

The Halfway House

A Non-Scholarly Treatise

by Christine Gainer Barton, Family Historian "Ordinaire"



Traditionally, taverns have served as a community gathering place, a place to meet strangers from afar to get news, and of course to receive refreshment, especially of a liquid sort. The stage coach and the mail coach would stop at the taverns to rest or change horses. Often, taverns were associated with inns, where travelers could stay the night and stable their horses. According to Gregg Smith on BeerHistory.com, "Functioning as an area's social center was certainly an important role, but the inns and taverns also contributed to the local economy. Inns were more than a bar, to traveling merchants they were a combination of the market, trade center, entertainment complex and hotel, everything a businessman needed to ply his trade."

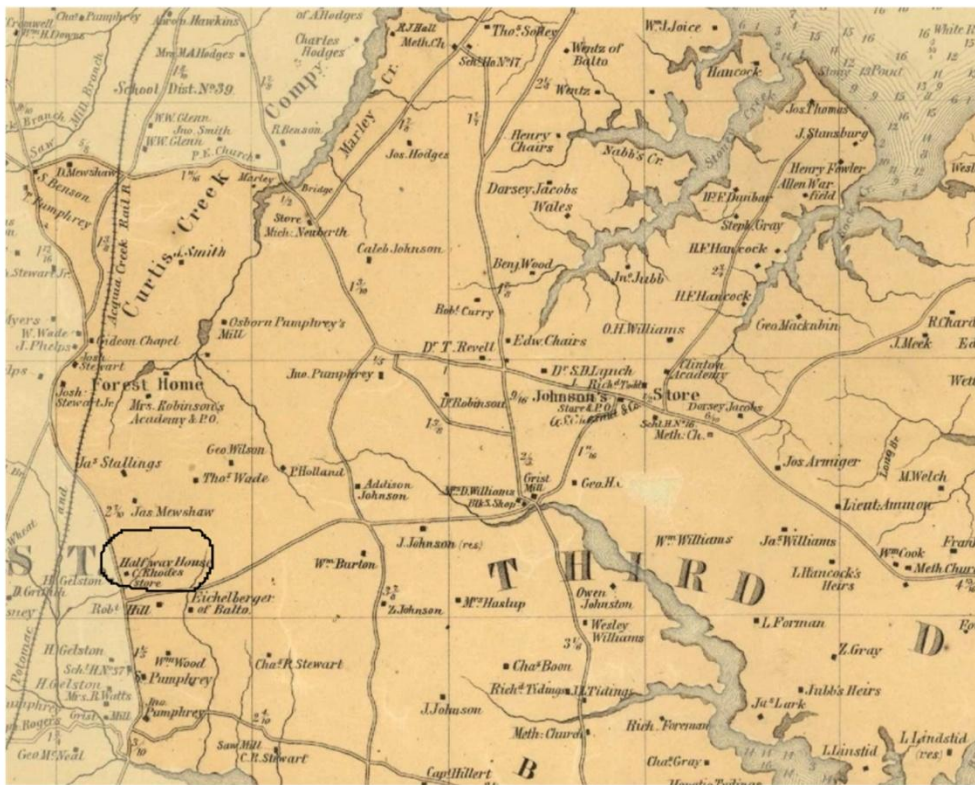
The Halfway House was such an inn and tavern about halfway between Baltimore and Annapolis, in Anne Arundel County. It can be found on the 1860 map (Simon J. Martenet, Map of Anne Arundel County, 1860, Library of Congress, MSA SC 1213-1-117). Trying to compare

that map to Google Maps, it appears the Halfway House was somewhere near where I-97 meets Veteran's Highway, perhaps just north of East-West Blvd, on the east side of Veteran's Highway. The building no longer exists. The location was perfect, in the olden days, for breaking up a trip between Annapolis and points north, such as Elk Ridge Landing, or Baltimore. In 1816 it was advertized for sale as "That Valuable Stand" less than 4 years old, including 50 acres, an 11 room frame house, with stables to house up to 20 horses. It had a pump and very fine water, an ice house newly stocked with ice, and a large productive garden. It had been occupied by a Mr. John Welch, upon whose death the place was put up for sale. Also included in the sale was a 250 acre farm about 2 miles distant, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the Severn River which provided fish and crabs, which was lately the residence of Dr. James Murray.

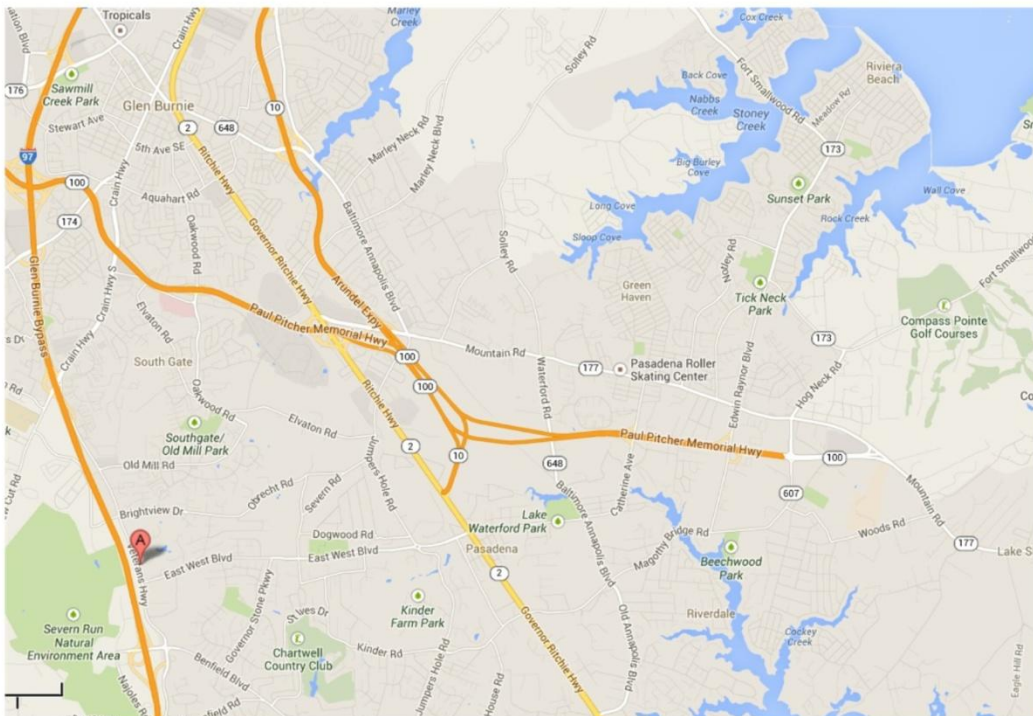
Dr. James Murray, who at some point was personal physician to Thomas Jefferson, and had many other accolades, also owned the house which is now the historic Annapolis Inn. Dr. Murray had several children, one of which was Sally Scott Murray who married Edward Lloyd, who was governor of Maryland for a time. Another of Dr. Murray's children was Daniel Murray, who married Mary Dorsey and settled in Rockburn, Elk Ridge Landing (now Elkridge). Note that this branch of the Murray Clan hailed from Scotland originally, and associated themselves with the "Elibank Murrays," and this may be where "Elibank Drive" in Elkridge gets its name, given its proximity to Rockburn and Belmont. (BTW: Sally's husband's sister married Francis Scott Key and he and Daniel were great friends. I may as well drop names wherever I can!)

Since Dr. Murray's former homestead was advertized with the Halfway House, it may be that he also owned the Halfway House property. From about the time of this advertisement until 1830, my family either owned the Halfway House, or they were the proprietors of the inn and tavern there. I suspect my 3-times great-grandfather (Joseph Barrett) purchased or rented it at the time of the 1816 advertisement. He was single, a captain in the militia, reportedly well-respected in the community, and served in the War of 1812. He married my 3-times great-grandmother (Kitty Holland) in 1822. Upon death of her mother (Jane Stewart Holland), Kitty had been brought up under the care of her mother's cousin, who was in fact Dr. James Murray's daughter, Sally Scott Murray Lloyd*. Though having a home in Talbot County (Wye Plantation), the Lloyds probably spent much of their time in Annapolis. Because of Dr. Murray's possible association with the Halfway House, Joseph may have been his acquaintance, and through that connection, he and Kitty may have met.

Maps of the Halfway House Location "Then and Now:"



1860 Martenet Map



2013 Google Map

Sadly, Joseph was accidentally shot at the Halfway House in December of 1824, and died from his injuries. As innkeeper and tavern manager, when a fight broke out, he told the parties involved to “take it outside,” which they did. Unfortunately a Mr. Brown fired his gun toward the house just when Joseph was passing by the door. Joseph died from his injuries after a short struggle, leaving Kitty and their 2-year old son to mourn for him. He was buried in Annapolis. The shooting and his obituary were reported in the Maryland Gazette, the Annapolis papers, and the Easton Gazette. According to my family history, Kitty’s father of whom she had seen little since her mother’s death, came to live with Kitty and helped her with the inn until his own death in 1826 at the Halfway House. His obituary did indeed state that he died at the Halfway House. Then, also in 1826, a newspaper ad read that “Mrs. Barrett respectfully informs travelers and others, that she has associated her Brother, Mr. Isaac Holland, with herself, in the management of [the Halfway House]. Their united exertions will be used to raise the House to its former celebrity, while under the superintendence of the late John Welch, Esq.”** As an example of the importance to the community, I found an advertisement in the 1828 Maryland Gazette which stated “Land for Sale. By virtue of the chancery court, the subscriber, as trustee will sell at public sale, on Monday the 25th of August next, if fair, if not the next fair day thereafter, at Mrs. Barrett’s tavern, known by the name of the Halfway House, on the road from Annapolis to Baltimore, The Real Estate of Elizabeth Worthington, late of Anne Arundel County, deceased...” Kitty kept the inn until around 1830, where we see that it was advertized again for sale, and as the ad said, it was so well known that no description was needed. Daniel Murray of Elkridge Landing was the subscriber of the ad, and given as point of contact for Elkridge Landing residents who might be interested. One of his brothers was the point of contact for Annapolis residents, and another for Baltimore, at the Mechanic’s Bank. So we see that the Murray Family is still associated with the Halfway House, or else acting as solicitors on behalf of Kitty because of her relationship to them.

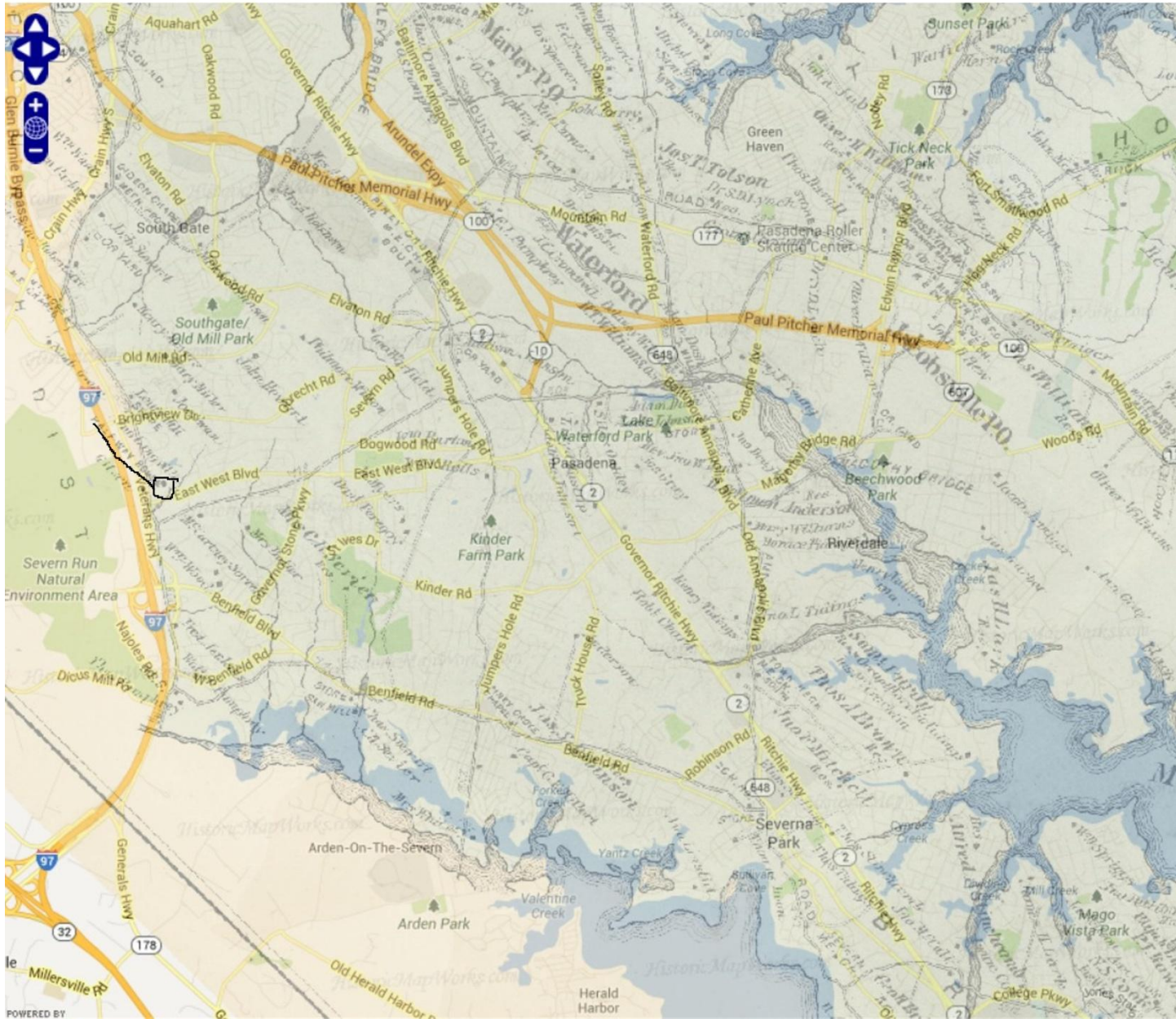
I found several other documents and articles mentioning the Halfway House. It was mentioned in a Maryland Archives document as a landmark delineating school districts; hence it must have been a well-known landmark. John H. B. Latrobe, a prominent lawyer (who was also involved in the railroad, served as attorney in a dispute about Troy Hill, and also painted a picture of the Viaduct which can be found on line), talks about visiting it twice – once when he was in the military during the War of 1812, and once around 1831. He considered it a “melancholy place” but he also considered the land between Baltimore and the Halfway House as “melancholy.” Perhaps he was a city boy! He called the meal he received around 1831 as “wretched.” Note however that my family members were not the proprietors during those years! The Daughters of the Revolution, in 1921, recall it as a place where travelers could refresh themselves, and lamented that it was no more. It is mentioned in a Baltimore newspaper article describing traveling through Anne Arundel County, and also mentioned in “The Pictorial Field Book of the

Revolution” by B. J. Lossing, but the traveler took a wrong turn, and never reached the inn. Instead, he spent the night with a Robinson Family.

The inn was up for sale again in 1849, first in February in a Chancery Sale at the court house (with 150 acres), and then advertized for sale in August. It was advertized as in foreclosure in 1890. The painting above is believed by our family to be of the Halfway House, painted by our great-great-Uncle Charles Albert Harkness. Kitty was his brother’s grandmother-in-law and lived with the family until her death around 1890. It’s possible that upon hearing of its foreclosure, Charles made a point to capture it on canvas before its demise. The house above resembles the Rising Sun Inn, which is the headquarters for the Maryland chapter of the Daughters of the Revolution, a few miles south on General’s Highway. It’s easy to understand why the Halfway House went out of fashion, with the advent of the railroad. Travelers no longer had to stop half-way between Baltimore and Annapolis. As the surrounding area was still countryside, and there are other documented inns and taverns in the vicinity, there just wasn’t a market anymore. Most of the land in the vicinity has been developed, but there is still a large farm on the south side of East-West Highway at Veteran’s Highway, and a 3 acre lot on the opposite corner exactly where I would expect the Halfway to have been. The lot is covered with trees and wild shrubs, but there is a little green shed or cabin tucked away, and it looks like someone did some landscaping in front of it, though it is sadly neglected now. A lot of trash has been dumped on the property. A sign indicates it is for sale, and I found on line that it is advertized for sale for about \$3 million! I plan to research that land and see if I can find any proof that it was part of the Halfway House’s 50 acres. But alas, the Halfway House is no more.



The following overlay map, in conjunction with the “Then and Now” maps above, convinced me that the Veteran’s Highway location is very close to the right spot.



Joseph and Kitty only had one child, George. He in turn had three, but only one of them, his daughter Anna, lived to marry. She had two girls, and only one of them, Mary (my grandmother) married and had a child. She only had one child, my mother Rosemary. My mother had six children and most of us have procreated, so our tree is starting to leaf out again. The point of this is, my family and I are the only ones who care about the Halfway House and Barrett's Tavern from that time-period. Whether later purchasers have a similar family history, I have yet to discover. As far as I can gather, it's up to us to keep the memory alive. I know it meant a lot to my mother, who passed away in 1999, so that makes it important to me. I wish I had 3 million dollars to buy that lot on Veteran's Highway and make it a little memorial park,

but I do not. So unless the lottery comes through, I imagine it will be a Burger King or McDonalds before too many months pass. Perhaps that is in keeping with tradition: wretched food for weary travelers on a melancholy highway.

Notes:

* I have been unable to determine the common ancestor(s) which would make Sally Scott Murray Lloyd the cousin of my 4-times great-grandmother (Jane Stewart Holland), but Kitty told my great-grandfather (Robert Henry Harkness) that it was so, and he wrote it in a family history book for his progeny. That there is a close and continuing relationship between the Stewart and Murray clans cannot be disputed. There is a family of Steuarts near Annapolis (still living at the "Dodon" estate) closely connected to James Murray's family, and there was another Stewart family from the Eastern Shore closely connected to the Enalls family (James Murray's wife was descended from Enalls.) Our family tradition tells us that when Jane Stewart married Isaac Holland (senior), it was against her family's wishes. In 1800, Isaac and Jane had 2 slaves and a large family living in Annapolis. I believe they lived in a historic house in Annapolis called "The Holland-Hohn House" (Christopher Hohn was Isaac's brother-in-law). We call the house "Little Blue" and it is still blue. Though not so prosperous as the Murray family, they were doing fairly well, as evidenced (horrifically enough) by the fact that they had slaves in their household. By 1810, there were no slaves and the family was much smaller as the older boys were grown and/or apprenticed out. As the War of 1812 approached, there were many economic hardships. Isaac Sr and many of his sons, as well as Christopher Hohn were enlisted in the military during the war. I cannot find Isaac Sr in the 1820 census – by this time, Jane would have passed, and Kitty would have been living with the Lloyds. Isaac Jr was newly married. He had been apprenticed out to a Mr. Brewer in the newspaper business (The Maryland Republican I believe.) Little Blue was apparently still in the family, as our tradition says that Kitty was there in 1823 when she gave birth to George. Isaac Sr seemed to have dropped off the face of the earth. I have this feeling he went off the deep-end when Jane died, and then went off to war and lost his way. This is probably far from the truth but the story goes that Kitty had seen very little of him since her mother's death, until he came to the Halfway House a couple years before his death, so my romantic wheels started spinning.

** "They have supplied themselves with the choicest liquors, good and attentive servants, and an excellent Ostler..." – actually this is appalling. They "supplied themselves with ... servants" probably means they purchased slaves. Kitty Barrett is shown in the 1830 census as having three slaves in her household. After giving up the Halfway House, she and her son George lived with her brother Isaac Holland Jr. In the 1840 census they lived with one slave woman and one free colored male in addition to Isaac's family. By 1850 there is no evidence of slave-holdings.

We can say what we want about how “that’s the way things were,” but it is still appalling. Isaac Holland Jr. died before the Civil War so we don’t know what his feelings were about it. He was elected doorman for the U.S. Senate in the 1850s (they had transplanted to DC by then). He was always trying to help George find a good clerk position, though George’s trade was house-painting (and adventurer – he was a California ‘49er). George fought for the Confederacy, but we have no way of knowing if he fought for it because he was in favor of slavery, or for other convictions. One of his brothers-in-law fought for the Union, and another fought for the Confederacy. After the war, George and family (with Kitty) returned to DC, and had an uphill battle. George was pardoned for his part in the war (procured by his brother-in-law) but he was given the cold shoulder as far as jobs go. He ended up going back to his trade as house-painter and eventually died of lead poisoning. Kitty out-lived George and his wife, and lived with her granddaughter’s family (the Harknesses) until she died at age 89. My mother told me that, despite her mother and her Grandmother Harkness’s very wonderful and loving qualities, they retained their discriminatory attitudes toward persons of color, and their high ideas about being “of the manor born.” Mother made sure we were raised differently, though we did have to keep our elbows off the table.