Radio broadcasting began in 1922 and grew rapidly. At first, Bill noted, the family would go to Grandmother York's to listen to the radio, because they didn't have one. At that time, the favorite program was "whatever was on." Charlie bought the family's first radio from Ott Withrow, who also operated a Pontiac agency, in the late 1920s.[49] By the 1930s, radio was better organized and programs were scheduled predictably. One regular show was Amos 'n' Andy, which was broadcast nightly starting in 1928. Bill recalled, "Amos 'n' Andy was always on about 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock at night. There were times you could walk down the street without missing a beat because everybody had their window open and had the radio on."[50]

There were movies at the local theater, and now and then a younger kid could climb up to the projection booth to visit with the projectionist. For kids, it cost a nickel or a dime to get in, "and they didn't clear the theater out after every showing like they do now. So I could go on Saturday night and stay there all evening. I was madly in love with Alice Faye, and if there was an Alice Faye movie I would stay to see it as many times as they showed it." Alice Faye, who began her career as a singer with Rudy Vallee's band, made her film debut in 1934. Appearing primarily in musicals, she became one of the most popular actresses in the country. The photo at right, taken in 1941, is from a poster for the movie, *Week-End in Havana*.[51]

Bill's Grandfather William Henry's wife, Sarah, lived on the Roberts farm just south of North Baltimore, and the family often visited. During one visit in the mid-1920s, Bill fell in a mud puddle while the adults were making apple butter. His wet clothes had to be dried, of course, and since he had no others, he had to go to bed bare-bottomed until they were dry. He later realized that it was no coincidence that his clothes were ready just before the family had to leave to go home! Picnics were another popular diversion, and as Bill recalled, "We used to have a lot of picnics. A picnic out around the waterworks…. Everybody would bring their own picnic, and we'd sit on the ground."[52]

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[49] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009. The 1930 Census specifically asked whether the household had a radio.

[50] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009.

[51] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009. An adult ticket was 25 cents. Photo of Alice Fay from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Poster_-_Week-End_in_Havana.jpg, accessed July 19, 2019.

[52] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009

Fraternal organizations and clubs were an integral part of small town life. The social scene included organizations such as the Grange, the Woodmen of the World, the Masons, and the Odd Fellows, and for women, the Pythian Sisters and the Eastern Stars. The Literary and Lyric Circle (LL) was formed in 1898, and in addition to being an Eastern Star and a member of the "Our Club," Nellie was an LL member from 1904 until her death in 1964, excepting the years she and Charlie lived in Toledo. Other clubs, such as the Shakespeare Study Club, admitted both men and women.

Nellie York and her sister Myrtie with their Sunday School class on a picnic near the water works in 1904. Their father Thomas York took the photograph.

A theme of many clubs was cultural improvement. Nellie's LL programs show the breadth of that group's interests. The annual theme for 1915-1916 was "Mexico," quite apropos in light of the events of the ongoing Mexican Revolution. The next years focused on the Bible, followed by "Our Own Country" and "The Islands of the Sea." Presentations in 1923-24 included "Bills Pending in Congress," "Alaska—Natural Features," and "Mussolini—The Fascisti."

The image at left shows Charlie and Nellie as members of the Shakespeare Study Club in 1904. There, they may have used Charlie's 1891 copy of Shakespeare's sonnets, which still survives, although the 1904-1905 memento shows that the readings that year were two comedies, two tragedies, and a historical play.

There was inevitably an element of cliquishness. For many years, the LL bylaws limited the membership to 25, although by 1945, the bylaws had been amended to ensure that

members of the Junior LL who “aged out” at 35 would be welcome in the Senior LL group. “I remember my mother saying to [a friend], remember when we used to have clubs and would keep people out and [the friend] said yes, I was one of the ones you kept out. That's the way that people amused themselves.”[53]

Politics was another favorite diversion, and Charlie and Nellie were staunch Democrats. While political affiliation was important, party spirit was tempered by the knowledge that, win or lose, life would go on and one would still have to interact with one’s political opponents on a daily basis. The “Crow Banquet” (left) was a biennial affair, in which winners and losers gently roasted each other. All involved recognized that, whichever party prevailed in any given election, the pendulum would swing back.

Of course, there was the occasional breach of decorum. Ed recalled an election in which Obie McCarty was running for mayor and Sug Clark was running for Marshal. The candidates used a railway express wagon across the street from the Baltimore House as a speaking platform. A group of bystanders egged them “and made a big mess out of the wagon and the sidewalk. The police came and made them clean it up.”[54]

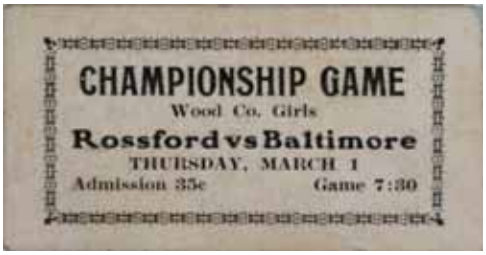
Sports were localized as well, and much of the attention now paid to year-round professional sports went instead to local and high school teams. Sports were part of growing up in the Roberts family—Bill’s brother Ed played football and his sister Henrietta played basketball, with her 1928 girls’ basketball team (right) winning the Wood County championship. “There used to be a building out by Brown's factory, like a barn, and that's where my sister played basketball. I don't know whether the guys played there too or not, but there wasn't any room for spectators, it was just a place inside to play basketball.”[55]

[53] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009. Both women were members of the “Our Club” and the LL Circle, so it isn’t clear which club was being discussed.

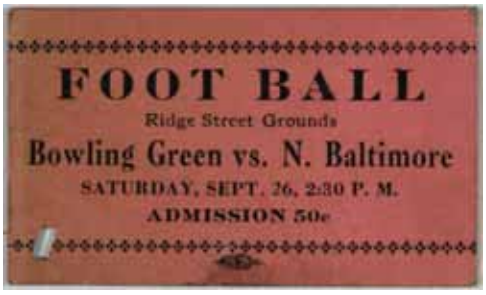
[54] EYR, “Windshield Tour.”

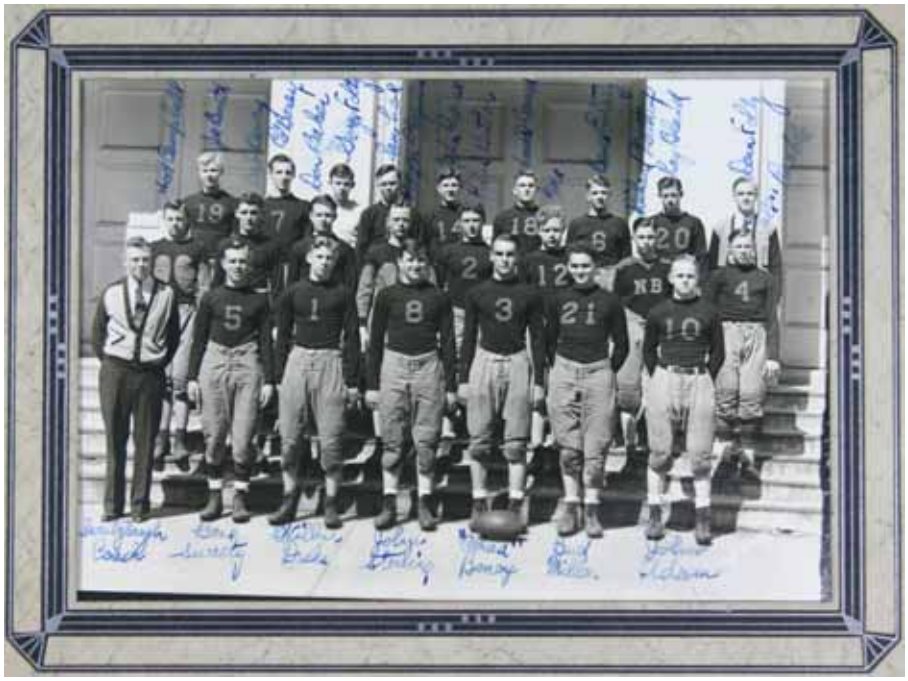
[55] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009.

Bill played football in his turn. In the 1930s, the North Baltimore field was where the Westhaven facility is now. Bill recalled, “I played football. I was clumsy enough for football, but for basketball, I couldn't handle myself…. I remember playing up at Delta…. That was the first time I ever saw lights on a football field. They told us that we had to be real careful. The ball had a light bulb in it, and if you broke it, you'd pay for it.”


CHAMPIONSHIP GAME
Wood Co. Girls
Rossford vs Baltimore
THURSDAY, MARCH 1
Admission 35c Game 7:30

Playing Van Buren, Bloomdale, and Cygnet was reasonable, since they were all small schools. Against Bowling Green, “we were sacrificial lambs.” It had likely been no different in 1925, when Henrietta attended a game against Bowling Green at Bowling Green’s Ridge Street football field using the ticket shown at right. “I had to hit a great big guy by the name of Bell, must have weighed about 250, and it was my job to block him. I don't think I had passed 160 at that time, 150 maybe. I just went off him like water off a duck's back.” In those days before two platoon football, “it was the same [position], guard, whether it was offense or defense. You played both ways. As I say, I wasn't very good at it.”[56] The 1938 team appears below, posed (as tradition demanded) on the auditorium steps. Bill is Number 12.


FOOT BALL
Ridge Street Grounds
Bowling Green vs. N. Baltimore
SATURDAY, SEPT. 26, 2:30 P. M.
ADMISSION 50c



[56] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009.

The school was always a center of the community. In the early 1920s, North Baltimore had two school buildings, one on South Second Street and one at Cherry and Tarr Streets. The north building is now the Roman Catholic church. The south building burned in 1926; it appears below before and after the fire.

The old south school, on South Second Street, burned in 1926. The building was a total loss, and the north school, now the Roman Catholic church, was not big enough to serve all of the pupils. While a new building was being built, elementary students went to the north school either mornings or afternoons, while the high school students attended class in such diverse places as the town hall and the Odd Fellows' Hall.

> When I started school in the first grade [in 1926], the kids from one side of the track, I think from the north side of the track, went to school in the morning, and the kids on the south side of the track went to school in the afternoon. The [new] building was opened in 1927…. My sister was in the first class that graduated from the high school, the class of '28. When they were in school, they had class all over town, in the city hall, and the Odd Fellows' Hall, and they went from one to the other, sort of like you would [in college].[57]

At that time, the school did not furnish books, so the students bought them at Sommers' drugstore.

Nellie, who taught elementary school in the early years of the century before her marriage, was on the school board that oversaw the design and construction of the new south school. In the 1950s and 1960s, when the administrative offices were in the school building, a bronze plaque next to the superintendent's office listed the board members who had been involved in the building project.[58]

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[57] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009. Full-day school resumed after the new school building was finished.

[58] The plaque is now at the NBOAHS.

NORTH BALTIMORE HAS NEW $275,000 SCHOOL

North Baltimore, Sept. 24—North Baltimore schools will open Monday. This new school building replaces the one which burned about two years ago and has been built at a cost of $275,000.

It is fireproof and furnished with all modern school equipment. The auditorium has a seating capacity of 900 and the gymnasium is fully equipped for all indoor athletics and will seat 400. There are 650 pupils enrolled this year and work with a staff of 22 teachers.

E. E. Leidy is superintendent and Verne Northrup, principal. Two new departments have been added, manual training and a commercial course. Miss Vera McGravey of this city has been employed to teach the latter course.

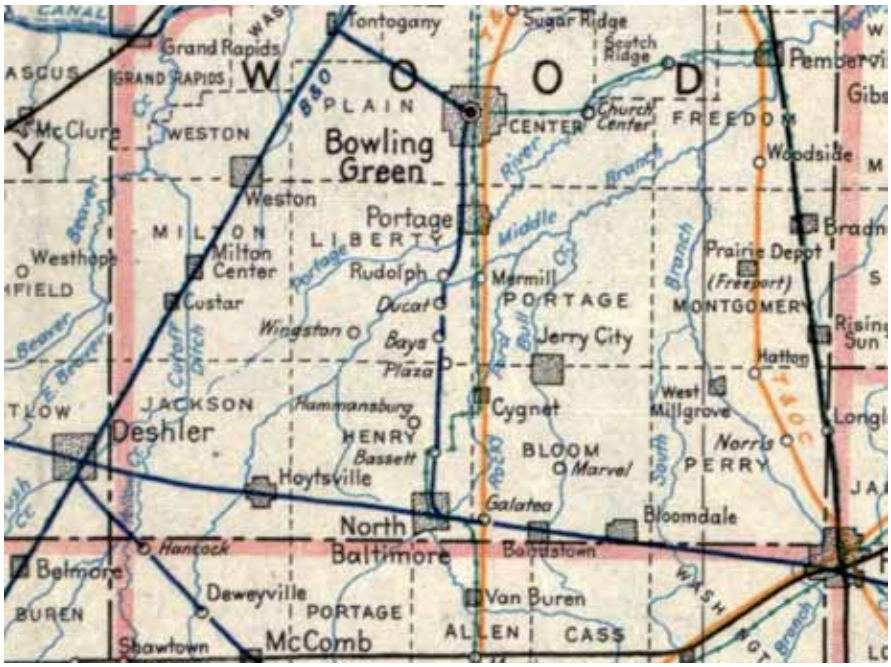
As in later generations, many of the students of the 1920s and 1930s grew up with each other. This image of the North Baltimore High School Class of 1938 at the end of their freshman year in 1935 includes four of the five friends shown above in the photo of "Old 97."

The high school music program was strong, and in this image of the NBHS A Capella Choir in 1936, sophomore Bill is third from right in the front row. Ruth Jane Biehler, then a freshman, is ninth from left in the back row. Both sang with the "Acapells" throughout their high school careers.

Railroad-centric

Much of life in North Baltimore revolved around the railroads, either directly or indirectly. Railroads were the primary source of goods from outside the local community, as well as the only means of long-distance travel. Everyone knew the schedules and when certain trains could be expected. There was always something interesting going on with the railroad!

The image at right, from a 1918 map, shows the density of the rail web. North Baltimore was served by the main line of the B&O and the northbound section that ran to Bowling Green and Tontogany (shown in dark blue). Running north and south through Galatea was the Toledo and Ohio Central, in orange, with another branch leading to Fostoria. Paralleling the B&O and the T&OC was the Toledo, Bowling Green, and Southern interurban, shown in green.[59]



> The rail network of the Twentieth Century was a far cry from the original of 1873, and the rail traffic far eclipsed the “Thomas Riley” and its three cars.
>
> There were a number of passenger trains—all steam engines, of course. Number 10, eastbound, was the ‘milk train’ and stopped at a lot of places. It came to North Baltimore about 4 in the afternoon and unloaded passengers, express and mail. We would often go to the station with our coaster wagons and shout, ‘Baggage Haul!’ to the people getting off the train. I remember one lady who gave me a quarter for hauling her trunk to someplace on West Water Street. That was a lot of money then and it kept up our hopes that more business would be forthcoming.[60]

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[59] C. W. Sherman, 1918 Ohio Railroad Map, published by the Ohio Secretary of State. https://digital-collections.columbuslibrary.org/digital/collection/maps/id/1370, accessed April 3, 2019.

[60] WHRMD, “What I Remember.” The quarter was memorable because the usual amount was a nickel. There was competition: “There might be three or four kids with wagons waiting on the train.” WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009

Number 7 (the Shenandoah) went westbound about 1 o'clock PM. It was always fast, but I believe it was what was called a 'flag stop,' in that arrangements could be made ahead for it to stop in NB. It also carried a Railway Post Office [RPO] car. The mail clerks threw a bag of mail off the train and used the mail-bag hook to grab the outgoing mail from the holder on the side of the track just west of Main Street. 'Mac' McCullough—Lynette's husband—was a clerk on the car and I asked him how he got the mail sorted between Bloomdale and NB, probably less than 10 minutes. He said the postmaster in Bloomdale had a packet of letters and mail for NB already tied, so all the clerk had to do was toss the packet into the NB bag.

This image, ca. 1915, shows a westbound passenger train stopped at the North Baltimore depot. The mail crane just to the left of the engine held a bag of outgoing mail. A hook on the Railway Post Office car would "catch" the mail so that the train did not have to stop. (Courtesy NBOAHS)

The Capitol Limited (Chicago to DC via Pittsburgh) eastbound went through about [9 PM]. It was all Pullman and it did stop on rare occasions to pick up passengers in NB, such as the senior class trip to DC. It was rumored that there was even a barber shop on board. About [8:45 PM] the eastbound Columbian went through. It was all coach and preceded the Capitol by about 15 minutes.[61]

Westbound, the Columbian and the Capitol went through in the middle of the night to get to Chicago around [9 AM] Central time. They never stopped in NB, but did in Fostoria and Deshler. About [7 PM] there was a train, the Ambassador, from Detroit to DC that came off the CH&D at Tontogany, down through BG to get on the main line at NB. I believe the DC-Detroit went through NB late morning via the reverse route.

Then there was the 'Harry Richmond Special,' which was a local from Deshler to Findlay to Deshler to Tontogany to BG to NB and back to Deshler. Harry was Ed Richmond's dad. It delivered freight and probably brought carload lots to the likes of D.S. Brown and the grain elevators, Rockwell's Mill (now Mid-Wood) and Kalmbach's Elevator on Second Street (west side) at the railroad.[62]

From the freight standpoint, things all came by railroad, and one spectator sport was watching the Winner's Implement folks unload tractors from flat cars.

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[61] RPO contacts ended in 1967.

[62] WHRMD, "What I Remember." As late as the 1950s, refrigerator cars could be seen parked on the siding between Main and Second Streets to offload meat and other chilled items for local grocery stores.

They were McCormick-Deerings with huge flat steel rear wheels. They came all blocked with wooden wedges spiked to the wooden floor of the flat car. There were holes in the rims of the rear wheels for mounting the lugs, and there were big spikes through some of those holes into the car floor. They either unloaded them onto the platform on the south side of the station or, later on, onto a platform between Main and Second Streets. Both platforms had ramps which, when not being used by the RR, made good places for coaster wagons and sleds.[63]

Watching the railroad was also a source of diversion. "We used to go down and watch the Streamliner go through when the diesels started appearing on the [Capitol Limited]. Everybody went down to the railroad crossing and stood around and chatted for a while until the train went through and then they went home." For the boys, "One of the other types of 'fun, sport and amusement' with the RR was to put two straight pins on the track, shaped like an X. After the train ran over them, if you could find them, they looked like a little pair of scissors."[64]

The railroad, however, also brought danger.

Some of the wrecks were spectacular. The one I remember most was in 1931 or 1932 after the TBG&S interurban folded. A scrap dealer bought the rails. They started at the north end of Findlay and tore up the rails as they came north. They had a small gasoline-powered locomotive that was able to pull two or three flat cars loaded with rails. The engine had no air brakes and neither did the flat cars. They were coming from the south and when they came to the B&O crossing on Main Street in NB, there was a train coming. The locomotive guys on the TBG&S couldn't stop their train so they abandoned ship. One train hit the TBG&S thing and knocked it into a second train going the other way. It must have been pretty spectacular to see.

There was wreckage all over the place as I remember. It was rumored that the B&O gave the salvage outfit 30 days to quit crossing the B&O before they tore up the rail crossing. *[The image at right, courtesy NBOAHS, shows the result.*]

After the TBG&S closed, some of the interurban tracks were removed. A TBG&S work train failed to stop at the B&O main line and a "pretty spectacular" wreck resulted. (Courtesy NBOAHS)

Farther north, just north of Oil Center Road, the Ambassador jumped the track. I was one of many spectators who watched the relief train rerail the passenger cars. As I remember, it was a summer day, just right for watching. I don't believe anyone was hurt in that accident. NB was on the Chicago Division of the B&O. There were big operations in Willard, Ohio, and Garret,

[63] WHRMD, "What I Remember." The McCormick-Deering line was made by International Harvester.

[64] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009; WHRMD, "What I Remember."

> Indiana…. They kept a relief train in Garret and one in Willard, and if they were needed, the wreck trains would start from Willard and Garret. By the time they got to the wreck, [the steam cranes] would have steam up and could start working without delay…. One wreck, west of NB, was before my time, but people were still discussing it. One of the railroad cars in the ditch was a carload of H.J. Heinz pickles. At that time, they shipped them in round wooden tanks, like tubs, on a flat car. I guess there were lots of free pickles to be had with little expenditure of effort.[65]

Until the advent of diesel engines on the B&O in 1937, coal smoke and ash were part of daily life, as this 1945 image of an eastbound freight shows (courtesy NBOAHS). Transportation pressures and industrial priorities during World War II extended the steam era, but by the early 1950s, steam engines were relegated to work trains, which were occasionally seen in North Baltimore. The B&O retired its steamers in 1958.

The geography of the railroads both affected and was affected by the town. At one time, proximity to the railroad was a status symbol. “In contrast to the present, homes along the railroad were sought-after. Quinn [Quincey] Rockwell, who married Rose Roberts (Charlie’s sister), lived in a big house on the southwest corner of Tarr and Railroad (now State Street) and Dr. [A.G.] Henry lived in a large Victorian house on the southeast corner…. Being where the action was around the railroad was desirable.”[66] The change from Railroad Street to State Street came about in the 1930s, reflecting a decline in the relative status of the railroad. “Fred Stoner owned a garage where the present post office [is]. He lived there [on Railroad Street] and he didn't think Railroad Street sounded right. So he petitioned the village to change the name to State Street. It was a little more prestigious.”[67]

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[65] WHRMD, “What I Remember.”

[66] WHRMD, “What I Remember.”

[67] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009. Fred Stoner lived at 420 West State. Builders’ Class of the Church of Christ, *Directory of the Village of North Baltimore, Ohio*. (North Baltimore, OH: North Baltimore News, 1941) (“1941 Directory”).

A wye came off the westbound track where the present Slippery Elm Trail is.[68]

> The other leg of the wye went up toward Main Street, and many times they would pull an engine up to Main Street and go into the restaurant….There was an elevated water tank about where the present Slippery Elm trail house is. I heard they didn't like to use NB water because of high calcium content.
>
> On the west side of Main Street there was a siding which served the France Machine Shop. The siding ended at Main Street. It has been removed, but I believe a little short siding still runs to Norbalt Rubber. A part of that configuration ran to the France Quarry because they used to ship a lot of ballast stone from the quarry. The old guys said NB stone was no good for concrete, but they never gave a reason—it was just fact.
>
> When the train stopped in NB, one of the crew—the flagman?—would walk back along the track three or four hundred feet with a red flag in his hand to flag any oncoming train. He also put a torpedo (made in Fostoria by the Fostoria Torpedo Company) on the track. When the next train hit the torpedo, it would make a loud bang to alert the following crew that there was a train in the next block. It was fun to wait for the bang. The torpedo had lead strips to bend over the top of the rail.[69]

In addition to the main line railroads, North Baltimore was served by the TBG&S interurban.

> The interurban station was just south of the first alley south of State Street on the east side of Main. There was a spur that ran from the main track in the center of Main Street a little ways east and the freight train would back into the siding to unload. The spot is now Kelley's car lot.
>
> My Dad knew Emmet Slough, who was a freight engineer. The train came from the east on East Water Street. The train, usually two or three cars but sometimes only one, would stop at Main Street and Emmet would let me ride from Water Street to Dad's store where he would stop and let me off. I believe the train came through about [8:30 PM], so I got into the store before the [9:00 PM] deadline. Passenger cars also stopped at the station. The building later became Ott Withrow's garage for many years before it was torn down. One of the motormen on the TBG&S was Herschel Rensch, whom everyone called Cappy. He was Cap Rensch's dad and after the TBG&S folded, he was the janitor at the South School for many years.[70]

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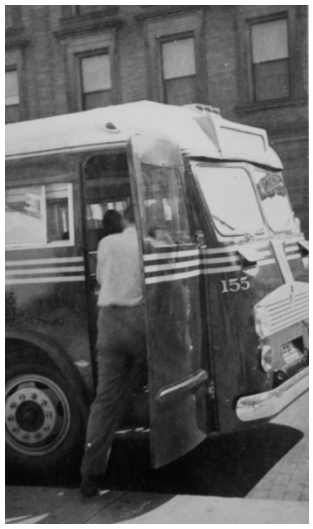
[68] In rail terminology, a wye (Y) is a triangular joining arrangement of three rail lines, with a switch at each corner connecting to each incoming line.

[69] WHRMD, "What I Remember." Norbalt Rubber and the siding are now gone (2019).

[70] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

The TBG&S was replaced by the Cincinnati and Lake Erie bus line. At right, a passenger boards a C&LE bus in Bowling Green.



The B&O station has been in its present location since the 1890s, as the image at right shows, and retained its original form (with an observation tower) into the 1920s (lower right, ca. 1920; both courtesy NBOAHS).

The station was divided into two parts. The east side was the waiting room and was separated from the freight part on the west end by an office-like room. There was a ticket window in the waiting room. The whole station was on the plain side as far as décor. Wooden benches, a potbellied stove, and I don't believe there were any toilets.

The agents I remember were Frank Paden Sr., then Harry Fisher, followed by Herb Hesse. They handled everything—passengers, freight, and express. They had nothing to do with the US Mail and when I was old enough to be aware, no telegrapher, although the old key was still there. There were telegraph poles on the right-of-way with four or five cross arms and a number of wires at each cross arm.

Just west of North Third Street on the south side of the tracks was a small shed, maybe 20x20 feet, that was the work shed for the section gang. They had a cart about six or eight feet long stored there. When they used the cart, there were rails from the door of the shed and, I assume, inside. They would put the cart on the rails but I never

saw them do it. Two or three guys would sit on the edge of the cart and propel it with their feet on the ties in a coordinated effort. No wonder Dick Gray has arthritis in his knees! I don't know whether they had a hand car (remember the Irish Mail?) or not. They later had a gasoline powered cart.

Watching the section gang drive spikes was quite a sight because two or three guys with sledge hammers… were all driving the same spike. They timed their swings so it was a steady, rhythmic pounding until the spike was in. Another thing the section gang did was to sweep snow from the switches. That must have been a miserable cold job.

In the days before mechanical hoists, they would replace rails by hand. The guys, maybe twelve or fourteen of them, had big tongs like oversized ice tongs. They would all place their tongs on the rail and the foreman would call, '*On* it!' and they'd all heave at once to move the rail maybe a foot or so. The rails were held together by long steel plates with bolt holes in them so that there were two or three bolts in the end of each rail. The rails rested on a flat tie plate through which the spikes were driven to fasten them to the ties.[71]

A watchman's shanty stood on the west side of Main Street just south of the RR (at right, courtesy NBOAHS).

The watchman was Chip [Charles] Ramsey, whose claim to fame was that he could dive off the high board at the Wixom and not surface until he got to the raft. There was a signal device inside the shanty that alerted the watchman when a train was coming. The signal must have been connected to the block signals on the RR. As I remember, there was a bell that rang and a little dial on the face of the device that moved to indicate a train coming. The watchman would take his sign and walk to the middle of Main Street. He would plant the stop sign and blow his whistle to stop traffic. I'm sure that the railroad figured it was cheaper than flashers or gates to pay someone to do the job. As I recall, the watchman only stayed during the day.[72]

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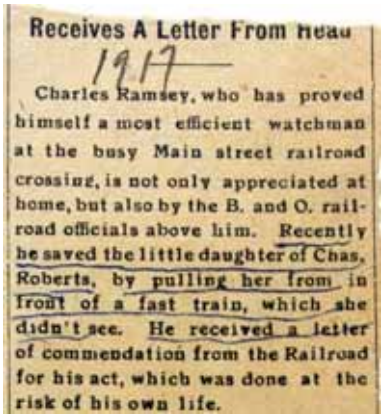
[71] WHRMD, "What I Remember." Main line rail at the time was likely 90-pound rail, which weighed 90 pounds per yard. A standard 39-foot segment of rail would weigh 1170 pounds, or roughly 100 pounds per man.

[72] WHRMD, "What I Remember." There was probably too little traffic at night to justify a night watchman.

Swimming underwater wasn't Chip Ramsey's only claim to fame—in 1917, the B&O Railroad had commended him for saving Bill's sister Henrietta from being struck by a train. It was another reminder that the benefits of railroad transportation did not come without costs.


Receives A Letter From Head

1917

Charles Ramsey, who has proved himself a most efficient watchman at the busy Main street railroad crossing, is not only appreciated at home, but also by the B. and O. railroad officials above him. Recently he saved the little daughter of Chas. Roberts, by pulling her from in front of a fast train, which she didn't see. He received a letter of commendation from the Railroad for his act, which was done at the risk of his own life.

Businesses and Professions

North Baltimore's localized character was clearly evident in its businesses. There were multiple examples of everything from grocery stores to undertakers, almost all locally owned and operated. The 1930 census reported that North Baltimore, population 2,402, had 24 retail stores with 35 proprietors and 42 full-time employees. During 1929, those stores had total net sales of $806,000 and paid a total of $49,000 in salaries and wages.[73] As Bill recalled, "Everything was here, whatever you wanted, whether it was hardware, or clothing, or groceries."[74]

The business scene, however, was far from static—a few years could make a significant difference in store ownership and location, so tracing any particular establishment takes effort. Even the Post Office moved. When Nellie Roberts became postmaster in 1935, it was located on the west side of Main Street a few doors north of the railroad. During her tenure, it was moved across the street to the building that was later the North Baltimore News office, and then north to the building across the alley from where Weith's store was then located. The current Post Office on East Broadway was built in the early 1950s, after Nellie retired in 1951.

In 1930, the census reported six grocery stores and a meat market. "There were a number of grocery stores in town. English's was just north of the drug store, and it was later taken over by Irv Heminger. Irv's store had been on the east side of Main Street next to the alley south of the drug store. Knodle's was another grocery about across from where the present Scarbrough's is located. Jay Aikens had a grocery on the west side of Main Street just south of Walnut Street. There was also an A&P store and a Kroger store. 'Pinky' Wirt had a grocery on the corner where the bank is now." As with other businesses, the landscape

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[73] US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth Decennial Census, Distribution Volume I, Retail Distribution, Part 1, Table 13, Ohio Retail Distribution, by Counties and Incorporated Places, s.v. North Baltimore, p. 182. Washington, DC: GPO, 1933. A listing of types of stores appears in Part 3, Table 14, County Distribution by Kinds of Business, s.v. North Baltimore, pp. 730-31. The sales represent more than $12,102,000 in 2019 dollars, and the wages in 2019 dollars would be more than $735,000. (https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/)

[74] WHRMD Interview October 20, 2009.

changed over time—Bill's brother Ed, thirteen years older, recalled Knodle's grocery as being on the northwest corner of Main and Broadway, and Duncan Sloan's store in the building just north of Roberts Pharmacy. When the Piggly Wiggly Store came to town, it was "quite an innovation" and very popular—its cachet was that customers chose their merchandise and took it to the cashier, rather than having a clerk go get it.[75] There was always at least one bakery.

Lester Latta had a barbershop just south of what is now the bowling alley, with a ring in the back where the boys held boxing matches. His son Delbert ("Del"), later a Republican Congressman, was Bill's age and boxed with him. "Del always said he hit me too hard, that's why I became a Democrat."[76] Bill also recalled pool rooms. During his childhood, one was on the west side of Main Street in the rear of Kirby Fausnaugh's barber shop, one on the east side of Main Street, and one a couple of doors south of Roberts Pharmacy. Bill hung out at that one as a child because he could sing for soda pop. Bill came home sick one evening and Nellie thought he was throwing up blood, but it turned out to be too much red pop.[77]

North Baltimore had a number of doctors, dentists, and attorneys, but Bill's memories highlight the doctors—as he said in a high school essay, he always wanted to be a doctor. Dr. Elmer A. Powell, for whom the Powell School is named, was the Roberts family doctor. Bill recalled, "I always thought he was sort of a demi-god because he was kind of tall and thin, and I didn't know him very well except by sight." Dr. John R. Archer, the first Roberts family doctor, was a good friend of Charlie Roberts. Both appear in the American Medical Association listing at right, from 1921, along with others.[78] Dr. Earl Foltz later moved to 123 East Broadway, where Bill later established his own medical practice in 1953. Some of Dr. and Dr. Foltz's furnishings and medical equipment survived, including medical texts and records now available at the NBOAHS.

NORTH BALTIMORE, 2,439, WOOD

Archer, John R., b'60; O.3,'87; 1'96
Cavett, Chas. Smiley, b'68; O.3,'95; 1'96
Foltz, Eearl Dewitt, b'91; O.6,'20; 1'19—328 N. Main St.; office, Gibson Block
FOLTZ, GEO. WASHINGTON; O.3,'96; 1'96
HENRY, ALBERT G., b'49; O.14,'81; 1'96
POWELL, ELMER ALVIN, b'72; Ill.17,'02; 1'03; ✠
Reddin, Danl. W., b'60; Mich.1,'81; 1'96

[75] WHRMD, "What I Remember"; WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009. Scarborough's is no longer in business (2019).

[76] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009.

[77] EYR, "Windshield Tour."

[78] Doctors Archer, Cavett, and G. W. Foltz graduated from Starling Medical College (later the Ohio State University College of Medicine). Dr. Earl Foltz graduated from Western Reserve University, Dr. Henry from the Eclectic Medical Institute of Cincinnati, and Dr. Powell from Illinois Medical College. Dr. Reddin graduated from the University of Michigan. *American Medical Directory* (Chicago: American Medical Association Press, 1921), 1212. Dr. Archer died in 1937, Dr. Earl Foltz in 1953, and Dr. Powell in 1957.

Dr. Earl Foltz lived in the house at 328 North Main that had belonged to George Franks and then to Dr. G. W. Foltz. In the image at right, from the 1930s or 1940s, the Victorian gingerbread along the eaves is gone, the second-floor airing porch has been rebuilt more solidly, and the open front porch railing and base have been replaced by brick.

During Bill's childhood, North Baltimore had three dairies. The Biehler Dairy was owned by Howard R. (Butch) and Gertrude Biehler. Butch's family owned a farm Route 18 near Galatea, later demolished to make way for the Route 18 interchange with I-75. They also farmed in nearby Hammansburg, where Butch's father David operated a general store. Butch and Gertie farmed in Dimondale, Michigan, in the late 1910s but were back in the North Baltimore area by 1920. The Biehlers "moved to town" in 1930, renting a house at 336 South Second Street from Curtis and Roxie Kelley. The deal included purchasing Kelley's dairy and bottling equipment and supplies, with which they started the Biehler Dairy.

> Besides Butch Biehler's dairy, there were two others. Bert Calkins ran a dairy behind the house that Bill Calderhead later bought [at South Main and High]. Bert pasteurized his milk in the bottle, so it had a different taste. Biehler's pasteurized in batches, so Butch said his milk was, 'Better by a Day' (his slogan). [The slogan appears on the side of the Biehler Dairy delivery truck, shown at right.]

Among the now-vanished elements of life were dairy delivery signals. Customers had regular orders, but if they needed something else, they would use a signal device to alert the milkman. The "E-Z-C" signal had a tapered cardboard bottom and a fan of colored tabs. The tapered cardboard base fit into an empty milk

bottle, and the color-coded tabs for different products and amounts could be recognized from the street. It enabled the milkman to make one trip instead of walking to the door, discovering that the customer wanted something unusual, and making a second trip to deliver it.

> Butch had a Ford panel truck (1934 or so model) that he used for delivering milk but after he sold to Meadow Gold, he got Fred and the wagon. The third dairy was Priebe's and it was located near where the sewer plant is now.[79]

"Old Fred," Butch Biehler's milk-wagon horse, figures in a number of family stories. He was a popular attraction for neighborhood children, both to pose (left) and to pull the wagon so that children could ride on top (right). In the image at left, the largest boy is helping to deliver the milk, a great privilege. Old Fred was stabled at the west end of the old creamery at Biehler's Corners (on the northwest corner of South Second and High, across from what is now the Masonic Lodge) through about 1952; his hitch weight and harness bells survive.

In the days before brand consolidation and auto mega-malls, there were many automobile dealers even in a small town.

> George Fulton's was where Kelley's is now. I believe he sold Buicks. Dorothy Roberts's dad, Esker Bosler, had a Studebaker agency on North Main Street [and] later sold DeSotos. Howard Pore had a Ford agency where Scarbrough's is now. Carl Dukes had a garage on West State Street where the St. Vincent DePaul is now and I believe he sold Willys. Carl Stoner had an Essex agency on East Broadway where the Post Office is now. A guy by the name of Misamore had a Willys agency about two doors south of Roberts Pharmacy, and he also sold a small car called a Whippet, which was made by Willys-Overland in Toledo. Ott Withrow sold Pontiacs in the Odd Fellows building on the west side of Main Street across from the drug store. Wirts sold Pontiac and Oldsmobile on North Main at Walnut."[80] At Misamore's, "There were Whippet and Overland and

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[79] WHRMD, "What I Remember." Meadow Gold was owned by Beatrice Creamery Co., out of Chicago via Lima.
[80] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

> Willys Knight; Plymouth, Dodge, and Chrysler, so to speak. I can remember hearing him tell this guy that that taillight setup was just *exactly* like the one on their $2000 car."[81]

As with most other products, autos arrived in North Baltimore by rail. "Automobiles were shipped by box car, four cars in each box car, [with] two autos at an angle on the ends and two flat on the floor of the box car like / - - \."[82] To save the delivery fee, some people drove to the factory to pick up their new cars.

North Baltimore had three drugstores—Roberts's, on South Main Street, Henry Sommers's just south of what is now the Virginia Theater, and John Hoffman's in the first block south of Broadway on the west side of Main. Sommers sold the texts that the students needed, because at the time, the school did not furnish them. The three druggists were friends and socialized together.[83] Much of their stock likely came from Walding, Kinnan, and Marvin, a wholesale drug house in Toledo, whose salesman rode the interurban. "When Andy [Andrews] came to town on the street car, he would stay in town until the next car. He made his calls at the three drugstores, then was on his way. I don't believe he even owned an auto."[84]

Sommers' drug store appears in this image of the west side of North Main Street. The year is 1923 and the town's Golden Jubilee celebration is in progress. The banner at right advertises "Jerry the Horse with 8 Feet"

The Roberts Pharmacy was a fixture in North Baltimore for many years. No photographs of the interior have been located, but it likely looked similar to F. P. Clark's drugstore, shown below ca. 1910. The Roberts store was narrow and deep, and like many older buildings, it was not perfectly square—it tapered from 21 feet of frontage on Main Street to 17 feet at the rear, 80 feet to the east. It had at least two rooms and, as Ed Roberts recalled, "I always understood there was a glove factory in there before we moved in. Part of the foundation of the big press was in the back room, cut off about even with the floor."[85]

> It seemed real big then, but probably the whole room was not more than 30 feet by probably 100 feet deep or so. [Charlie] had display cases where you could move them,

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[81] WHRMD, "Windshield Tour."

[82] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

[83] WHRMD, "What I Remember." John Hoffman died suddenly in 1931 and his son Kenneth ("K.O.") took over the business. Sommers had purchased Frank Clark's drugstore, where Charlie Roberts had once worked.

[84] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

[85] EYR, "Windshield Tour." The building is still in use in 2019.

and there were cases on the wall that you couldn't move. Everything that was there was on display.[86]

The furniture was all light-colored maple. Along the store on the right-hand side, the south side, there were large, shallow cases with sliding doors, with merchandise in them. There was a series of freestanding cases that had merchandise in them. When you walked in—on the north side—there was the tobacco counter, cigars and so on. In back of that, along the wall, were open shelves that had apothecary bottles, glass, [with] labels on them, row after row..... Below the open shelves were row after row of almost like filing drawers that were probably 12 inches wide and maybe eight or nine inches high. There were a lot of crude drugs in those because back in those days, not particularly in my day, but before that, they started out from scratch.[87]

One of the drawers contained cinnamon, which young Bill liked to chew, so he stuck a postage stamp on that drawer to make it easier to find. He found himself in hot water over the cigar case:

> In the front of the drug store was a large glass and wood case about ten feet long and counter height that Dad used as a cigar case. There was a change drawer in the middle below the main case. The drawer had four pull type levers that could be set so that a combination of levers would open the drawer. When I was little, but old enough to know better, I messed up the combination. Dad got mad and really tore the case up trying to get the change drawer open. After that, he always blamed me for ruining that cigar case.[88]

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[86] WHRMD Interview October 20, 2009.

[87] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009. The furniture included four 6', one 8', and one 10' cases; a wrapping counter; sidewall cases and shelving; and a "wall case and cupboard for patent medicines," as well as smaller items, fixtures, utensils, and "all shelf bottles and show jars." Contract between Cora M. [sic] Jones and Chas. S. Roberts, December 1, 1915.

[88] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

At other times, though, the cigar case served to ease discord. The wife of one of the local physicians bought her husband's cigars for him so that she could be sure that he smoked only the cheap 5¢ variety, like the Cannon Ball cigars that were made a few doors south of the pharmacy on Main Street. When she came in for them, Charlie would sell her a box of much better stogies and charge her the 5¢ price. The doctor would come in the next day to pay the difference.

As well as drugs and tobacco, the drugstores of the early Twentieth Century sold a broad range of goods. In the 1920 North Baltimore directory, Roberts Pharmacy advertised "a complete line of A. D. S. Remedies and Toilet Articles," as well as patent medicines, tablets, drugs, box paper, pens, pencils, ink, and school supplies.[89] "Sundries" (miscellaneous items) were a significant part of the business. "At Christmas time we'd always have what you called vanity sets, with the mirror and brush and comb, that you could give for gifts. It was all made out of celluloid, which is highly flammable. So this was a great risk."[90]

The pharmacy also sold cameras, perhaps because of Charlie's early interest in photography, and stocked the rosin that the grain elevator needed to keep the belts that drove their machines from slipping.

> They ran all of their equipment with line shafts on the ceiling. They had belts that ran the individual machines and they used to use rosin on the belts to keep them from slipping. My dad would get [it in] a kind of barrel, round and probably five or six feet high and maybe three feet across. When they put the rosin in, it was molten, and when it solidified, it was just like glass. The worst words I could hear were, the elevator needs 25 pounds of rosin, because that meant I was going down in that barrel and chipping it out by hand. As soon as it got down where he couldn't reach it, he'd put me in the barrel with a chisel and a hammer.[91]

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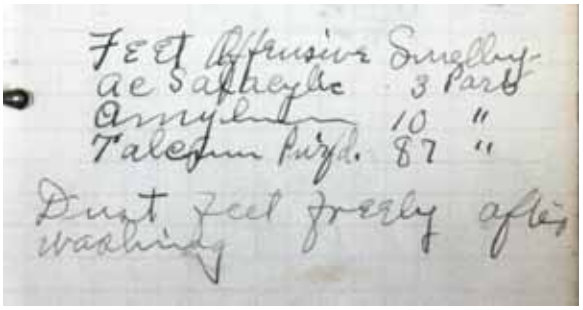
[89] The American Druggists Syndicate (ADS) was an association of pharmaceutical buying cooperatives that was used by many small pharmacies.

[90] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009. Tom Boltz noted, "In the store, yeah," and received the reply, "Well, it was a great risk to the person using it, too." It was apparently not the only risky item in the store. In 1917, Charlie received Federal Explosive Vendor's license 521084, and it would be interesting to know the story behind that mute piece of paper.

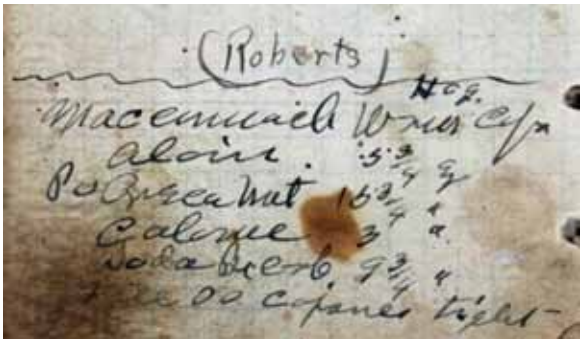
[91] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009.

We think today of pharmacists primarily dispensing drugs that are made elsewhere, but in the 1920s and 1930s, pharmacies did their own compounding. The Roberts Pharmacy used several published pharmacy references, but Charlie's own formulary, written in longhand in a loose-leaf notebook, shows that medicines were far from standardized. Besides compounding medicines for humans and animals, the pharmacist served as a practical chemist, making such things as orange shellac, show card ink, trombone oil, and a cure for smelly feet.



Some recipes hint at stories—"Hoytville Blood Med." included potassium iodide, which was and is used to treat goiter (hyperthyroidism), but at this remove it is difficult to know why the medicine was specific to Hoytville. The pharmacy also catered to veterinarians—dog medications in the formulary include "condition pills" and specifics for worms and cough, while Mrs. Fred Nigh had her own remedy for chicken cholera.

The recipe for "Macormack Hog Wrm Caps" appears in the formulary as shown at right.



> Doctor McCormick, the veterinarian… had a concoction he gave to hogs to worm them. It had aloin in it, which was bitter as all get out. One evening he called Dad and wanted 100 of those worm pills, and the whole family turned to to fill the capsules, fill each half.[92]

The Roberts formulary book contains many generic recipes, but many medicines were compounded for specific individuals. For Sam Feese, Charlie prepared a ginger-based "condition powder." The active ingredient of the "Grippe Cure" he made for George Black and John Tice was quinine from Peruvian bark, but some of its attraction may have been due to the amount of medicinal brandy in which the bark was dissolved.[93]

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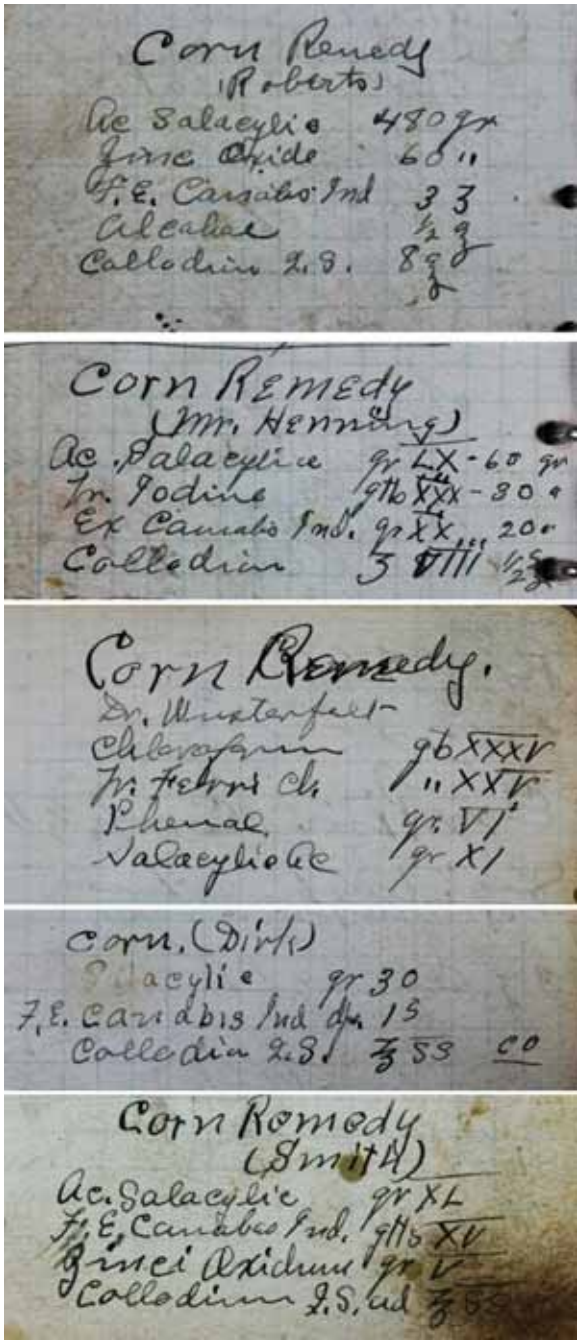
[92] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009.

[93] "Grippe" was an old-fashioned term for influenza.

Charlie's formulary included at least five remedies for corns (at right), including Charlie's own. Given the current interest in medical marijuana, it is intriguing to note that four of the five corn formulas, and many other preparations, contained cannabis.



Bill helped in the drugstore as well, where he "waited on trade and swept the place out." In 1937 he was certified as an Apprentice Pharmacist. Bill's mother Nellie was also an apprentice in the pharmacy.

> The rules were a little more lax than they are now. Now… the law states that you don't dare have the drugstore open without a pharmacist, so that's why a lot of the drugstores have gratings [to] close up the pharmacy and still keep the rest of the store open. Back in those days, my dad would take vacation and my mother would run the restaurant.[94]

[94] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009.

Growing Up

As youngsters grew older, their interests changed. Boy Scouting, in North Baltimore Troop 315, became a part of Bill's life when he turned twelve, and it remained so through his high school years.

The kids my age were the first members of the troop because I would've been 12 in 1932. The scout master was Chet Fast, who was a teacher at the high school…. it was really quite active. We did lots of things and we had a little bit of a distinction in that Donn Foltz and I both sang, and also Dick Bretz…. Bill Cryer sang bass and we made him a Boy Scout so we could get him in the quartet.


North Baltimore Quartet Will Sing Here Sunday

A quartet of North Baltimore high school boys, under direction of Prof. Stanley Weldy, has been gaining recognition in their performances and will sing Sunday evening at the First Church of Christ. Singers (from left to right) are: Don Foltz, 1st tenor; William Roberts, 2nd tenor; Richard Bretz, baritone; and William Cryer, bass.

The golf course tract in NB belonged to the B&O and was to be their right-of-way on the way to Findlay. We used to camp there on overnights…. One of the requirements for First Class Scout was a 14-mile hike. We got

credit for following the Rocky Ford to Van Buren and back even though I doubt it was 14 miles."[95]

Camping didn't have to be organized, of course.

There were a lot of kids at that time who had what we called shanties. Dale Everett lived down on West Water Street. His folks let him take the old chicken coop and make it into a shanty, and we'd stay all night, cook our breakfast and so on, and in the wintertime, besides. We'd burn corncobs in the stove. It's a wonder we didn't burn the place down. [Corncobs] are just red hot or coals, there's no in between.[96]

As might be expected, many recollections of the twenties and thirties involved automobiles.

Dad's first car was a Model T. Then he got a Mitchell (named after the General) and bought a second one for parts. Then he got a Willys-Knight [at left]. There were a number of different makes of cars that used the Knight engine (Stearns Knight being one) and they all smoked and used oil like mad because they had a sleeve valve system instead of regular valves.

Then he got a Studebaker 'Big Six' [right, on Main Street] that was huge. It had a six-cylinder engine with cylinders that must have been 6" across. That's the one we used to siphon gas from to put in our buddies' cars to run around in. Dad never could understand why every time he took the car out of the garage he had to buy gas.

Model T Fords were all over the place. Since most of them had to be cranked by hand, the guys would fasten a stiff wire to the carburetor. The wire ran out the front through the radiator so the guy could choke the engine while cranking. It was great sport to walk down Main Street and pull those choke wires out and bend them down. Who, me? Do a thing like that? The other thing was to stick a raw potato in the end of the exhaust pipe so the car wouldn't start.

Then there was the time Jim Baker cranked his 'T' in front of Dad's drug store, but he'd forgotten to pull back the clutch lever that everyone called the Johnson Bar. When the car started, it went up over the curb and into the front window of Dad's store. There

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[95] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009; September 9, 2009. WHRMD, "What I Remember." While a 1921 town directory stated that it was, "Published under the auspices of No. Baltimore Troop No. 1, Boy Scouts," nothing else has come to light about that troop.

[96] WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009.

were a number of cameras in the window display, but I don't believe any of them were damaged. Minnie Baker, Jim's wife, was in the car. Fortunately, Jim jumped out of the way, but the town wags said, "Well, Minnie, you missed him that time, have to try again!"[97]

Although the three druggists all socialized, cars brought something extra to the relationship between the Sommerses and the Robertses.

> Lulu Sommers had a Studebaker four-door sedan that was tan with orange wire wheels. There were wheel wells in the front fenders with a [spare] wheel in each one. Ed Roberts had a Chevrolet coupe with the same colors and the same wheel wells. Ed also had an Airedale dog named Cappy Ricks. The story was that Ed brought this pup home to Charles and Nellie's just as Ed was on his way back to Columbus to OSU one Sunday afternoon. The dog was not well mannered, but he loved to ride between the spare wheel and the hood on Ed's car.
>
> Unfortunately, [Cappy] didn't know a Studebaker from a Chevy, so in his wanderings, he would ensconce himself on Lulu's car and wouldn't move. Sommerses lived on South Main Street on the east side. Dad would get a phone call from Lulu Sommers saying, "Charlie Roberts, come get your dog." This happened more than once.[98]

Cappy Ricks appears at right in his favorite position, demonstrating that, indeed, the make of the car didn't matter to him. Bill recalled, "Living on Main Street, we could never keep a dog very long because they'd always get run over."[99]

Driver's licensing in those days was looser than it is today. Ruth Jane Roberts recalled that she obtained a driver's license at the age of 15 based solely upon her father's statement that she knew how to drive. Care in never letting her license expire enabled her to boast that she never took a driver's test in her life.[100]

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[97] WHRMD, "What I Remember." Many motorists (including Bill's sister Henrietta) suffered broken wrists when an engine kicked back while they were cranking a "T" by hand. For the Willys-Knight sleeve valves, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleeve_valve.

[98] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

[99] WHRMD Interview August 25, 2009. "When I had a dog die, usually hit by a car or, in Sport's case, a train, [Charlie] would ask permission from the elevator to throw the dog into the cob burner. It saved digging a hole, to say the least." WHRMD, "What I Remember."

[100] Her propensity to hug the right side of the road led her father, Howard Biehler, to note, "Well, Ruth Jane, nobody's ever going to sideswipe you!"

While motor vehicles proliferated in the twenties and thirties, horses dwindled but, as Biehlers' Old Fred indicates, did not disappear. "Frank Ausenbaugh, who lived south of town on the Angling Road, used to come to town in a buggy with a pony for prime mover. There still were hitch rails on Main Street, both north and south of the railroad."[101] Children were taught to harness and drive horses, as the image at right of Bill and his friends shows, and the local blacksmith repaired wheels and shoed horses.

> The blacksmith shop was a long, narrow building on the west side of the alley behind Roberts' Drug Store—where the Marathon station is now…. One farmer named Jeff Clarey lived out west of town. He had an unruly team and would ask Dad to let him use the back yard of the drugstore to shoe them. He had to throw them—he would tie their feet together and push them over. There would be dust everywhere and horses squealing! The smith (Noah "Noe" Dominique) hated to see Jeff come in."[102]

The declining horse population did make the streets cleaner as gaseous pollution from exhaust pipes replaced solid pollution from horse manure, but solid pollution did not completely vanish. One day, a hard-of-hearing farmer was towing his manure spreader up Main Street behind his tractor. Everyone he met was particularly friendly, waving vigorously at him, and he waved back. He finally realized that people were trying to get his attention because the spreader was engaged.

During the 1930s, growing up was colored by the Great Depression, and Roberts Pharmacy was hit as hard as any Main Street business. In 1930, the store earned $914 on sales of $4,687, but Charlie also made $1,000 as Secretary of the Home Savings and Building Association. As the Depression began to bite, both of these income sources declined—by 1934, his salary from the "Building and Loan" had been reduced to $850. Meanwhile, in 1931, the pharmacy lost $344, even though it cut expenses by drawing down inventory. In 1935 Nellie was appointed Acting Postmaster by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which was fortunate. In that year, Charlie retired from the Savings and Loan and the pharmacy lost $26, so Nellie's Post Office salary was supporting the family. In 1936, the pharmacy made $67.00 on sales of only $1,200.[103]

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[101] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

[102] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

[103] Individual Income Tax Returns of Chas. S. Roberts, 1930-36.

A key element of Depression economics was how slowing business for retailers also hurt their suppliers. As the graph at right shows, in 1930, the pharmacy bought $3,112 worth of merchandise to sell. In 1936, the corresponding figure was $800.[104]

Although Nellie's position provided the family with a steady source of income, money was still tight; as late as 1948, the Roberts family used an icebox instead of a refrigerator, and had never owned a new car.[105] Other families made do in their own ways. As farmers, Ruth Jane recalled, the Biehlers might be short of cash but never short of food. They regularly invited neighborhood children to dinner so that the children would have at least one good meal each week. Others took advantage of the way that loaded coal trains headed for Toledo slowed when they left the B&O main line: "People would climb up the coal cars and throw coal off to the side until the train started to pick up speed. Then they would jump off, pick up the coal, and go home. I think there were a number of homes with heat that winter that would have been otherwise cold."[106]

A feature of Bill's childhood was the family's summer cottage at Long Lake, Michigan. The "Buckeye" was small and simple, across a dirt road from the lake shore. As a toddler, Bill wore a harness clipped to the clothesline to keep him from wandering off. Age brought freedom, and the lake, the woods, and the nearby area became a playground. Fishing was popular, and an excellent way to catch grasshoppers for bait was to station a boy with a butterfly net on each front fender and drive slowly across a field of stubble, capturing the hoppers as they flew up. Long Lake town, with its post office and general store, added interest, and in his boyhood summers, Bill made lifetime friends.

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[104] Chas. S. Roberts Tax Returns.

[105] Iceboxes, used before mechanical refrigeration, were insulated cabinets, usually made of wood and lined with tin or zinc. A large block of ice kept the inside cool. An ice delivery service made frequent rounds, and customers would place a sign in the window to tell the iceman how many pounds they needed that day.

[106] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

Long Lake Town was even smaller than North Baltimore—its whole township had only 725 people in 1930. The center of town was the post office (left) and general store. At right, Bill shows off a good catch.

Growing up, of course, meant discovering the opposite sex. Bill noted,

> I don't think I realized what girls were until I was maybe a junior in high school or something like that…. I don't think you ever went to the movie or anything. Well, maybe when I was a senior we might have. I had a dollar, and you paid two bits apiece to get in the movie, and that was 50 cents. And 15 cents for gas, that was 65, which left 35 cents. There was a White Castle [in Findlay] where you got those little bitty hamburgers six for a quarter. So that was 25 cents of the 35 cents. And then two Cokes for a nickel [apiece].[107]

It's not clear when Bill and Ruth Jane began dating, but it appears to have been late in high school—the clipping at right shows her in high school as the female lead in the junior play, "Calm Yourself." Bill recalled that dinner at Biehlers' was very congenial, but one evening, his portion of chicken included a piece of buckshot, and he wondered afterward if it might have been intended as a subtle hint that Butch owned a shotgun. It turned out that the main course had escaped from the chicken yard and evaded apprehension for several days. When Butch saw the chicken in the field across the alley, he recaptured it with the 12 gauge. Butch contributed another family favorite line: "Eat lots of potatoes, Bill. They're cheap."

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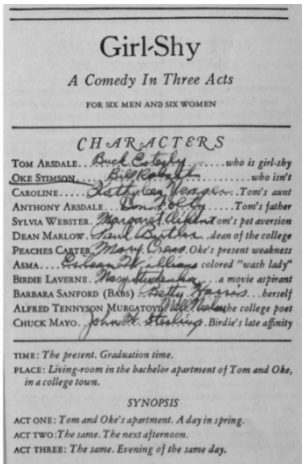
[107] WHRMD, "What I Remember."

Leaving Town

The years 1937 and 1938 were a period of change. Bill's sister Henrietta ("Hank") had married Bill Britton, a local man, in 1935, and their daughter Katherine Louise ("Kay Lou") was born in December 1936. Both Hank and Kay Lou contracted tuberculosis, and Kay Lou died in April 1937 at the age of four months. Hank herself died May 19, 1938, and, in those days before health insurance, the medical bills seriously damaged the family's finances for several years. A 1948 letter from Nellie indicates that Charlie's health also declined around 1938, and in August of that year, he discontinued his narcotics license. The pharmacy business was sold to Ray Quiggle at about the same time.[108]

For Bill himself, 1938 marked a watershed. Finishing high school was a significant accomplishment, since fewer than 30 percent of Americans had done that, and being accepted to Ohio State for college was even more significant. Bill had always wanted to be a doctor—he wrote about that dream in a high school essay—and pharmacy school would be good preparation. It would also be a big change to move from North Baltimore, a town of about 2,500, to Columbus, which boasted nearly 300,000 inhabitants.

The last week in May 1938 drove home the transition. After the high school junior-senior banquet on Friday, May 20, the Class of 1938 attended a baccalaureate service on Sunday, May 22, and a National Honor Society ceremony on May 23. The Senior Play ("Girl Shy," by Katherine Kavanaugh) was presented on Wednesday, May 25, with Bill in a major role. The image at right shows the cast, with Bill second from left in the front row.[109] At Commencement, on Thursday, May 26, Bruce Esterly and Margaret Aikens gave the salutatory and valedictory addresses and Bill played a cornet solo. His schooling in North Baltimore was over.



Girl-Shy

A Comedy In Three Acts

FOR SIX MEN AND SIX WOMEN

CHARACTERS

TOM ARSDALE.....who is girl-shy
OKE STIMSON.....who isn't
CAROLINE.....Tom's aunt
ANTHONY ARSDALE.....Tom's father
SYLVIA WEBSTER.....Tom's pet aversion
DEAN MARLOW.....dean of the college
PEACHES CARTER.....Oke's present weakness
ASMA.....colored "wash lady"
BIRDIE LAVERNE.....a movie aspirant
BARBARA SANFORD (BABS).....herself
ALFRED TENNYSON MURGATOYD.....the college poet
CHUCK MAYO.....Birdie's late affinity

TIME: *The present. Graduation time.*
PLACE: *Living-room in the bachelor apartment of Tom and Oke, in a college town.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: *Tom and Oke's apartment. A day in spring.*
ACT TWO: *The same. The next afternoon.*
ACT THREE: *The same. Evening of the same day.*

"Freshman Week" at Ohio State began September 28, 1938, and with it, Bill's years away from North Baltimore.

Epilog

During the late 1930s, the international situation became increasingly tense, and in September 1939, war broke out in Europe. That led to a gradual economic resurgence as US industry began to fill orders for military equipment. Yet the war was still very distant from Ohio. Although Ohio State required that all male students participate in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), marching in the band fulfilled the requirement, and Bill marched with The Best Damned Band In The Land for four years. After France fell to Nazi Germany in 1940, the United States introduced conscription, but many felt that the US should not again become involved in Europe's quarrels. Isolationist sentiment was strong, opposition to the draft was very vocal, and the Service Extension Act of 1941 passed the US House of Representatives by a single vote.

Isolationism remained strong until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. North Baltimore was immediately affected, since the town's first World War II casualty was Seaman Irven Thompson, killed aboard USS ARIZONA. Many men, including Bill, volunteered for service—he appears at right in ensign's uniform, at about the time of his marriage to Ruth Jane in 1943. Some 400 North Baltimore area residents served as volunteers or draftees. As a result, women replaced absent men in "non-traditional" jobs such as manufacturing. Many consumer goods were scarce and others were rationed during the war years, but the town was more prosperous than it had been since before the Great Depression.

Bill left town in 1938 and did not move back until 1953, when he established his medical practice. For his generation and in that period, life-changing experiences abounded—college, wartime service, the loss of friends and parents, marriage, fatherhood—and those fifteen years had been years of change at home as well. As has been the case for others, moving away caused him to see North Baltimore as a time-lapse movie with an exposure each time he returned. With the exposures months or years apart, changes seemed to come rapidly, but in fact they were gradual and incremental.

From the 1940s through the 1960s, several factors eroded North Baltimore's position as a center of commerce. The changing face of transportation was highly significant. The town was a creation of the railroad, and since its founding, most goods had moved by rail. Road transportation was limited; at first by the lack of reliable motor vehicles, and then by the relative lack of good roads. By the 1950s, roads were good enough and motor vehicles reliable enough

for long distance road transportation to become common. The construction of the Interstate Highway System accelerated that shift.

At the personal level, automobiles and good paved roads enabled people to travel farther to do their shopping and to carry home their purchases more conveniently. Retailers in larger centers such as Findlay, Bowling Green, and Toledo grew into regional merchants, able to offer broad selections and low prices thanks to their large customer bases and high sales volumes. Although the same easy access meant that people from other communities could be attracted to shop or dine in North Baltimore, local merchants who started from small customer bases and had limited capital found it very difficult to make the transition from local to regional sales. In short, small-town merchants could not compete.[110]

During this period, American businesses grew markedly in size and geographic reach, furthering the decline of the small town in two ways. First, as businesses grew and shifted to corporate ownership, they lost their personal connections with towns. Business decisions made by local owners could not be divorced from local considerations. Distant corporate managers, however, focused on maximizing shareholder value with less concern for other stakeholders, and their impersonal, numerically driven decisions were often devoid of local input. Second, the increased scale of national businesses made the competitive disadvantage for small merchants even greater, since the small firms could not benefit from the economies of scale available to large ones, nor match the advertising upon which large corporations spent so much.

The post-war period also brought changes in the labor market, and, in the same way that small-town merchants were squeezed out, small-town employers could not compete. The labor shortage of the immediate post-war years was due in part to the jobs that opened up when women workers were sent home from their wartime occupations, but that temporary boom masked structural changes, such as the increased farm production and reduced need for farm labor brought by widespread mechanization. Better transportation made it convenient for people to live in North Baltimore and work elsewhere.

Socially, the changes in mass communication were as profound as the changes in transportation. Television, which first supplemented and then superseded radio, had far-reaching consequences. As Richard Davies points out, at a high level, it “accelerated the domination of small-town life by urban America” and reduced the influence of local culture. More immediately, it removed people from community activities, isolating them in their homes

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[110] Horses were roughly limited to a 7 mile radius (mentioned above), so merchants in town could draw from an area of some 154 square miles. Doubling the radius to 14 miles (e.g., roughly to Bowling Green or Findlay) results in a “shopping area” of 616 square miles, and increasing the radius to 35 miles (e.g., to Toledo) increases the shopping area to 3,848 square miles. People “increasingly looked to [local stores] only for the low-cost necessities of everyday life.” Richard O. Davies, *Main Street Blues: The Decline of Small-Town America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 1998), 155.

during the evening hours and reducing the amount of visiting between neighbors. Because television required seeing the story as well as hearing it, one could no longer follow a show through open windows as one walked along the street. “Over time, neighbors became more distant; newcomers sometimes remained strangers.”[111] The decline of connection and “social capital” also showed in the erosion of the long-standing American predilection for joining civic and communal organizations.[112]

Many veterans, including Bill, took advantage of the post-World War II educational benefits provided by the GI Bill. Increased education made the veterans attractive candidates for the opportunities offered by large companies and the expanding Federal Government, while wartime experience and travel made small-town life seem less fulfilling. [113] A previous generation had asked, “How you gonna keep ’em down on the farm after they've seen Paree?” and the result of out-migration and the loss of locally owned businesses was a decline in civic engagement. These trends accelerated in the 1960s and the town’s population was practically flat between 1970 and 1990.

Main Street will never regain its former commercial or social importance. In fact, the decline of Main Street has spread from small towns to medium-sized ones, as on-line retailers take business from regional stores and on-line content reaches almost every household. Yet small towns are holding their own, and North Baltimore grew 9% from 1990 to 2010. It has sound civic institutions, its own school system with up-to-date facilities, a plentiful and independent water supply; and a vibrant public library. With a good number of employers for a town its size and a strategic location on the rail and highway map, “Peters’ Crossroads” has good prospects for the 21st Century.

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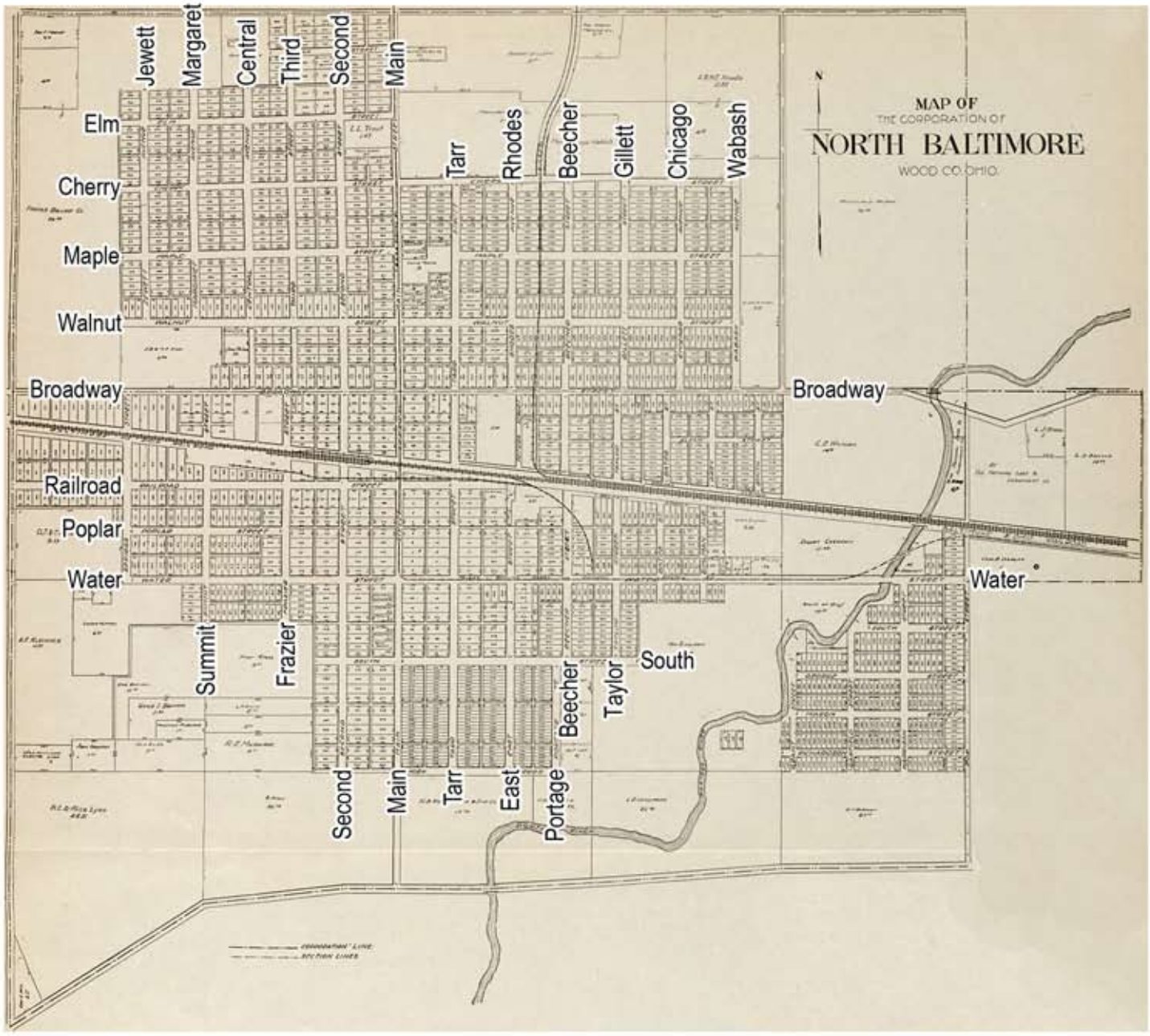
[111] Davies, *Main Street Blues*, 148-53; 155. Bill recalled, “[The movie theater] was still going when I was a teenager, but it closed shortly after I graduated from high school [1938] and then it opened up again later on, sometime in the early sixties that I remember. But it was on the downhill for people with TVs.” WHRMD Interview September 8, 2009

[112] The relationship between social capital and civic engagement is examined at length in Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Touchstone, 2001). Putnam attributed roughly 25% of the observed declines in civic engagement to “electronic entertainment” and roughly 50% to generational change—the replacement of a cohort with values formed by the heightened civic obligation of World War II by a cohort with differently formed values. He also observed, “The more fully that any given generation was exposed to television in its formative years, the lower its civic engagement during adulthood.” Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 272.

[113] Davies, *Main Street Blues*, 142-44. North Baltimore life in the 1950s resembled Xenia in the 1910s, as lyrically depicted by Helen Hooven Santmyer in *Ohio Town*, and the similarities speak to the slow rate of change in the four decades before the advent of television. Certainly a traveler from the 1920s would have recognized North Baltimore in the 1950s—Main Street was still the main street and small, locally owned businesses still predominated. A trip to Findlay or Bowling Green was still unusual. Kids still wandered around looking at things—the cob burner at the elevator, the machine shop—and still walked or bicycled to the quarry to swim.

North Baltimore in the Early 20th Century



Adapted from Maumee Valley Map Co. An Atlas of Wood County, Ohio. (Bowling Green, Ohio: Maumee Valley Map Co., [1912?]), 37. http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g4083wm.gla00037, accessed May 4, 2019.

ISBN 978-1-7342077-0-5
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