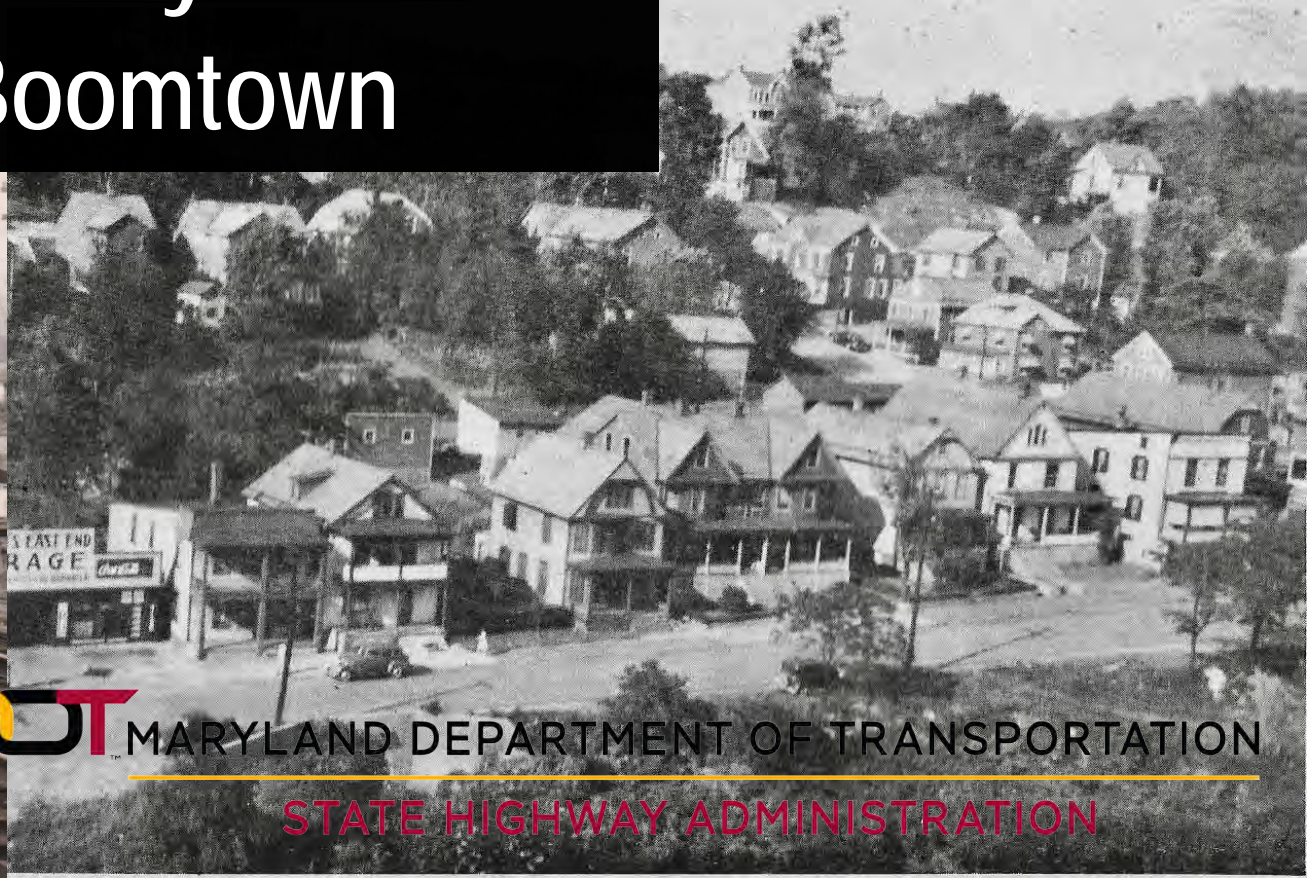
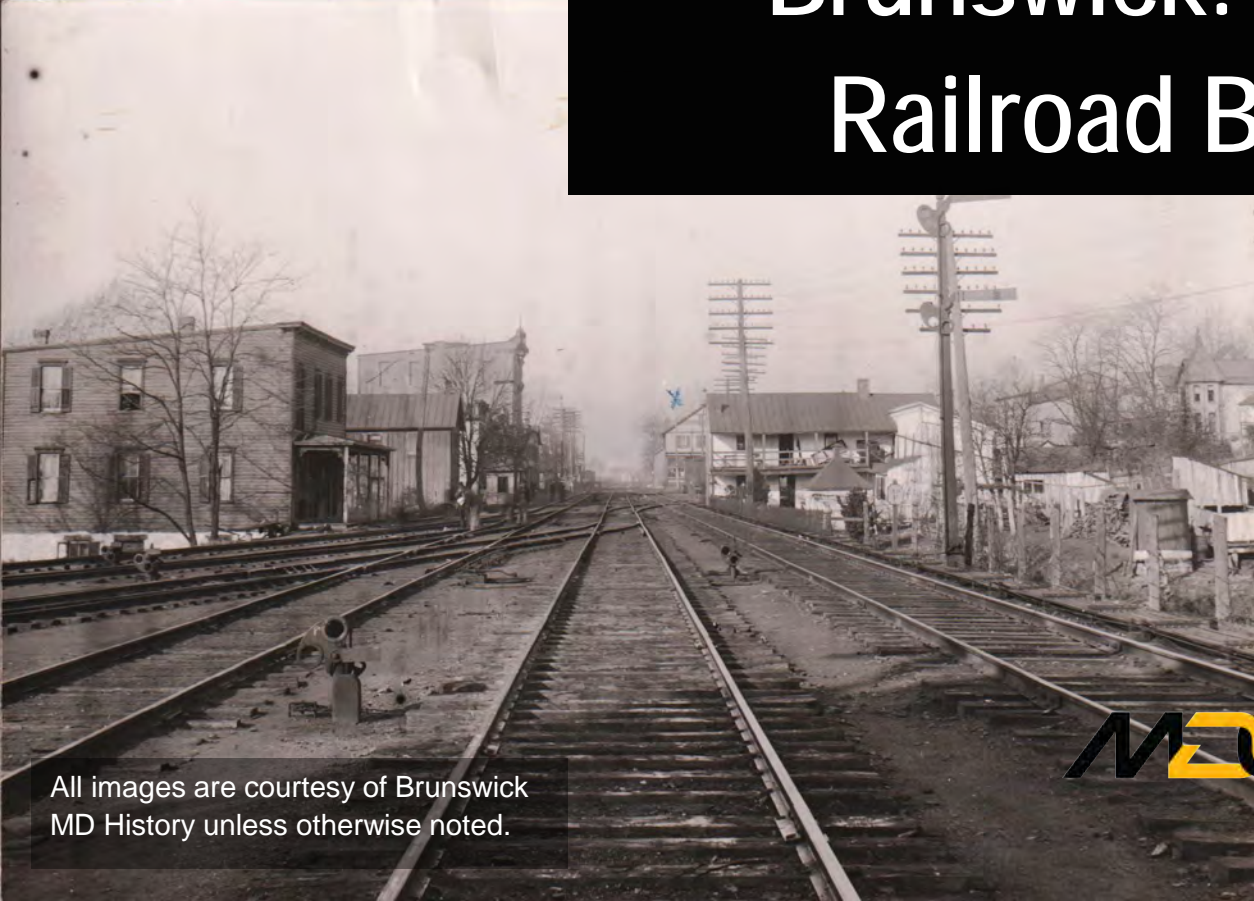




Brunswick: Maryland's Railroad Boomtown



All images are courtesy of Brunswick MD History unless otherwise noted.



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Brunswick's Origins

The area of Brunswick was originally known as "German Crossing" since German settlers migrated from York and Lancaster counties in Pennsylvania to the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. In the 1720s trader Abraham Pennington became the first permanent settler and established a ferry across the Potomac River in 1731. The ferry continued operating into the nineteenth century. The crossing became a key migration route for thousands of settlers.



1872 photograph of ferry boats, Library of Congress

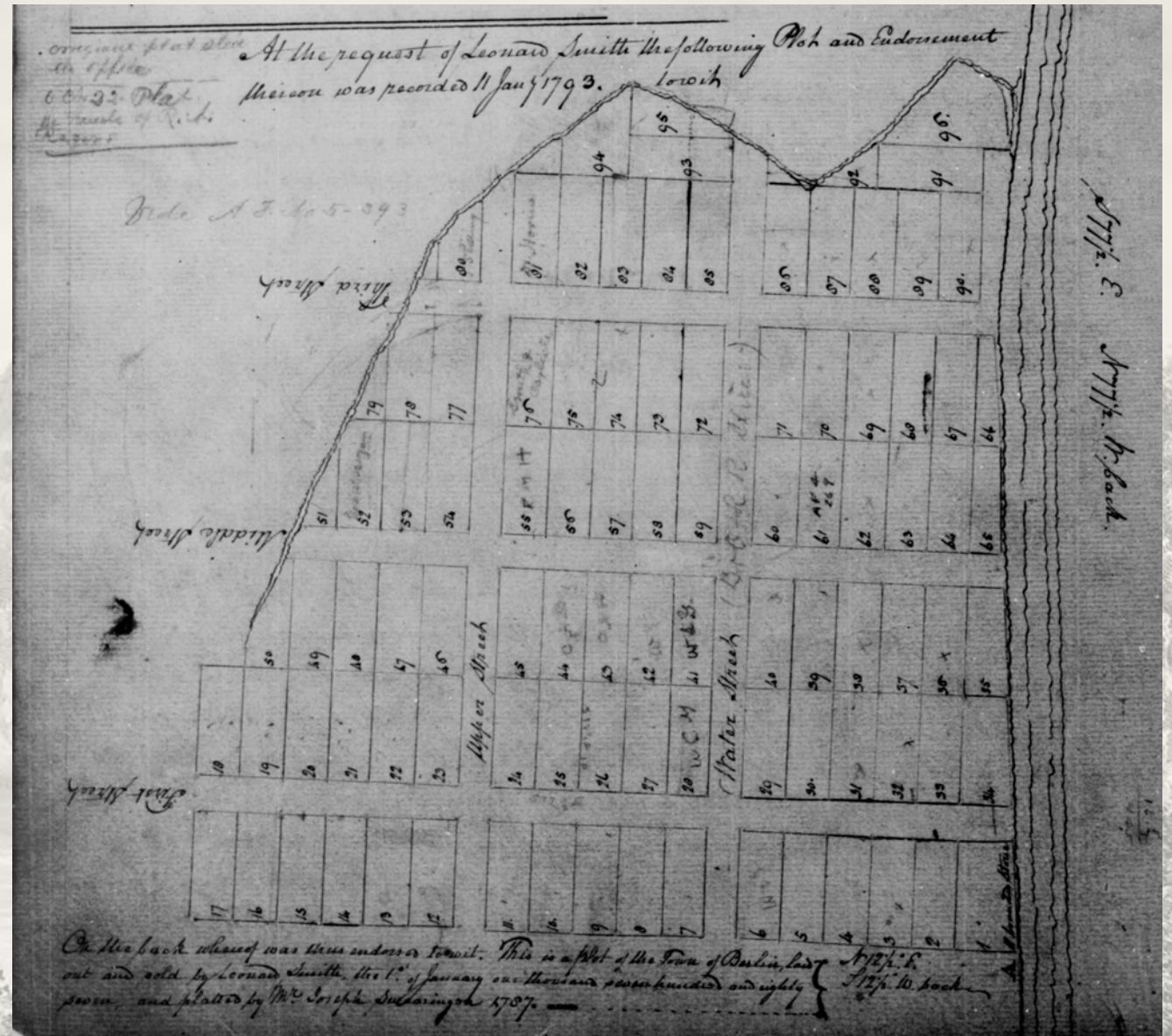
1749 Map Showing Maryland and Surrounding Colonies, Library of Congress

The Founding of Brunswick

In 1787 Leonard Smith platted the town of Berlin, eventually named Brunswick, into 96 lots. The town's layout simplified survey, subdivision, and sale of lots. Smith followed the common practice of numbering north-south streets (e.g First Street, Middle Street, and Third Street) while the east-west running streets were named Water Street and Upper Street.

The plat map shows one building in town, a store at the south end of First Street on the bank of the Potomac. More buildings followed as Smith sold lots; by 1800 over 100 people lived in the town.

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1793 Leonard Smith Plat of Berlin

View on the Potomac--Near Harper's Ferry, Library of Congress

Early Brunswick

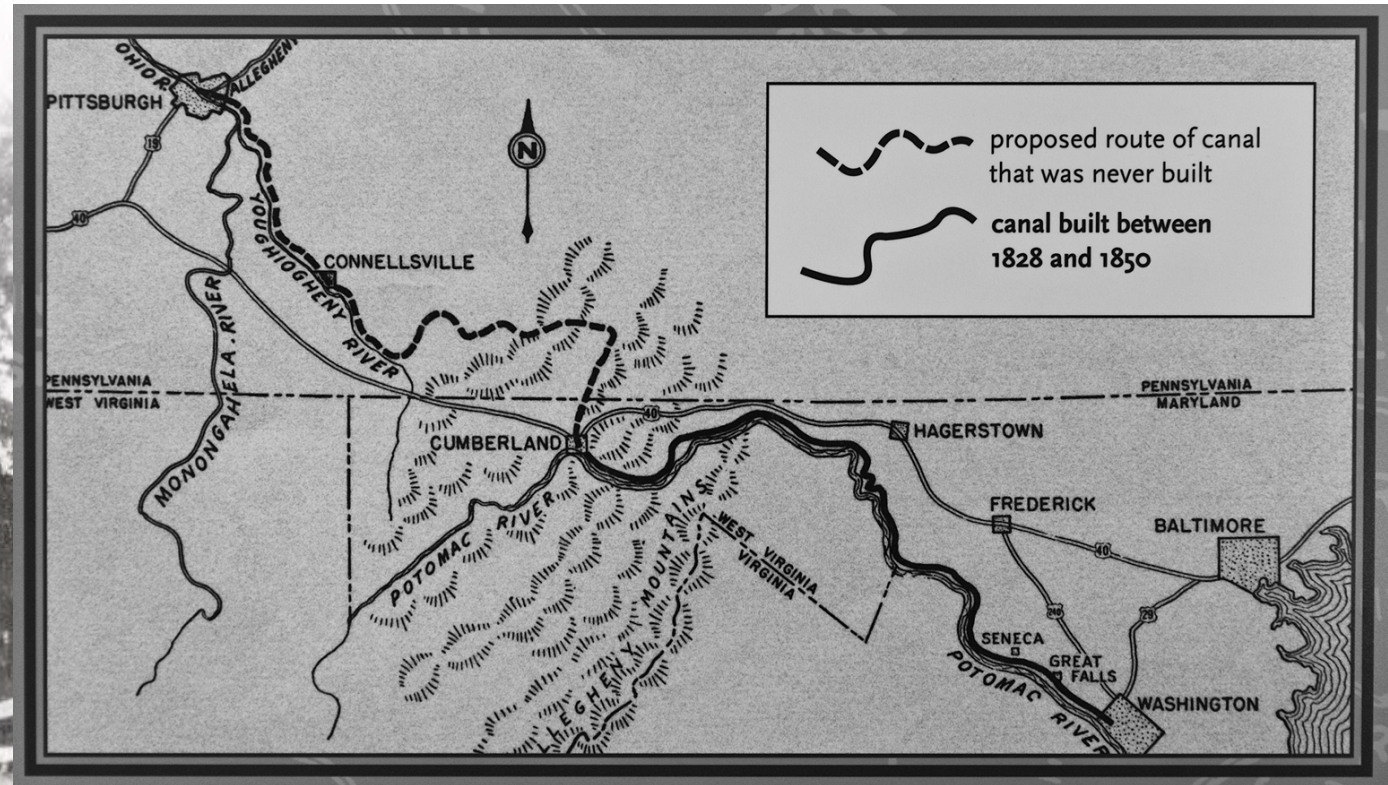
In the decades after the United States was founded, Americans focused on constructing infrastructure to connect the growing country and strengthen its economy. Turnpikes and canals, funded by private joint-stock companies, allowed for faster transportation of people, goods, and ideas throughout the country.

Since the town was not along major roads or turnpikes, it remained a small town with a store that served river traffic, local Marylanders, and – through the ferry service – Virginians on the opposite bank of the Potomac River.

View on the Potomac--Near Harper's Ferry, Library of Congress



The C&O Canal Comes to Brunswick



In 1832 the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal Company began to purchase land for construction of a canal through the town. Construction of the eastern section began in 1828 and ran from Washington D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland; it took over 20 years to complete the canal. A second, western section was to connect the canal at Cumberland to the Ohio River in Pittsburgh but was never built.

Construction of the canal from Point of Rocks to Harper's Ferry began in June 1832 and was completed a year later. This new canal was built at the banks of the Potomac River; Lock 30 and a lockkeeper's house were located at the end of First Street. The new canal brought new businesses and spurred growth. The basin-like area at Lock 30 provided areas for boats to dock and load and unload wares where they were distributed to warehouses and businesses along the canal.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad



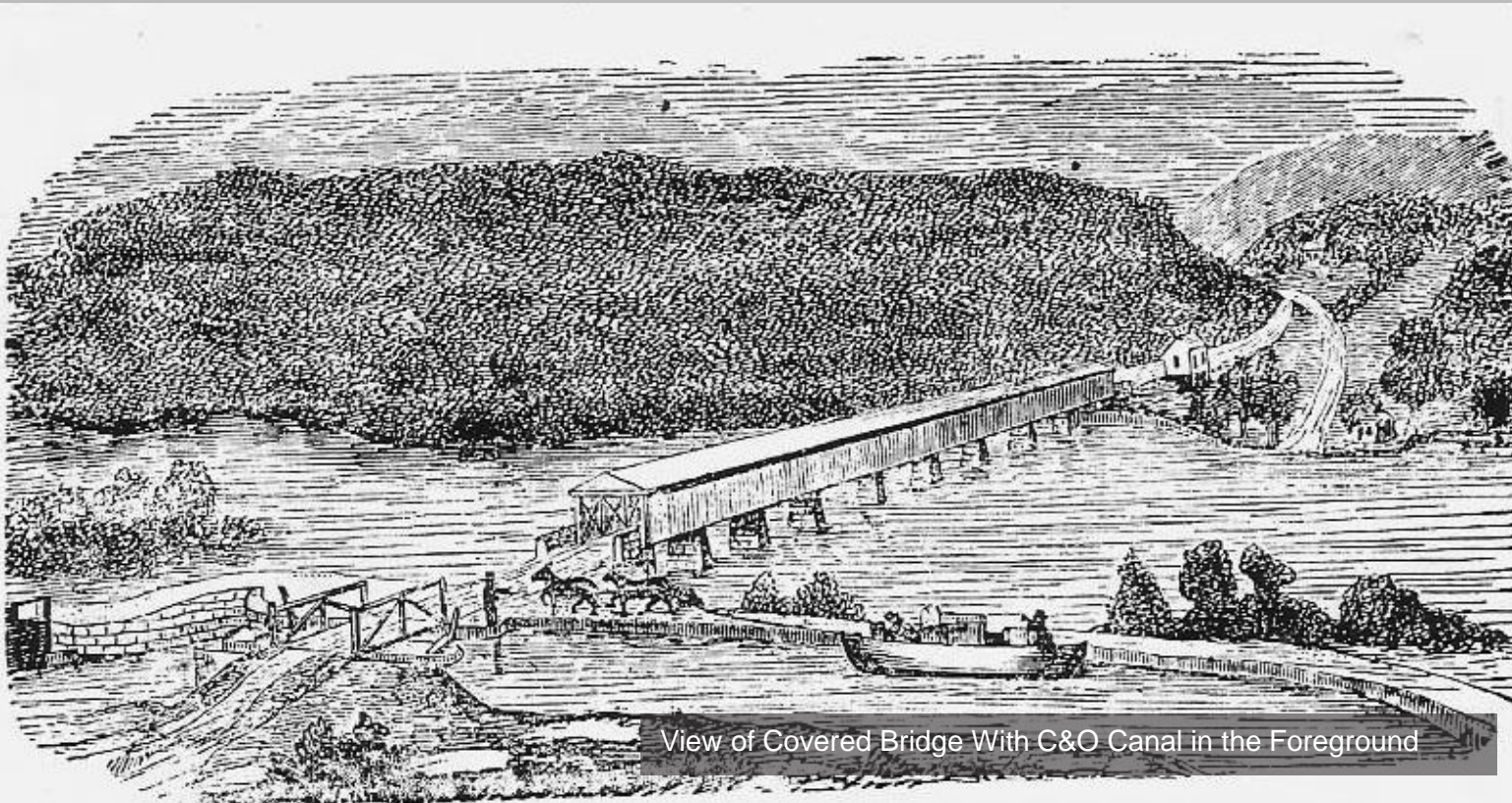
While planning the construction of the C&O Canal continued, Baltimore businessmen decided to invest in a new form of transportation: railroads. They formed the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad Company, one of the first commercial railroads in the world and the oldest railroad in the United States. Construction began in 1828.

The flat, narrow land along the Potomac River between Point of Rocks and Harper's Ferry was crucial to the construction of the B&O Railroad and the C&O Canal. Both companies legally fought for the land. Eventually, the two companies compromised to share the right-of-way. In 1834, the B&O completed construction of a single track through Brunswick, as well as a depot and tool shed. Although the railroad would eventually determine the town's economy, the canal initially had a greater economic impact on the town.

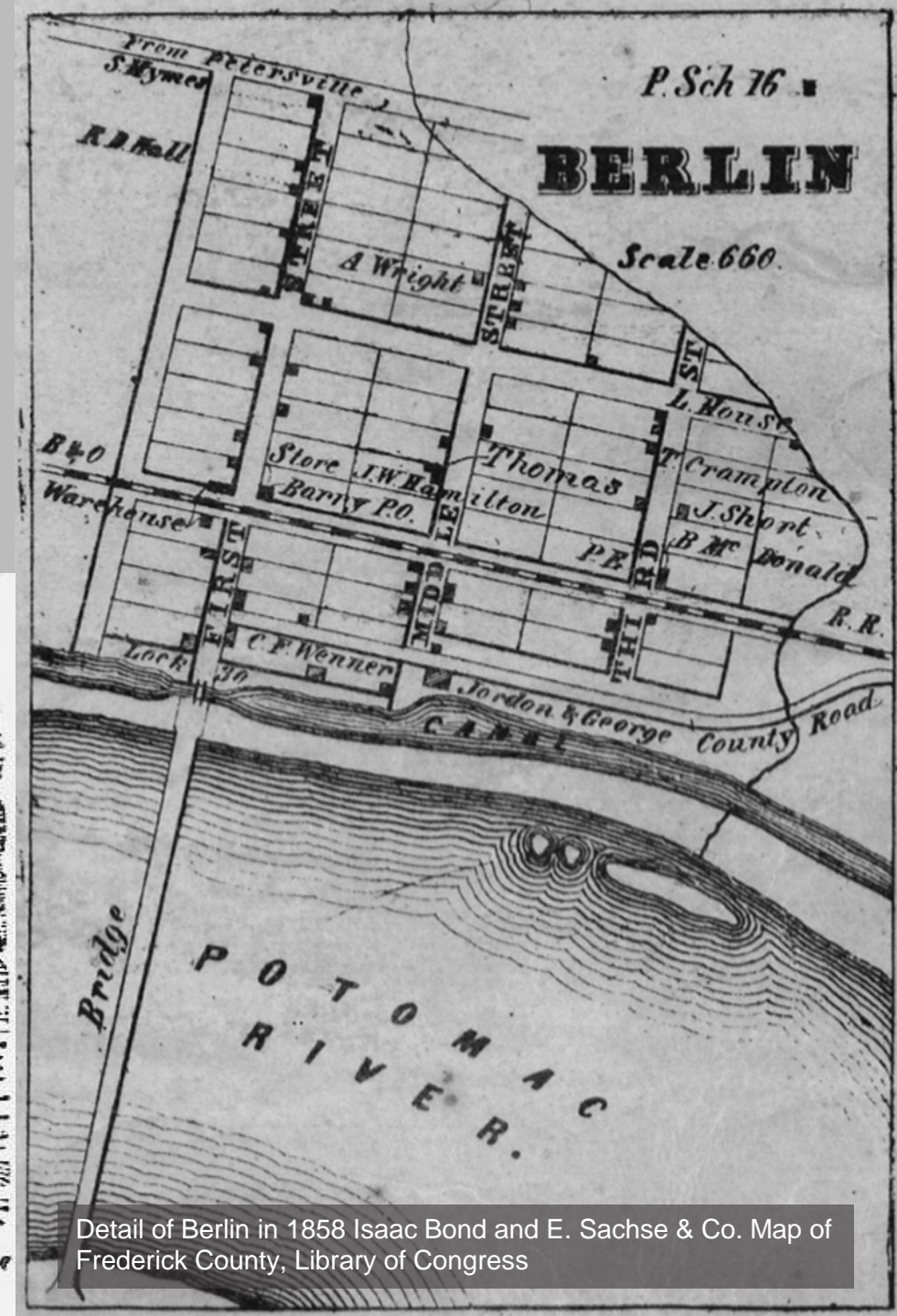
1850s Brunswick

By the 1850s, the town had grown, though it had not yet expanded beyond the boundaries of its original 1787 plat. The railroad ran along the original Water Street with warehouses along the tracks. The 1858 map of Berlin (Brunswick) also shows the Post Office and Store, as well as warehouses along the canal.

Berlin had grown enough that in 1853-54 the Loudoun and Berlin Bridge Company replaced the ferry and constructed a bridge over the Potomac. Built in 1858 and located just south of Lock 30, the crossing was a double-track wooden covered bridge on stone piers.



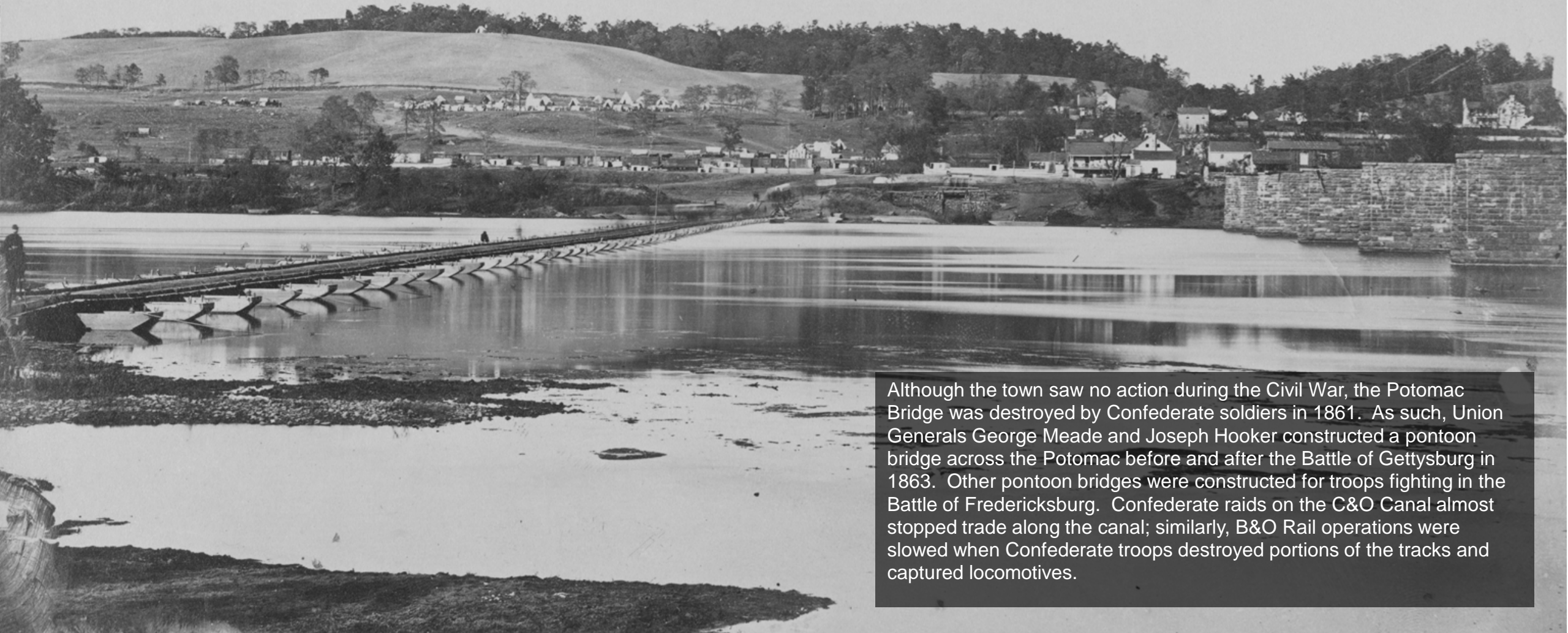
View of Covered Bridge With C&O Canal in the Foreground



Detail of Berlin in 1858 Isaac Bond and E. Sachse & Co. Map of Frederick County, Library of Congress

1862 photo from the Virginia shore of the Potomac, showing the Union Army Pontoon Bridge and 1858 bridge piers in the foreground. On the opposite bank: Brunswick to the right, and the Union Army encampment to the left. (Library of Congress)

The Civil War



Although the town saw no action during the Civil War, the Potomac Bridge was destroyed by Confederate soldiers in 1861. As such, Union Generals George Meade and Joseph Hooker constructed a pontoon bridge across the Potomac before and after the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Other pontoon bridges were constructed for troops fighting in the Battle of Fredericksburg. Confederate raids on the C&O Canal almost stopped trade along the canal; similarly, B&O Rail operations were slowed when Confederate troops destroyed portions of the tracks and captured locomotives.

1870-1880s Brunswick

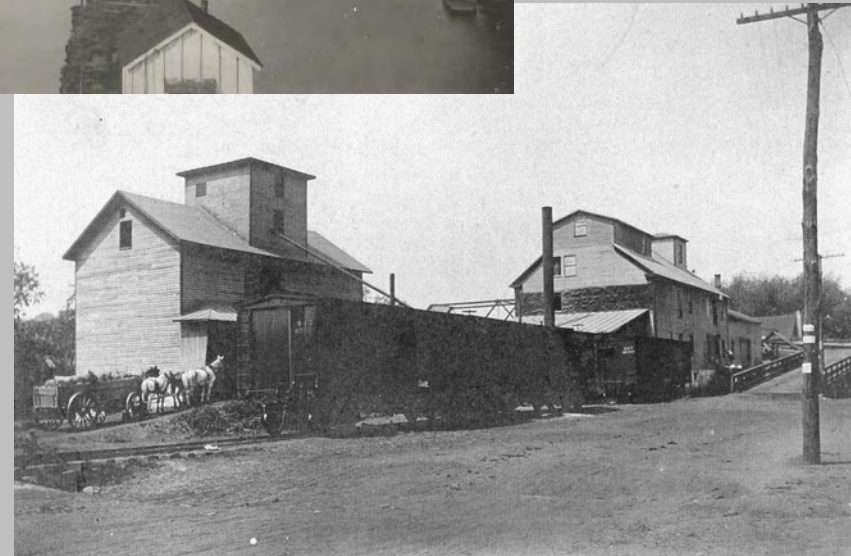


Detail of Berlin in 1873 DJ Lake and C.O. Titus & Co Atlas of Frederick County, Maryland



View from Lock 30
Looking West

Grain Elevator (left)
Flour Mill (right)



Because of the active commerce along the C&O Canal, the town continued to prosper after the Civil War. The 1870s were the canal's peak years of profitability, as coal trade along the canal increased. In Berlin, local businessman C.F. Wenner convinced the C&O to allow him to build a grist mill along the canal. The new mill allowed farmers to sell their grain to millers in the town. The 1873 map of Berlin (Brunswick) shows Wenner's mill and other warehouses. By 1882 the town also had a builder, a blacksmith, a butcher, a shoemaker, and a restaurant.

Flooding along the C&O Canal



Views of the canal during the 1924 flood

The C&O Canal's position along the Potomac River made it vulnerable to flooding. In 1889, a massive flood caused damage to the canal which the C&O Canal Company could not afford to repair. The B&O Railroad bought majority ownership of the canal to keep its land out of the hands of competitors, but repaired the canal, which reopened in 1891. It remained open until 1924, when another flood damaged the canal and it was permanently closed.



1882 Photograph of a Saloon along the B&O Tracks

A New Name and A New Beginning

According to local legend, the 1890 B&O railroad executives, disguised as farmers, negotiated to purchase 600 acres of land in Berlin. A new freight yard and classification facility would be built on the wide, flat land along the Potomac River. Of the land it purchased, 100 acres was for the new railroad facilities, while the remaining 500 acres would be used to build a town for employees.

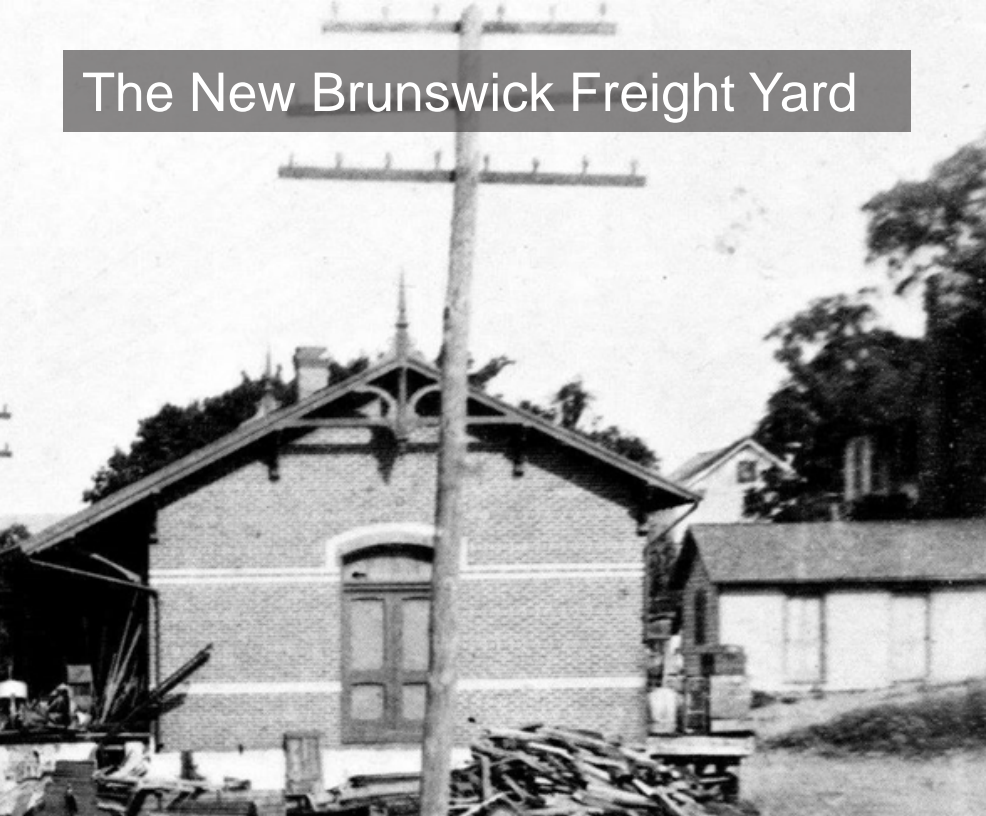
On April 8, 1890, the town of Berlin was incorporated as Brunswick. The name was chosen by the B&O Railroad to avoid confusion with Berlin on the Eastern Shore and to create a new identity for an important railroad center.



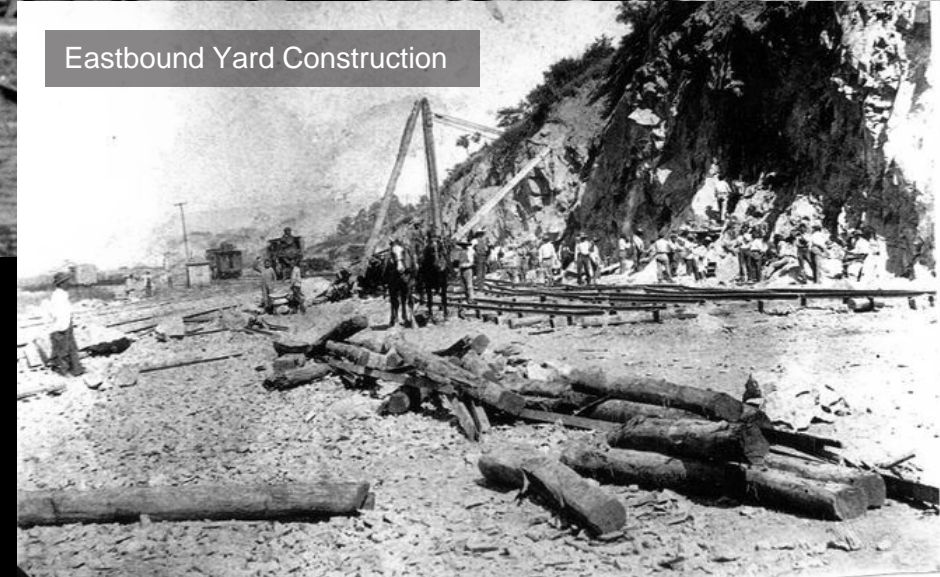
Brunswick buildings being demolished along the tracks, 1890s



The New Brunswick Freight Yard



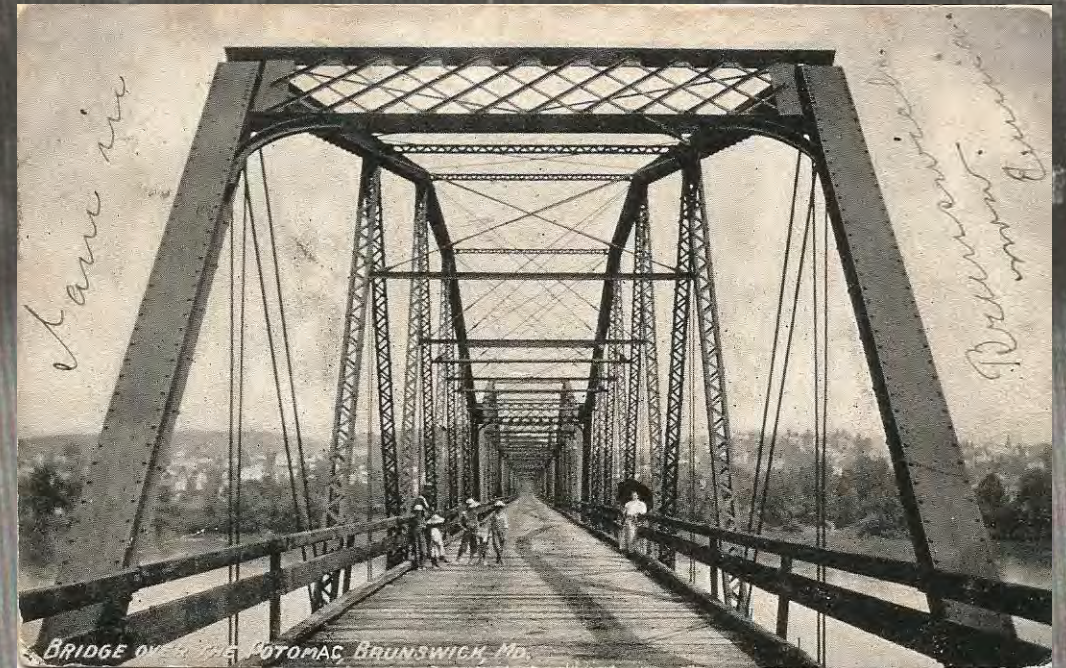
Eastbound Yard Construction



The new Brunswick freight yard was constructed between 1890-1893 with an eastbound 2,500-car classification yard, located southeast of the “Old Town of Berlin” (the original town platted by Leonard Smith), between the original railroad tracks and the C&O canal. Except the Wenner Mill, all buildings between original Middle and Third Streets, the original railroad, and C&O Canal were razed to construct workers housing.

Brunswick & Lovettsville Bridge

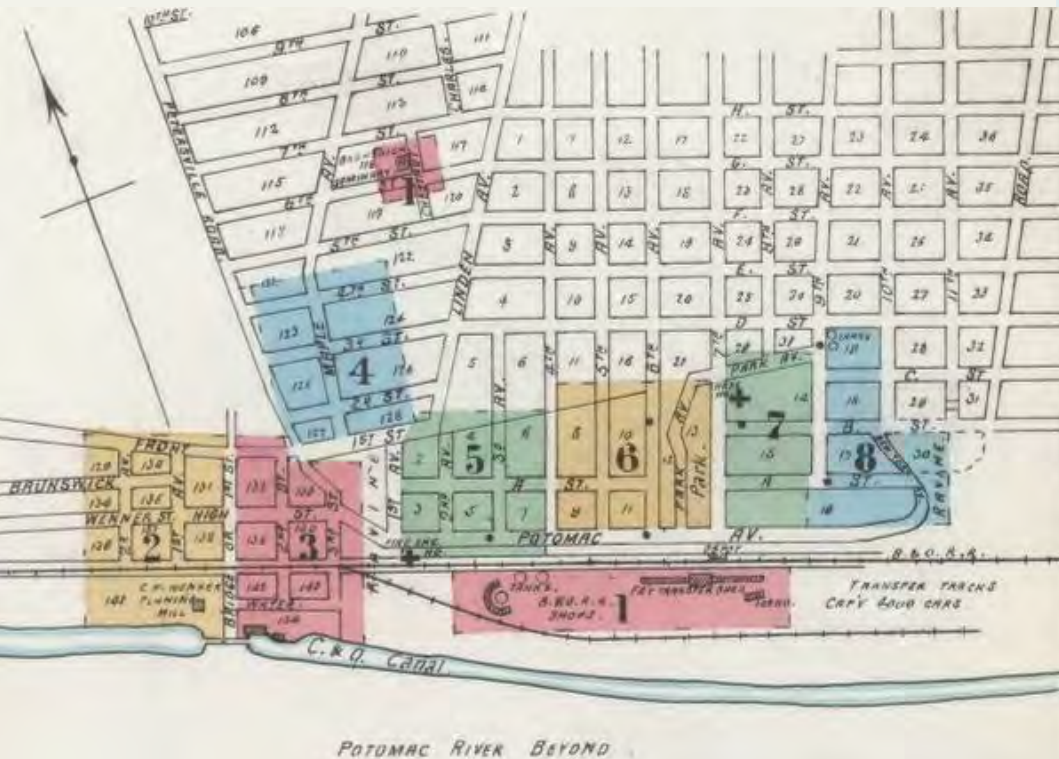
Since the Potomac River bridge was burned during the Civil War, ferry service had been used to cross the river. In 1890 the Brunswick and Lovettsville Bridge Company purchased the original bridge's stone piers and constructed an iron-truss toll bridge in 1893. The new bridge crossed over the C&O canal, ending just south of the railroad tracks



A Railroad Boomtown

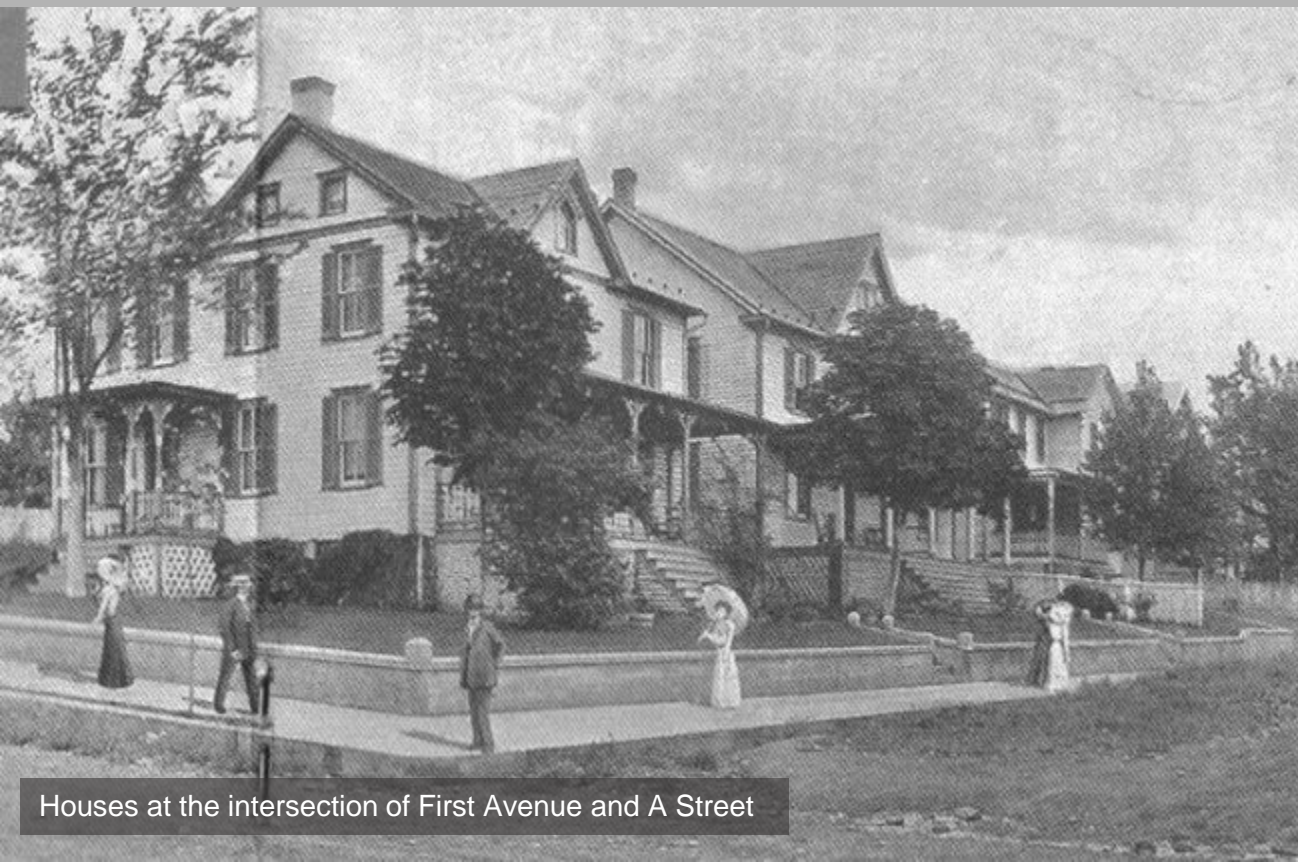
In 1890, Brunswick's population doubled as the railroad construction began. By 1900, Brunswick's population had grown to 2,471 people. New commercial growth took place within the central business district while, new subdivisions, following the original town layout, grew beyond these areas.

This 1899 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows a plan of Brunswick (below) and the "Old Town Berlin" area (right).

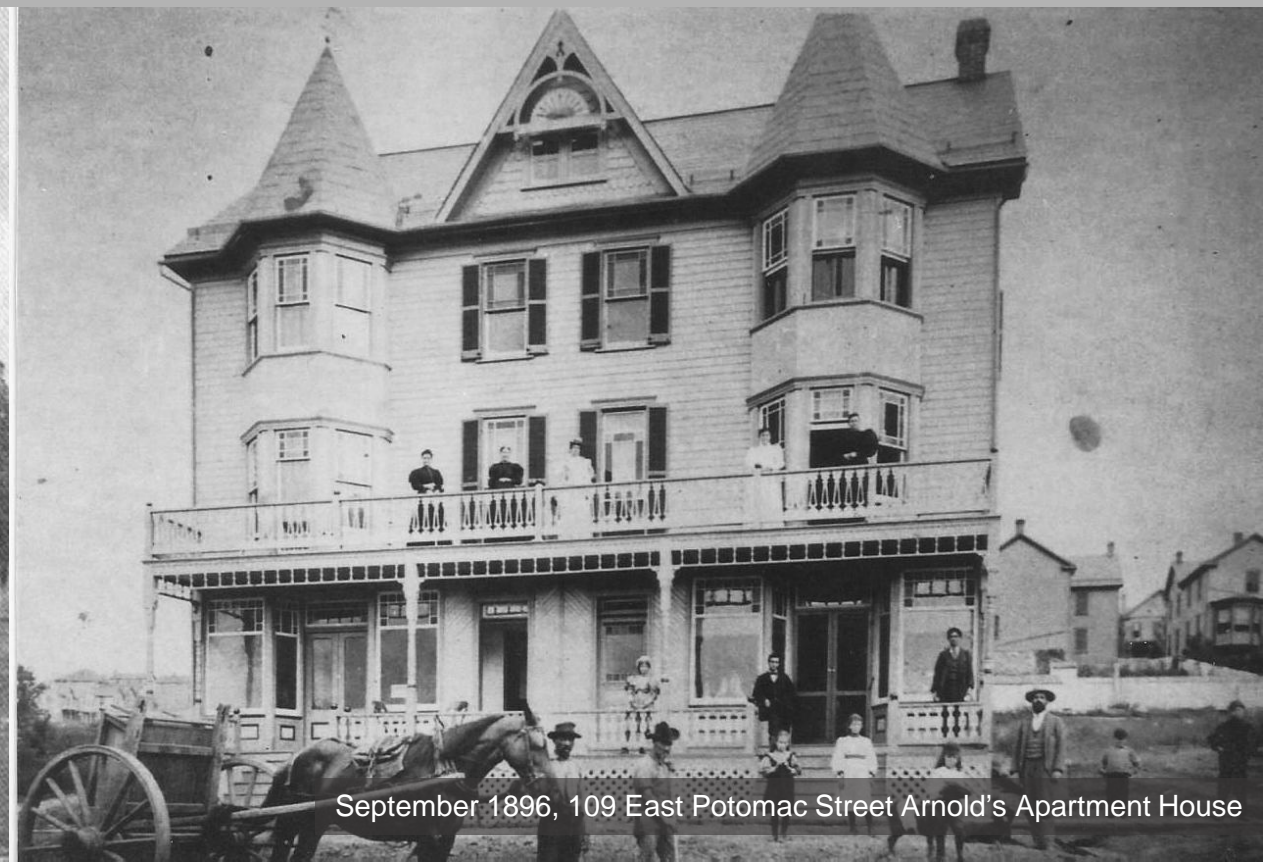


A Railroad Boomtown

The B&O Railroad owned and developed a large part of Brunswick, the only true railroad town in Maryland. The B&O created The Real Estate and Improvement Company of Baltimore City (REIC), to develop its land in Brunswick. Land roughly between First Avenue, E. Potomac Street, Tenth Avenue, and Park Avenue was platted as the B&O Railroad Addition. It incorporated narrow lots along the north side of E. Potomac Street near the new rail yard for railroad workers' housing. Larger lots along the other streets in the hills to the north were laid out for the white-collar professionals who provided services to the rail workers. The area also included stores, a bank, and four churches, as well as a school and public park for which the railroad donated land.



Houses at the intersection of First Avenue and A Street



September 1896, 109 East Potomac Street Arnold's Apartment House

Private Development in Brunswick

Private developers created other subdivisions in Brunswick to meet the needs of the town's ever-expanding population. At the west end of town, W.W. Wenner's addition was under development by 1891, extending between Florida Avenue (west), W. Potomac Street (south), Delaware Avenue (east), and W. B Street (north). Unlike the REIC, this area generally had similar-sized lots throughout its extents, regardless of distance from the rail yard.

Brunswick's African American community primarily lived on the north end of town, on I and J Streets, Sixth Street, Seventh Street, Eighth Street, and Peterville Road. Like other African Americans in the United States, racism and segregation limited economic and social opportunities.

Right: W.W.
Wenner's Addition,
View looking west
along Brunswick St

Bottom Left:
Ebenezer AME
Church, the first black
church in Brunswick,
was established ca.
1909. The present
church was built in
1920 and restored
(as shown here) in
1979

Bottom Right:
Undated photo of
Brunswick's
segregated baseball
team, the Yales

Brunswick Street, looking West, Brunswick, Md.



Freight Yard Expansion



The railroad finished the westbound classification area on the southwest side of town in 1906-7. With its addition, the total capacity of the yard increased to 4,250 cars and it became the largest rail yard ever owned by a single company. The construction resulted in the demolition of the remaining buildings between the railroad and the canal.

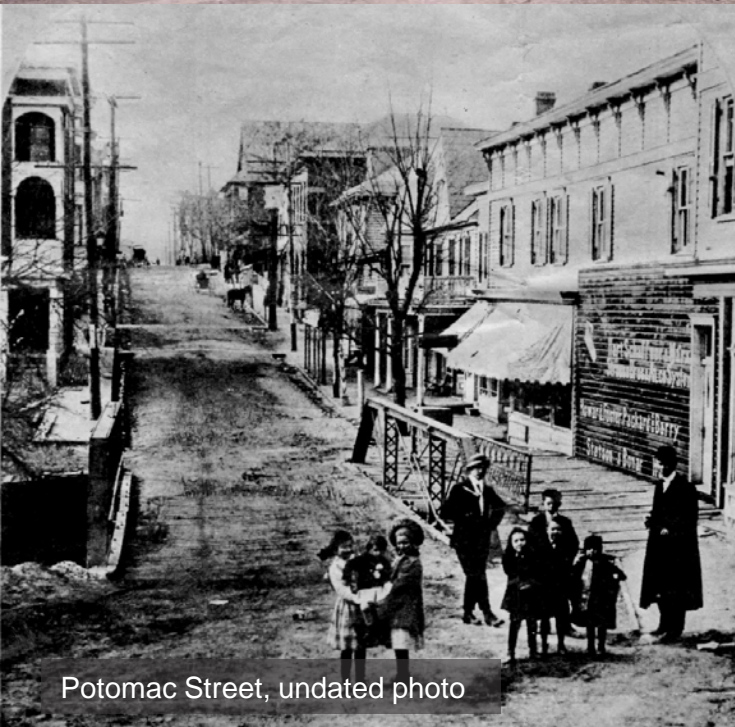
The railroad replaced its original roundhouse with a larger, 12-stall roundhouse at the same location. It also constructed a new machine shop at the southwest corner of the round house.

New B. & O. Round House, Brunswick, Md.



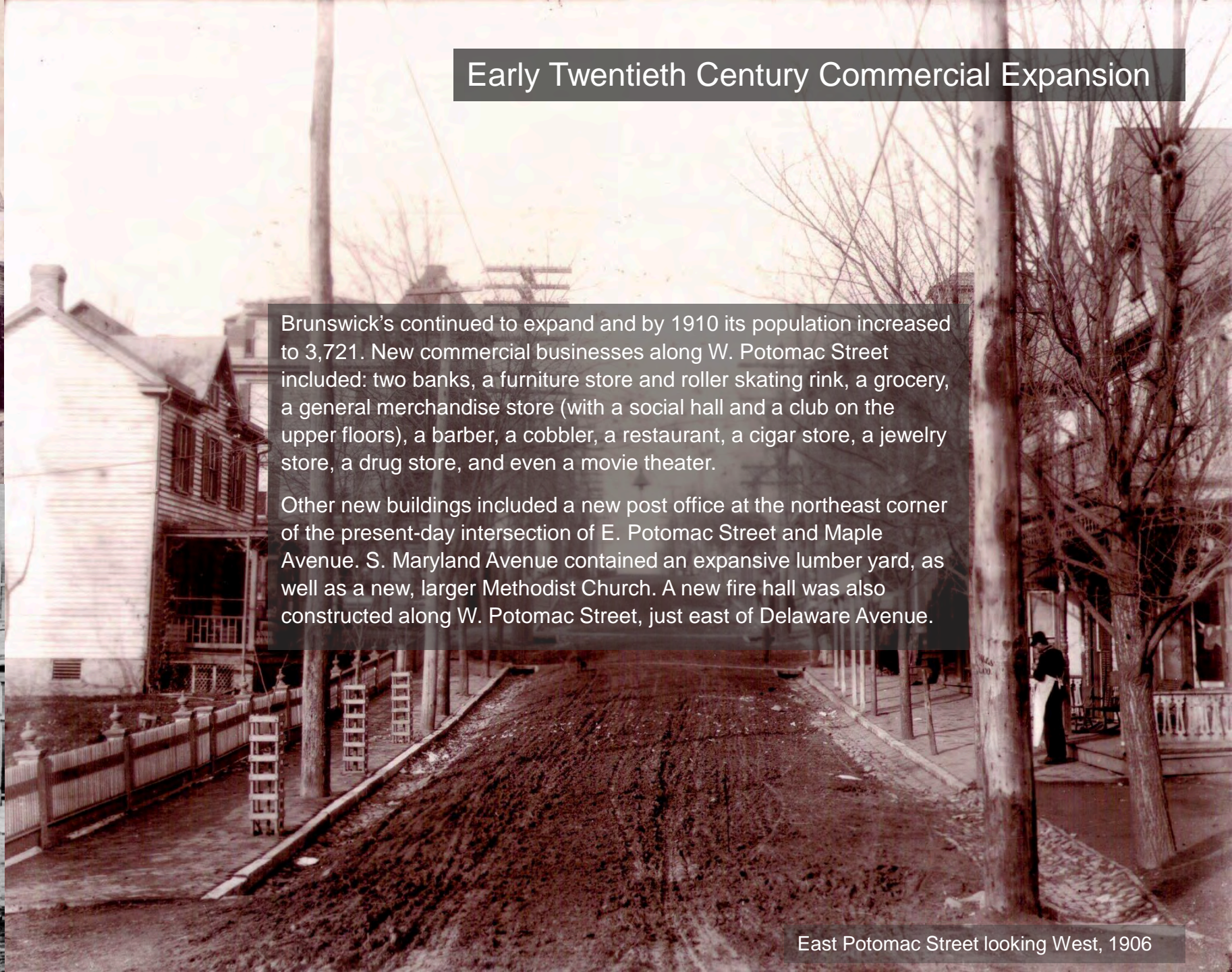


Horine Building: Drug Store & Residence, 1910



Potomac Street, undated photo

Early Twentieth Century Commercial Expansion



Brunswick's continued to expand and by 1910 its population increased to 3,721. New commercial businesses along W. Potomac Street included: two banks, a furniture store and roller skating rink, a grocery, a general merchandise store (with a social hall and a club on the upper floors), a barber, a cobbler, a restaurant, a cigar store, a jewelry store, a drug store, and even a movie theater.

Other new buildings included a new post office at the northeast corner of the present-day intersection of E. Potomac Street and Maple Avenue. S. Maryland Avenue contained an expansive lumber yard, as well as a new, larger Methodist Church. A new fire hall was also constructed along W. Potomac Street, just east of Delaware Avenue.

East Potomac Street looking West, 1906

Grades 1-7, circa 1920



Schools in Brunswick



1911 High School on 4th
Avenue (above)

One-room Schoolhouse at
40 W J Street (below)

Schools in Brunswick were segregated until 1959. The first black school was reportedly a corncrib on the Wenner farm until 1901, when a wood frame house at 37 I Street was leased as an elementary school. After 1905, the one-room schoolhouse was constructed at 40 W J Street; a second one-room school building was later constructed at 42 W J Street. One teacher taught grades 1-7. Since there was no African American high school in Brunswick, older students had to repeat grades until 1921 when Lincoln High School in Frederick opened. It served all black students in Frederick County.

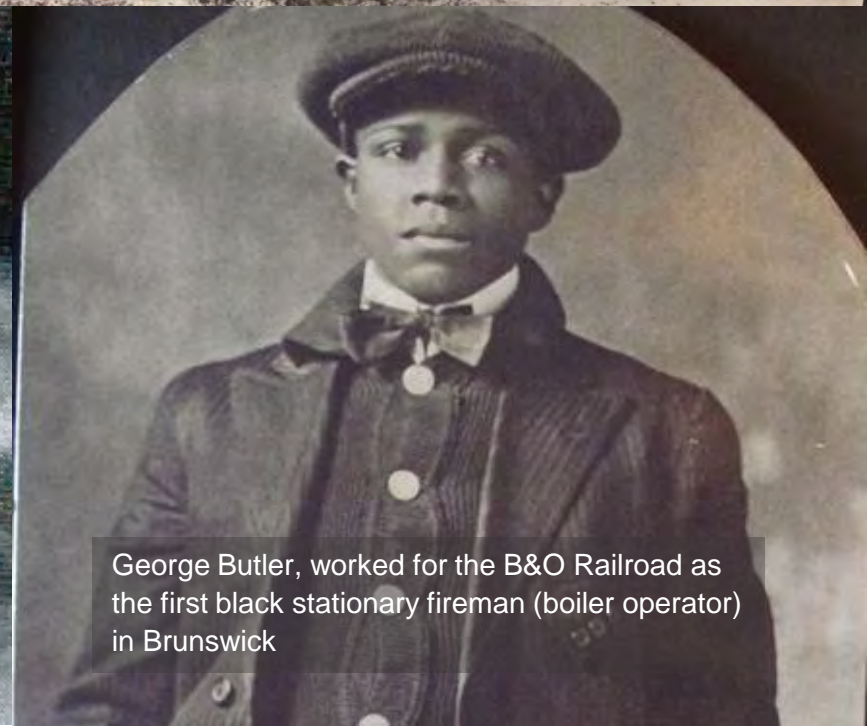
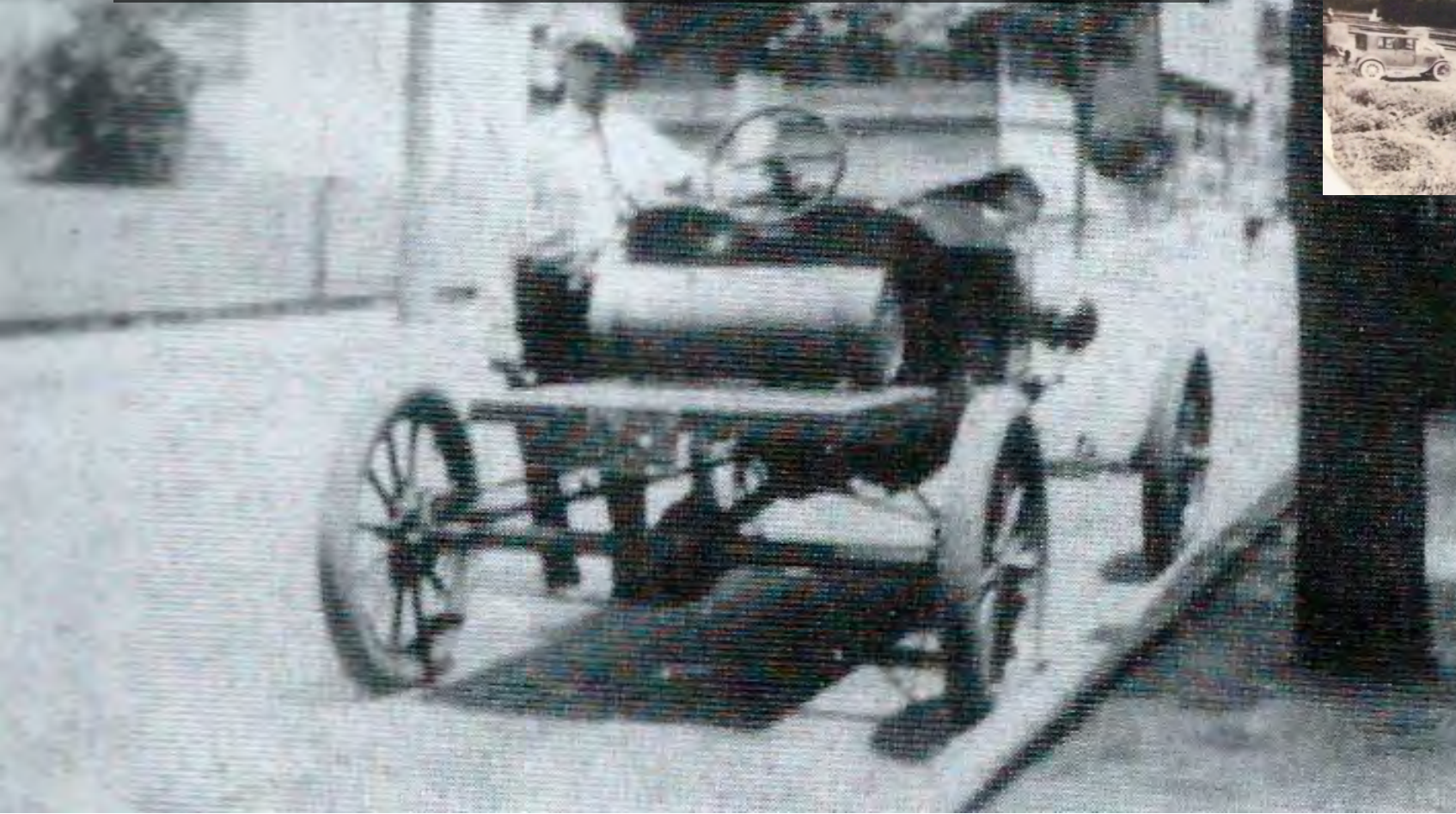
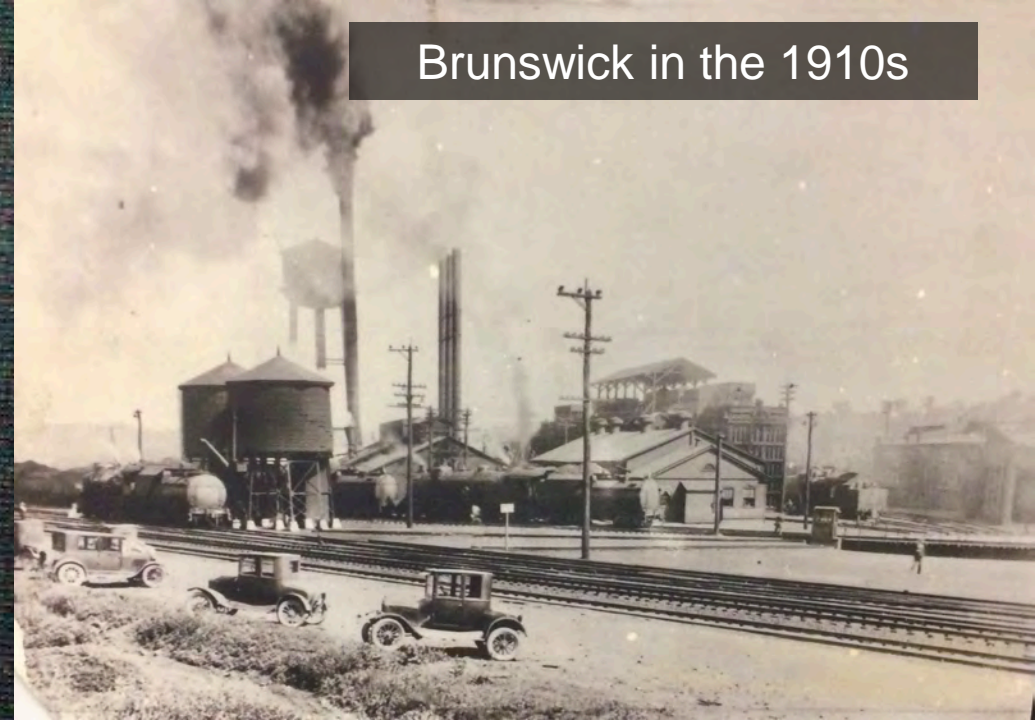
Elementary schools for white students were built on the east and west sides of Brunswick; circa 1911 a white high school was constructed on 4th Avenue.



Although traffic in the rail yard increased during World War I, Brunswick's population between 1910 and 1920 increased by 184 people. The western end of town continued to grow, and new commercial buildings appeared along Potomac Street. Maps show the first garages, service stations, and auto shops in Brunswick, heralding the growth of automobile transportation throughout the country during this period.

While African Americans were employed by the railroad, they were limited to blue collar positions. The 1910 U.S. Federal census listed the main occupations of Brunswick's black residents as labors, laundresses, farm hands, janitors, servants, wagon drivers, and freight callers.

Brunswick in the 1910s



George Butler, worked for the B&O Railroad as the first black stationary fireman (boiler operator) in Brunswick

Decline of the Brunswick B&O Freight Yard

Both the B&O Railroad and Brunswick were hard-hit by the Great Depression. The decision to cut half of the railroad's workforce was a major blow to Brunswick; nearly 30 percent of its population was employed by the railroad in 1930. Only the intervention of state and county officials in 1932 saved the yard from closing entirely.

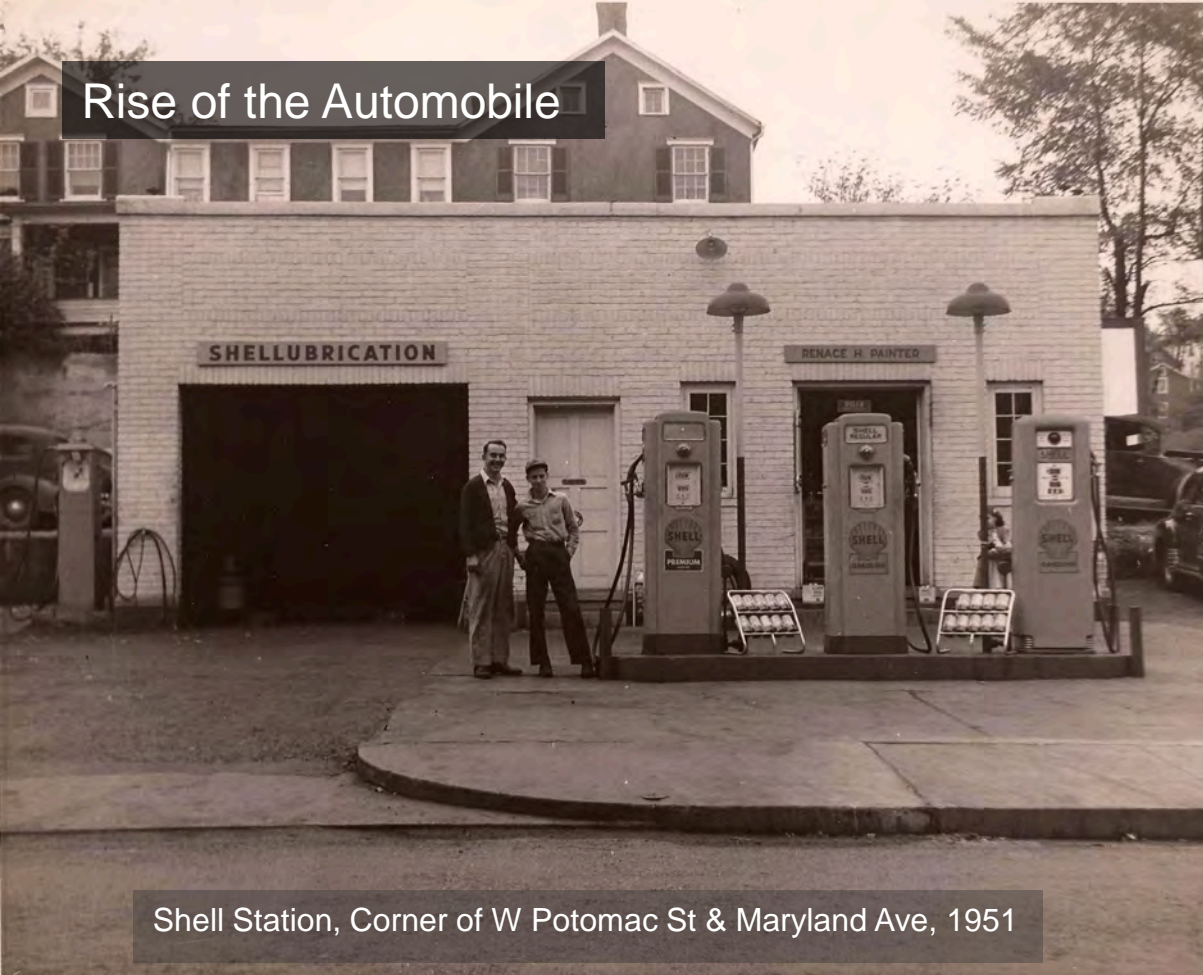
World War II revived rail operations in Brunswick. During the war, the yard processed 75 freight trains per day and employed 1,000 people, numbers almost as high as the pre-depression workforce. But diesel began replacing steam locomotives during the 1940s. Diesel could travel farther, did not require coal or water, and needed less servicing. Trains could travel non-stop between Washington and Cumberland without servicing in Brunswick. In 1953 the last steam locomotive was taken out of service.

Despite these changes, Brunswick continued to operate as a classification area and processed nearly 3,000 trains each day, one of the busiest rail yards in the B&O system.

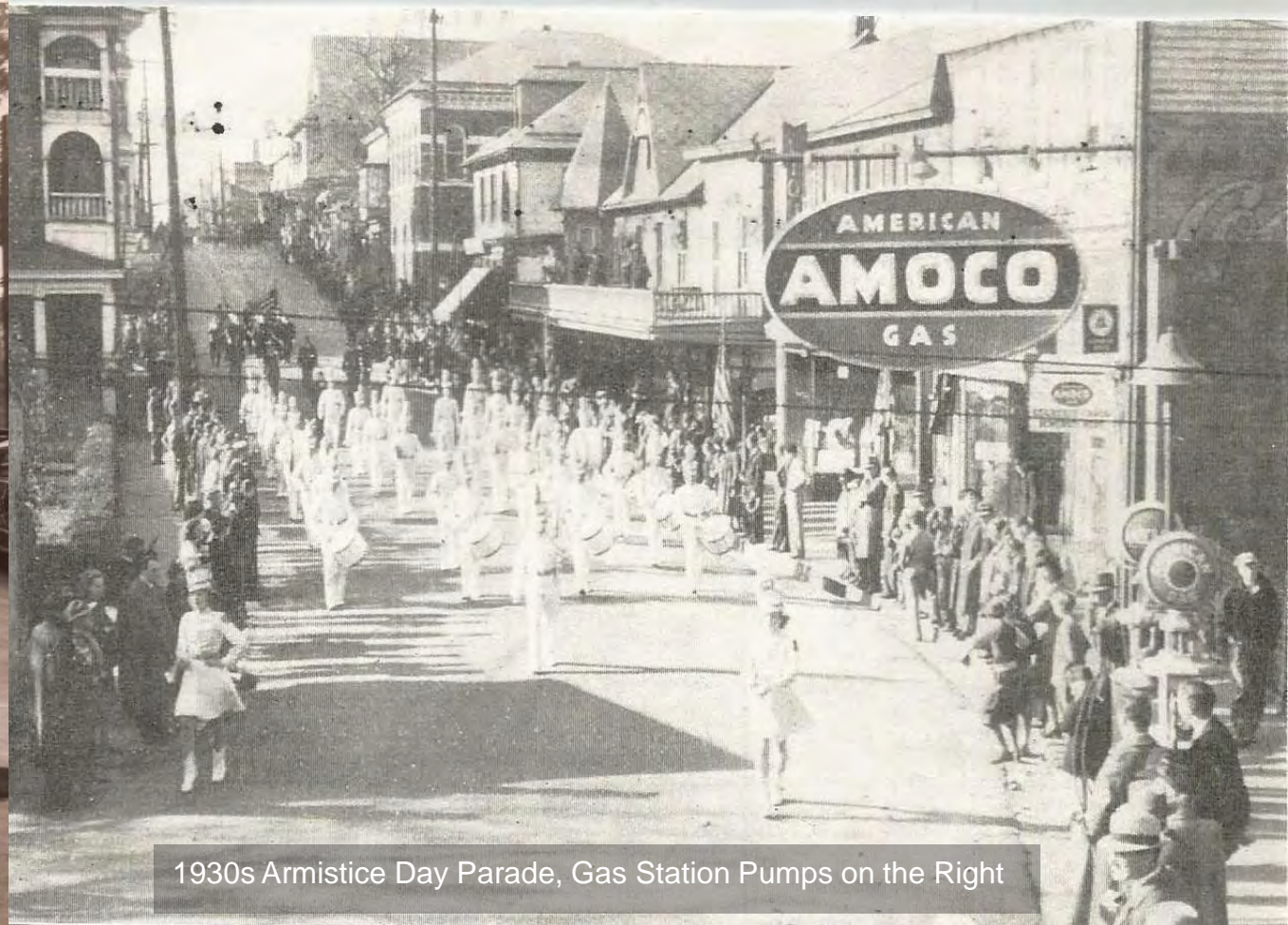


Baldwin Diesel Engine at the Brunswick Yard, Early 1950s

Rise of the Automobile



Shell Station, Corner of W Potomac St & Maryland Ave, 1951



1930s Armistice Day Parade, Gas Station Pumps on the Right

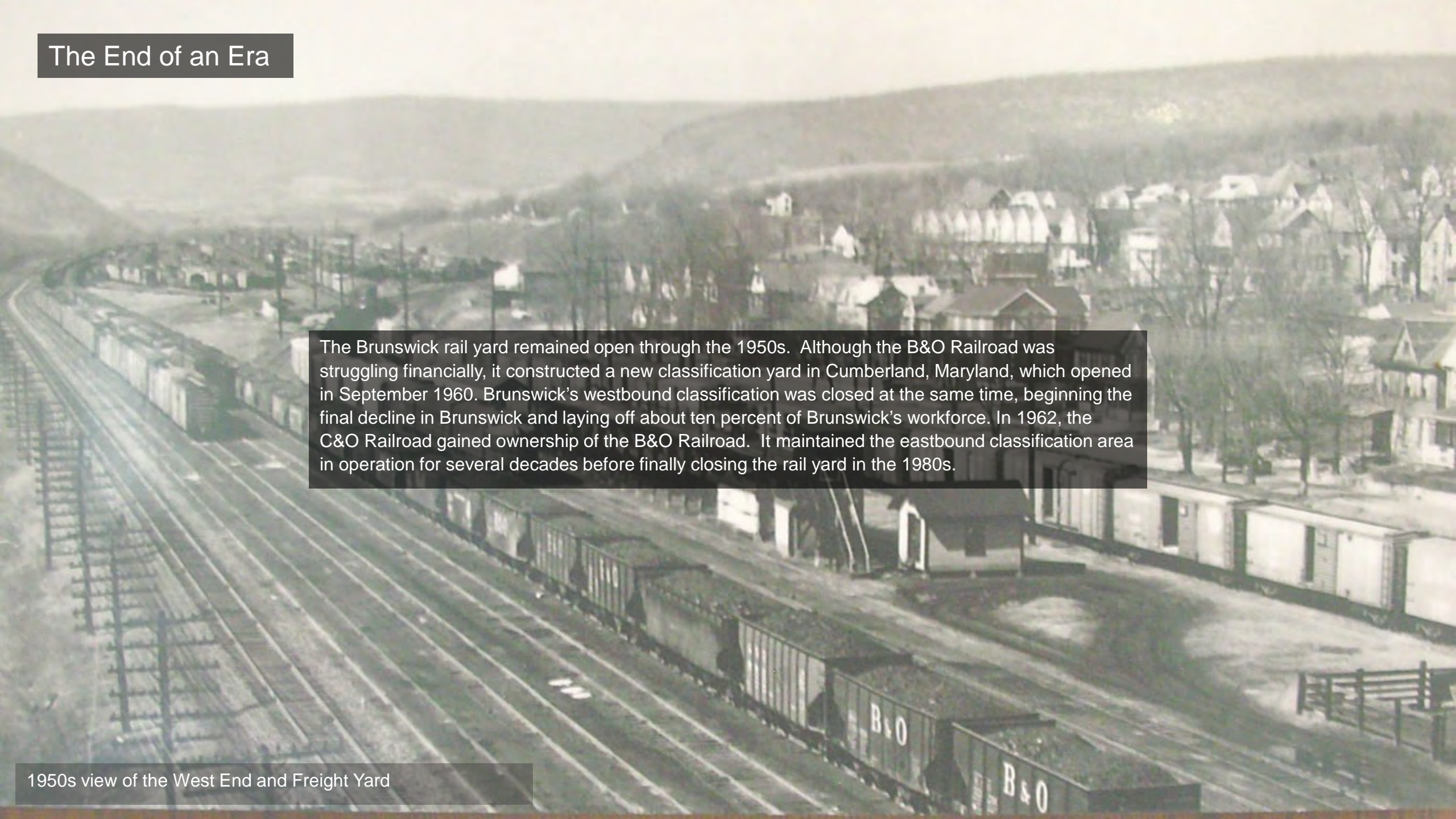
The rise of the automobile during the early decades of the twentieth century provided Americans with a new way to travel. Better paved roads built during the 1930s allowed drivers to travel longer distances more quickly and opened the way for trucking to compete with railroads' freight business. In the years following World War II, many railroads ended their passenger service and struggled to remain profitable.

Rise of the Automobile

In the 1950s The State Roads Commission, (MDOT State Highway Administration) began to expand and modernize its highway network. The existing iron truss bridge over the Potomac River was over 50 years old, did not meet contemporary safety specifications, and its north approach was located just south of the B&O railroad tracks. In 1953-55 it was replaced with the existing multi-span steel and concrete bridge. The new bridge spanned the rail yard, connecting directly to downtown Brunswick.



The End of an Era

An aerial photograph of a large railway yard. In the foreground, several long freight trains are parked on parallel tracks. The freight cars are mostly dark-colored, with some white ones visible further back. Some of the cars have "B&O" written on them. To the right of the tracks, there are several small, white, rectangular buildings or sheds. In the background, a town with various houses and buildings is visible, nestled at the foot of a hill. The overall scene is a historical view of a busy rail yard.

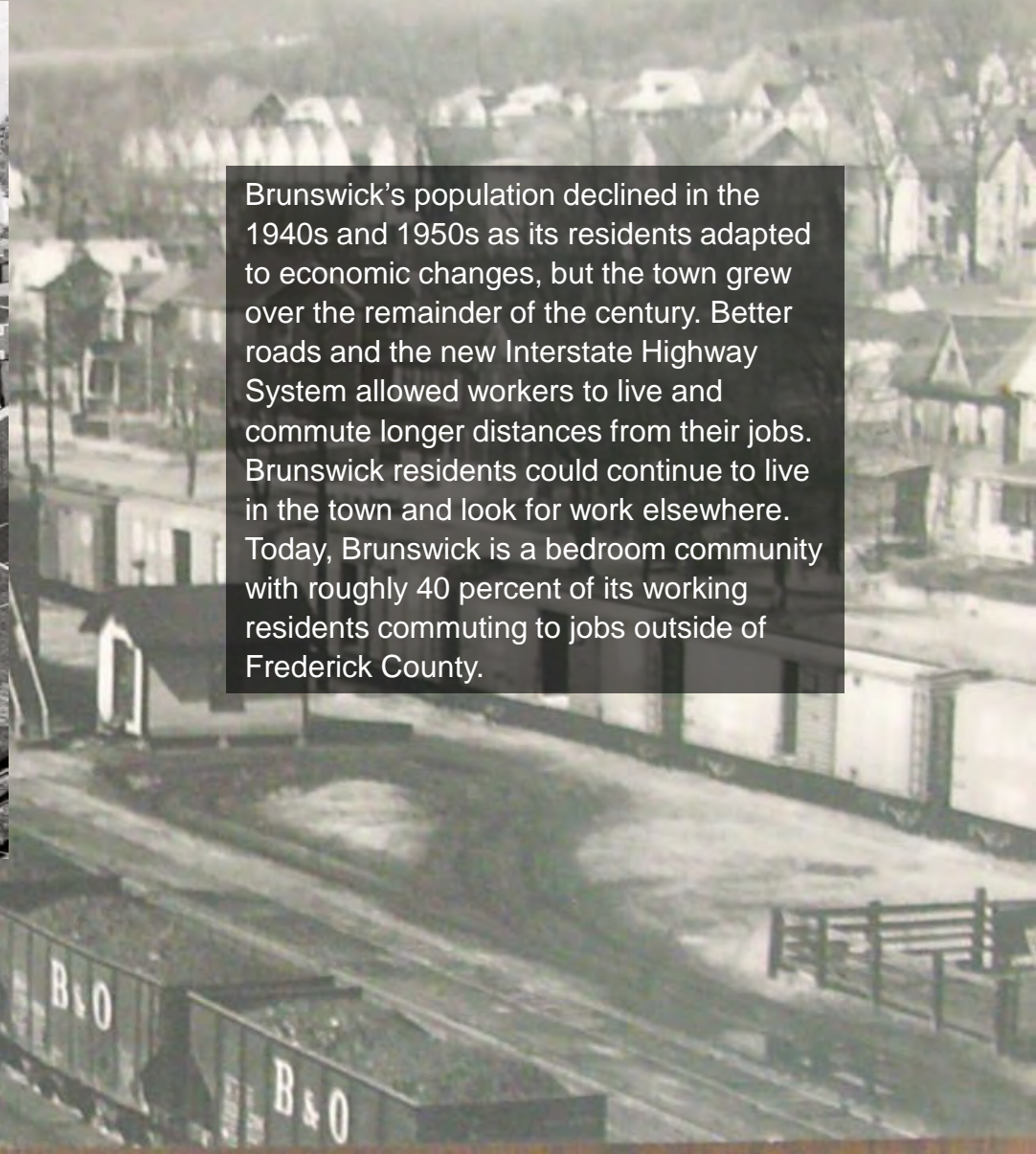
The Brunswick rail yard remained open through the 1950s. Although the B&O Railroad was struggling financially, it constructed a new classification yard in Cumberland, Maryland, which opened in September 1960. Brunswick's westbound classification was closed at the same time, beginning the final decline in Brunswick and laying off about ten percent of Brunswick's workforce. In 1962, the C&O Railroad gained ownership of the B&O Railroad. It maintained the eastbound classification area in operation for several decades before finally closing the rail yard in the 1980s.


1950s view of the West End and Freight Yard

From Boomtown to Bedroom Community



Brunswick's population declined in the 1940s and 1950s as its residents adapted to economic changes, but the town grew over the remainder of the century. Better roads and the new Interstate Highway System allowed workers to live and commute longer distances from their jobs. Brunswick residents could continue to live in the town and look for work elsewhere. Today, Brunswick is a bedroom community with roughly 40 percent of its working residents commuting to jobs outside of Frederick County.



An aerial photograph of Brunswick, Maryland, taken from a high vantage point. The town is densely packed with historic buildings, many of which are multi-story and feature varied architectural styles, including brick and stone construction. A prominent railroad line runs diagonally across the lower left portion of the image, with several tracks and a bridge visible. To the left of the town, a canal or waterway is visible, bordered by a towpath. The background shows rolling hills under a clear blue sky. The overall scene captures the town's rich history and its integration with natural and transportation infrastructure.

Brunswick's buildings and landscape continue to tell a story that is unique in Maryland. Visitors can hike along the C&O Canal towpath and ride on Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) passenger trains that travel along the former B&O Railroad tracks. The town's rich and significant history and architecture have been recognized by its designation as a National Register of Historic Places Historic District.

December 31, 2018 Aerial View of Brunswick, Todd Crone