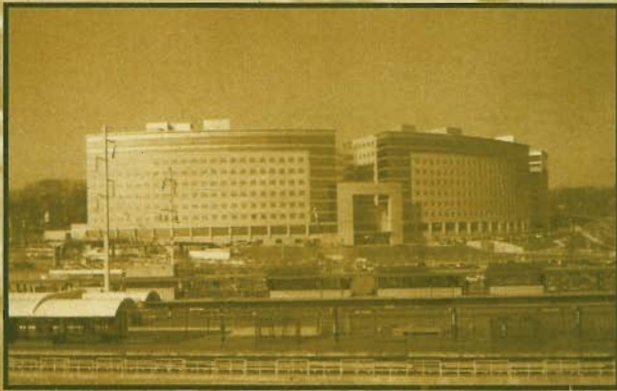


Proud Past
PROMISING FUTURE



**CITIES AND TOWNS IN
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND**

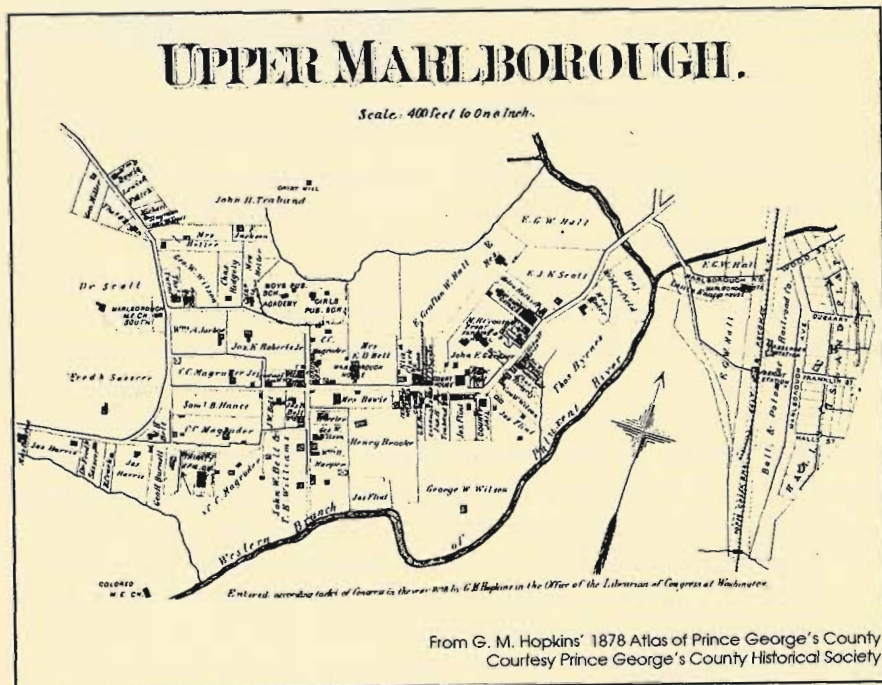
By George D. Denny, Jr.

Town of Upper Marlboro

Incorporated 1870

A bustling county seat by day and a quiet country town by night, the Town of Upper Marlboro has enjoyed a long history as the political, commercial and social center of Prince George's County.

Nestled in the heart of tobacco country, near the confluence of the Western and Collington branches of the Patuxent River, the land which was to become the town was part of several estates known as "Grove Landing," "Meadows," and "Darnall's Chance," owned by the Brooke,



Beall and Darnall families,¹ respectively.

Darnall's Chance, also known as the Buck House, was built between 1694 and 1713, across from what is now the County Administration Building on Gov. Oden Bowie Drive. It was owned by the Darnall and Carroll families and may have been the birthplace of Daniel Carroll, a signer of the U.S. Constitution, and his brother, John Carroll, the first bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in America.

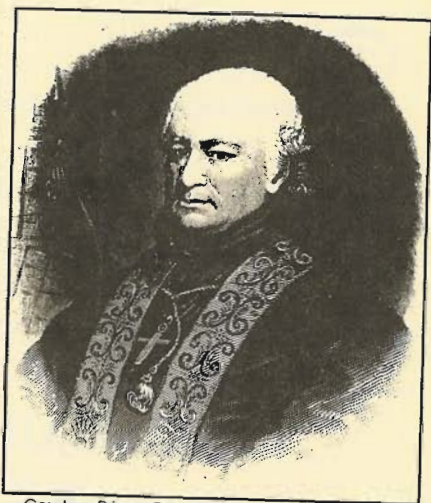
A marker sign located outside of Darnall's Chance calls it the oldest building still standing in the county seat of Upper Marlboro and perhaps in the entire county. Some question the accuracy of that assertion, however, in as much as the building underwent major renovation from the ground floor, up in the late 1980's.

By 1695 a post road had been established between the provincial capital of Annapolis and Port Tobacco in Charles County. The road crossed the Western Branch of the Patuxent River in the area which would become Upper Marlboro.

A company of Scotch Presbyterians led by Rev. Nathaniel Taylor settled in Upper Marlboro in 1695 and built the third Presbyterian church in America on the present site of Trinity Church by 1704.

Marlborough was established in 1706 by the General Assembly "at the upper landing on the Western Branch, commonly called Colonel Belt's landing."² That year, county surveyor Thomas Truman Greenfield conducted a survey of 100 acres of the three estates from which the town would be carved, laying out streets and alleys, as well as 100 lots to be used for homes, a meeting house (church) and various small businesses.

Earliest surviving plats of the survey show that the town was laid out in a grid pattern of "L" shape.³ Marlborough Town, as it was called then, was named for John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, an



Courtesy Prince George's County Historical Society

Archbishop John Carroll

Born in Upper Marlboro

Upper Marlboro

English military hero of the Battle of Blenheim and a friend of Queen Anne.

Residents of the town apparently were dissatisfied with Greenfield's survey, and in 1731 they petitioned the General Assembly to have the town replatted. It wasn't until 1744, however, that a new survey was approved, and the town was then called Upper Marlborough in Prince George's County. The word "Upper" had been added to distinguish the Prince George's town from an older Calvert County community of Marlboro, which later had "Lower" added to its name.

Upper Marlborough was one of the ports where "all ships and vessels calling upon this province shall unload and put on shore all merchandise and commodities."⁴ As a port of entry, ships from many European ports came to Marlborough for the tobacco raised in the area. The old shipping harbor was located at the end of Water Street, between Trinity Church and the new District Court and what is now Rte. 4. The stream used by these ships has since filled up, such that even a row boat could not come up to the town from the Patuxent River.

The Marlborough House, which had stood on the site of the parking lot next to the current post office, was built in 1712. Over the years it was used as a private home, a bank, a store, a tavern, and then a hotel in 1858. Prior to being torn down in 1957, the Marlborough House had reverted back to its former use as a private residence.

In 1721 the town became the county seat of Prince George's County. The county seat had been in Charles Town, on the banks of the Patuxent River. County justices met for the last time in Charles Town on March 28, 1721, adjourning to Marlborough in the afternoon, where they completed their court business the same day.

The new court house was built by levying a tax of 12 pounds of tobacco on all inhabitants of the county. One of the first laws passed in Marlborough was the Public School Act, which established a public school system.

John Carroll was born in Marlborough in 1735. A sign on Main Street proclaims his birthplace as being a home on the site of the west wing of the old court house. Darnall's Chance, owned by John Carroll's father, Daniel Carroll, however, is also believed by some to have been the younger Carroll's birthplace.

John Carroll was educated in France and ordained into the priesthood there. In 1776 he was sent by the American Congress to Canada to try to persuade that country to join the Colonists in the

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Revolutionary War. In 1789 he was appointed by the Pope as Bishop Carroll, making him the first American to hold that title. He founded St. Mary's College for Boys (Loyola) and Mount Saint Mary's College in Emmitsburg, and Georgetown University. Carroll was made Archbishop Carroll in 1808. A monument to John Carroll, sculpted by Felix de Weldon, is located on the grounds of the Main Street entrance of the old courthouse.

Kingston was constructed in 1735. It is believed to be the oldest existing privately owned house in town, located near the intersection of Old Marlboro Pike and Main Street.

By 1745 horse racing had become a major attraction in Upper Marlboro. The Maryland Jockey Club sponsored spring and summer races at the race track south of town, and racing continued there until 1972, when they were moved to the Bowie Race Track. The Marlboro Race Track is now part of the Equestrian Center owned by Prince George's County.

George Washington lodged in Upper Marlborough in August of 1774 on his way to the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia. He



The County Court House in the early 1900's.

Courtesy Helen Wilson

had visited there before in 1756 as a colonel of the Virginia Militia and returned there in 1793 as president of the United States.

Town resident John Rogers was one of three Maryland delegates to the second Continental Congress, held in 1776, where he voted for the Declaration of Independence. When it was time to sign the document, however, Rogers was ill, and was replaced by Charles Carroll of Carrollton (Frederick County), thus making Rogers the only member of the congress who had voted for the declaration whose name does not appear on that document.

A new courthouse was constructed on the site of the old one between 1798 and 1801. It was rebuilt again in the 1880's and expanded several times. A new District Court House was erected behind the present courthouse in the early 1990's.

Many prominent attorneys have practiced law from offices along Main Street and cross streets near the court house. Among those were Thomas George Pratt and Oden Bowie, who were at one time governors of Maryland. Reverdy Johnson, a former U.S. Senator, Attorney General and Ambassador to the Court of St. James in London, also had his law office in town, on Water Street. Johnson defended Mary Surratt at her trial in 1865 for conspiracy in the assassination of President Lincoln. The building is no longer there.

More recently, Lansdale G. Sasscer Sr., who was born in 1893, had an office on Pratt Street. Sasscer was a member of the Maryland State Senate from 1922-1938, serving as president of that body from 1935-37. He also was a member of the U.S. Congress from 1939 to 1953. In addition to having his offices in Upper Marlboro, Sasscer also lived in the town, on Elm Street. The family home is occupied today by his son, Lansdale G. Sasscer, Jr.



Courtesy Prince George's County Historical Society

Lansdale G. Sasscer, Sr.

State Senator, Congressman

Upper Marlboro

Holy Trinity Church was founded in 1810 by Thomas John Claggett, the first Protestant Episcopal Bishop consecrated in America. The original building was constructed in 1812, and the present church was erected between 1844 and 1846. Claggett served as Chaplain of the U.S. Senate for many years.

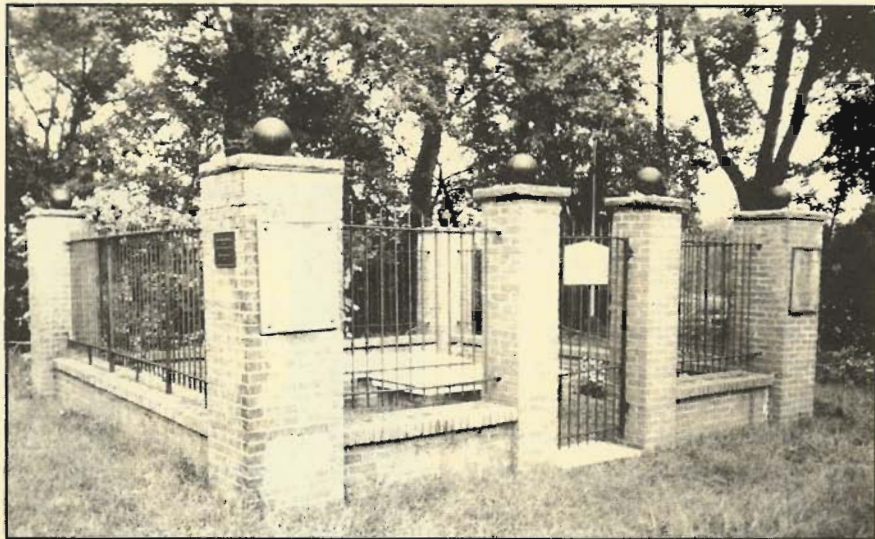


Photo by author

Dr. and Mrs. William Beanes are buried in this enclosed cemetery near the County Administration Building. Their home, which sat near the cemetery site in the 1800's, was a brief stopping place for British soldiers headed to and from the sacking of Washington, D.C., in 1814.

On August 22 and 23 of 1814, British troops camped in Upper Marlborough on their way to burn and sack the City of Washington. The British commander, Gen. Robert Ross, reportedly made his headquarters in the home of Dr. and Mrs. William Beanes, located on a hill above the pond. The following day, Aug. 24, the British marched on to Bladensburg, where a brief but bloody fight ensued, and then into Washington, where they burned the White House, the Capitol Building and numerous other government buildings.

The troops returned to Upper Marlborough on Aug. 26, moving toward Nottingham on the Patuxent River, from whence they had come several days earlier. Despite the ravages which they inflicted upon the Capital City, however, the British soldiers reportedly were not unkind to the residents and homes of Upper Marlborough, with one soldier

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recording later in his journal that he had "never seen a landscape more pleasing and more beautiful"³ than that of the Upper Marlborough area.

Several stragglers did break into Dr. Beanes' house to steal liquor, however, and Dr. Beanes had them thrown in jail.⁵

The British soon retrieved the stragglers, arresting Dr. Beanes in the process and taking him to Benedict, where the British fleet was anchored. President James Madison sent Francis Scott Key, a friend of Beanes, to seek his release, and Key ended up with the doctor aboard a British ship. The fleet sailed up the Chesapeake Bay toward Baltimore and began bombarding Fort McHenry. It was during the bombardment that Key wrote the words to "The Star Spangled Banner," which later became America's National Anthem.

Dr. Beanes' home was torn down later and replaced by the former Marlboro Academy. The graves of Dr. and Mrs. Beanes are still located within a gated enclosure near the site of their home. On the same hill which bears the Beanes' graves is a brick structure which was once the old Marlboro High School and later an elementary school. It is now occupied by the Prince George's County Sheriff's Department.

The Marlboro Gazette was founded in the 1830's, followed by the Planter's Advocate in 1851. The Gazette was forced to suspend publication during the Civil War because of its southern sympathies. The two papers merged in 1925 and became known as the Enquirer Gazette, which is still in operation today.

The Union Methodist Episcopal Church was founded by the Freedmen of Upper Marlborough in 1865. Located on Valley Lane, the congregation's Union Chapel was the first Methodist church and cemetery for the black community.⁶ Members of the congregation also

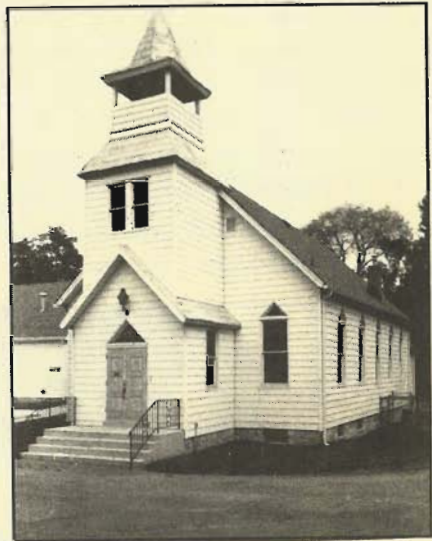


Photo by author

The Union Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church was opened in 1916, later became called Union United Methodist Church. It has been renovated and enlarged from its original size.

Upper Marlboro

established the Free Colored School Society, which resulted the following year in the creation of the second school for black people in the county. Classes met the first two years in the Union Chapel, until the Freedmen's Bureau School was completed. The chapel no longer stands, although tombstones are visible still in the cemetery on the chapel grounds.

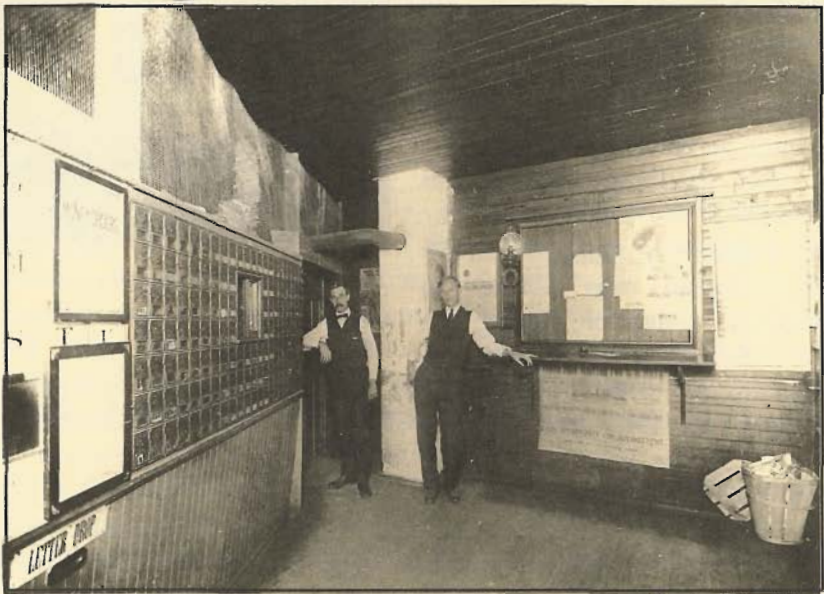
In 1916 a newer Union Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church was erected on Old Marlboro Pike, replacing the old chapel. The newer church was renamed the Union United Methodist Church in 1968, and a large wing was added in 1992.

The Town of Upper Marlborough was incorporated by the Maryland General Assembly in 1870, adopting a charter with a commission form of government.

By that time, the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad (later the Pope's Creek line of the Pennsylvania Railroad) offered passenger and freight service to the residents and merchants of the town.

A volunteer fire company was organized in 1886, and the Marlborough Fire Association was incorporated the next year.

Upper Marlborough became Upper Marlboro in the late 1800's.⁷ A clerk in the town's post office apparently decided that the extra letters,



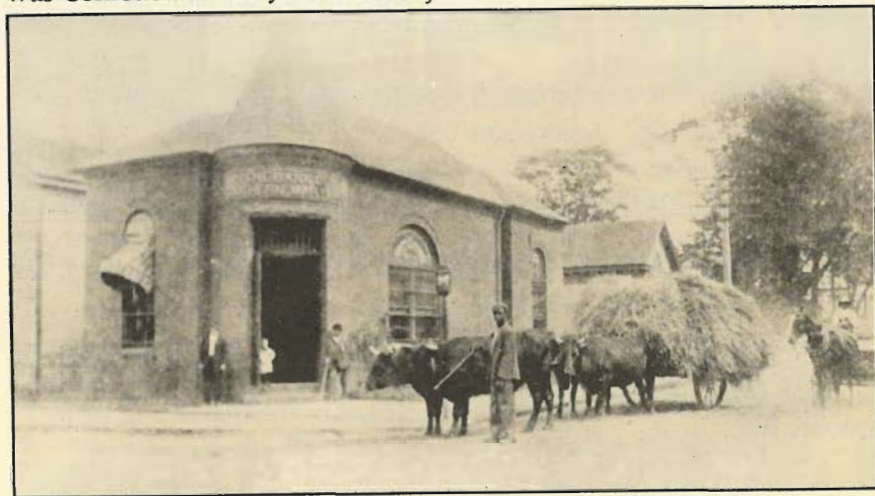
Courtesy Helen Wilson

The Upper Marlboro Post Office was a two-person station in the 1930's.

Upper Marlboro

"ugh," didn't fit properly on the rubber stamps being used at the time, so he reportedly cut them off of the stamp. By 1893 postal guides were referring to the town as "Upper Marlboro." It has remained that way ever since, despite a ballot question in 1968 which would have restored the "ugh" to the town's name. The question was defeated by the voters.

St. Mary's Church was erected in 1898. One of its honored guests was Confederate Col. John S. Mosby.



Courtesy Town of Upper Marlboro

The Bank of Southern Maryland, located at Main and Elm Streets, did not have a drive-in window, but in the early 1900's it was easy to stop long enough to take care of banking needs.

In the early 1900's the Chesapeake Beach Railroad had a station in town, located near the present site of town hall and the Board of Education. The line was used primarily to transport residents of the District of Columbia to beaches and summer homes on Chesapeake Beach. Automobile use later reduced ridership on this line.

Construction of Crain Highway, linking Baltimore and Richmond, was begun in 1922. The road, which passed through town and was called Rte. 3, was completed in 1927.¹ It was later supplanted by Rte. 301. A monument to its construction stands at the convergence of Old Marlboro Pike and Main Street.

Many of the buildings in Upper Marlboro were destroyed by a major fire in March of 1924. The following year a new fire department was organized and a fire station was built where the parking lot of the First

Upper Marlboro



Photo by author

The Marlboro Volunteer Fire Department occupies this station just off of Main Street.

National Bank is now. That station was later demolished after the current fire house was constructed just off of Main Street, near the county jail.

The sale of loose leaf tobacco for cigarettes began in Upper Marlboro in 1939, and tobacco auctions were held in the many large barns there. By 1947 an office of the Maryland State Tobacco Authority had opened in town.

Another fire destroyed the Masonic Hall, located on Main Street, a half-block from the courthouse, in 1964. Thomas Fielder Bowie, a Maryland Democrat who helped to reunite Southern Marylanders with the Union after the Civil War, had lived there, as had other members of the Bowie family. In 1908 the building had been used by Masonic Centennial Lodge 174. At some point it was also used as the Upper Marlboro town hall.

The 1970's saw a series of real and proposed development activities which threatened to change the "country" atmosphere that had been the hallmark of the community for over 200 years.

The Marlboro Square Shopping Center, located just south of the town limits, opened in 1971-72. Construction within the town of the new County Administration Building, a five-story structure, soon followed. The county's first condominium office complex -- Marlborough Professional Park -- opened in 1975.

In 1977 the Marlboro Plan, a revitalization plan, was adopted by the

Upper Marlboro

County Council in cooperation with the Town of Upper Marlboro and the town's Chamber of Commerce. The plan addressed parking problems and called for a walking mall on Main Street and a new commercial area.

Lack of sufficient parking spaces for those who come to town daily, a constant concern of the municipality and its businesses at the time the plan was adopted, has since been remedied with the construction of a parking garage beside the new addition to the courthouse, the opening of a Prince George's County Parking Authority-operated parking lot on Pratt Street, and ample free parking at the Equestrian Center, complete with free shuttle bus service to and from county and court buildings in the town. The proposed walking mall on Main Street did not become a reality, however, due to the objection of town residents.

Helen Wilson became the town's first woman commission chairperson (president) in 1976, a position presently held by Helen Ford.

The Marlboro Racetrack, not open for racing since 1972, was purchased by the county in 1980 and used as a parking lot and horse training center. The property still is used for parking, but an Equestrian Center and Showplace Arena also have been constructed on the site.

The town hall was moved in 1988 from an office on West Court Drive to a new building on School Lane and Old Crain Highway. That



Photo by author

Town offices were moved from West Court Drive to this building on School Lane and Old Crain Highway in 1988.

Upper Marlboro

building holds administrative and police offices and a room for town meetings.

Members of the family of "Doc" Albert M. Cahn, a prominent local pharmacist, lawyer and banker, donated a large brick gateway sign which was installed in recent years at the eastern approach to the town.

A Master Plan for Upper Marlboro was adopted in 1994, retaining the small-town atmosphere which residents have strived constantly to preserve.

More recently, the owner of a new professional hockey team has announced plans to make Upper Marlboro the team's home in the upcoming season.

With the Washington Capitals headed for downtown Washington, D.C., Mike Caggiano, owner of the Baltimore Bandits in the American Hockey League, unveiled plans to locate a minor league East Coast Hockey League team in Upper Marlboro, using the Showplace Arena as its home ice. The as-yet unnamed team would play 35 games in the arena during the season, and the presence of the team in Upper Marlboro could generate additional revenues for the town and its merchants, in addition to providing jobs for county residents.



Courtesy Robert Ennis

Main Street in 1947 featured a movie theater across from the Court House.

Upper Marlboro

Today, Upper Marlboro is a thriving town, offering a full range of municipal services to its residents, including its own police department.

Few of the town's older buildings remain, many destroyed by fires that took whole blocks at one time. Others were demolished to make way for the sprawling county government buildings and for other developments in the area.

By day, the town is teeming with people -- a mixture of county and court employees, attorneys, merchants, county residents doing business with the county, jury panelists, police officers from various jurisdictions, and participants in the criminal and civil justice systems. At night, Upper Marlboro is a small, quiet residential community, a place that visitors and residents alike remember for its old-town character. Its leaders work hard to preserve the serenity of their community, hoping to keep it the pleasing and beautiful place referred to by that British soldier over 180 years ago.

If, indeed, history repeats itself, the Town of Upper Marlboro will be able to look to the successes of the past to help it forge a path through the challenges and opportunities of the next millennium.



Courtesy Helen Wilson

Upper Marlboro school group. Date unknown.



President
Helen Ford

Commissioners
Robert D. Hopkins, III
Lawrence K. Warman, Jr.

Est. Population
745

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