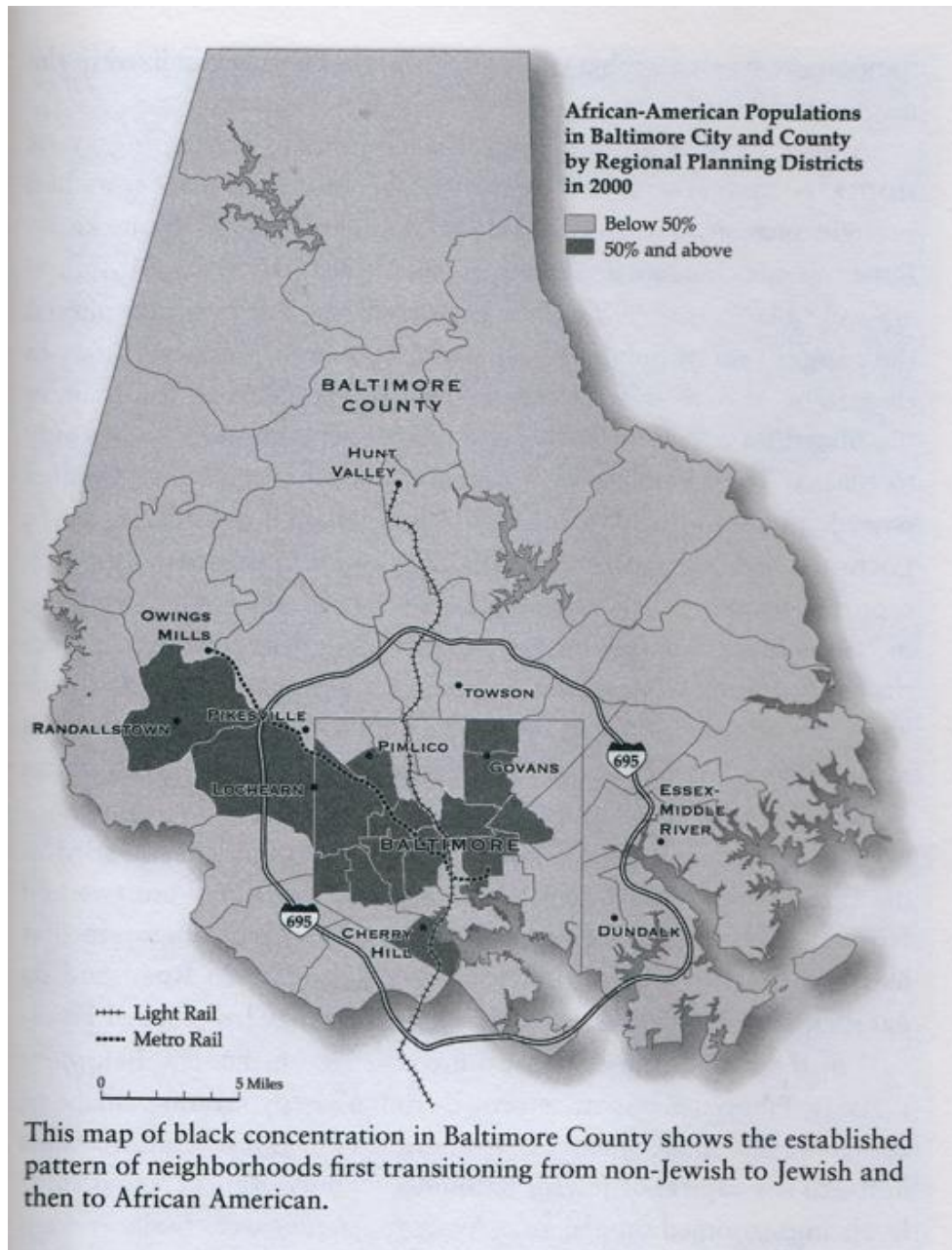
Pietila, 2010, p. 69.

>Park Heights—to the northwest out Reisterstown Road—was a predominantly Jewish streetcar suburb by the 1950s that is now predominantly black, as Jews have moved further northwest into Baltimore County. Black-Jewish tensions in Baltimore largely occur along the frontier between these populations today.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park_Heights,_Baltimore

*Not just residents were fleeing Baltimore. From 1955 to 1965, Baltimore lost 82 industries, 65 relocating to Baltimore County, plus hospitals, a college (Goucher), churches, and business offices. At the same time, Baltimore County was exercising not just “exclusive zoning” to discourage less expansive housing but “expulsive zoning” by rezoning historically black rural neighborhoods in the county for industry or highway construction, specifically the Baltimore Beltway, I-695, thereby forcing displaced blacks into the city.

*Even the construction of Inner Harbor—a grand effort to revitalize downtown Baltimore for office work and tourism by replacing the residual industries and business around the Basin—led to work going away for blacks. And with both employed blacks and employment opportunities continuing to move away, long stable black neighborhoods continued to lose socio-economic diversity, producing the geography of disinvestment and concentrated poverty we find today (which some refer to as a Black Butterfly about a White L—see the maps on the cover page), along with all of the consequences of that pattern.



Pietila, 2010, p. 239

*The pattern of black neighborhoods has only expanded since 2000, but, clearly, Baltimore remains a city segregated around neighborhoods of people affected by generations of concentrated poverty by structural racism. Geography for these people has been destiny—where they live has affected access to education, employment, healthcare, the justice system, and any semblance of accumulated, intergenerational wealth.

Bibliography:

Books:

Jessica Elfenbein, et al. Eds. *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth in an American City*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.

Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010.

Antero Pietila, *The Ghosts of Johns Hopkins: The Life and Legacy that Shaped an American City*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.

William Julius Wilson, *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*. New York: Norton, 2009.

Joseph S. Wood, “Reading Baltimore in the Breach: Between the World and Me; Ghetto: The Invention of a Place, the History of an Idea; Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics; and The Cook Up: A Crack Rock Memoir.” *AAG Review of Books*, 2017. 5:2:126-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2325548X.2017.1292589>

Open Data Sources:

Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance. <https://data-bniajfi.opendata.arcgis.com/> (BNIA’s Vital Signs data and maps provide a detailed view of the city.)

The Baltimore Uprising 2015 Archive Project. <https://baltimoreuprising2015.org/>

Recent Newspaper and News Journal Articles.

Ron Cassie, “A Tale of Two Cities. For half a century, West Baltimore was a vital center of black culture, mixed-income neighborhoods, and groundbreaking civil rights activism. After Freddie Gray, can it be again?” *Baltimore Magazine*, 2016. <https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/2016/4/11/a-tale-of-two-cities-west-baltimore-before-after-freddie-gray>

Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Alec MacGillis. “The Third Rail. In Baltimore, public investment — and disinvestment — in transportation have figured greatly in the persistence of racial and economic inequality.” *Places*, 2016. <https://placesjournal.org/article/the-third-rail/>

Alec MacGillis, “The Tragedy of Baltimore,” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/12/magazine/baltimore-tragedy-crime.html>

Sarah Meehan. “Baltimore among nation's most gentrified cities, study shows.” The Baltimore Sun, 2019.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-gentrification-study-20190319-story.html#share=email~story>

Dan Rodricks, “In the midst of West Baltimore blight, an ambition for new housing and a cup of coffee.” The Baltimore Sun, 2019.

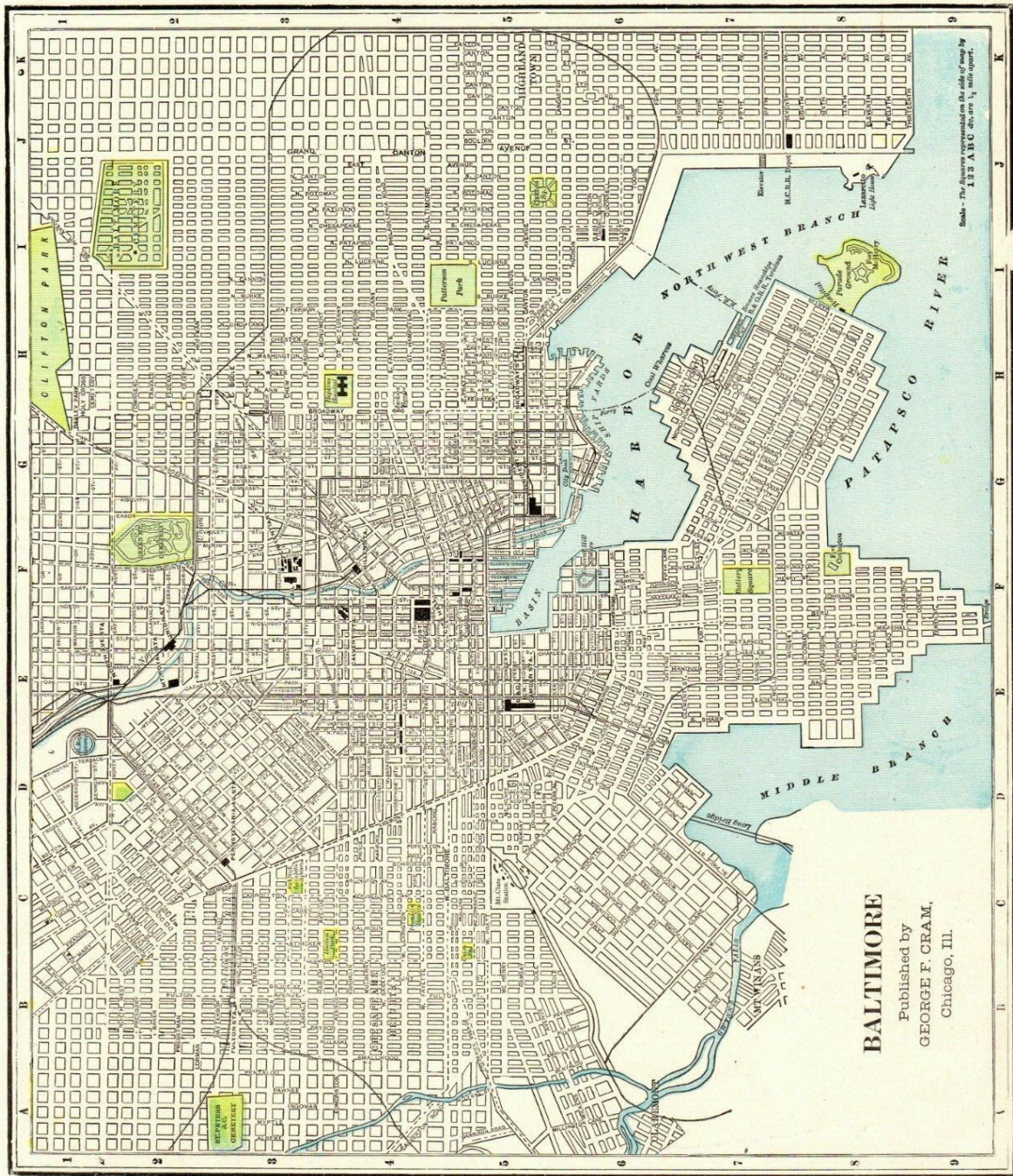
<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/dan-rodricks-blog/bs-md-rodricks-column-0313-story.html#share=email~story>

Dan Rodricks, “The towering potential of Baltimore hindered by crime and chaos.” The Baltimore Sun, 2019.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/dan-rodricks-blog/bs-md-rodricks-column-sunday-0324-story.html>

Yvonne Wegner, “‘Scary’ on both sides of the windshield: Squeegee kid debate divides Baltimore.” The Baltimore Sun, 2018.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-squeegee-kids-nuisance-need-20181012-story.html#share=email~story>



Baltimore, 1915