

*...train stop* along the Pope's Creek Branch of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad in 1873. In that year, a railroad station was built where the Port Tobacco-Bryantown Road (**Charles Street**) crossed the railroad tracks. The Town evolved on land subdivided from two large farms, including the Chapman family's "La Plata Farm" and the Matthews family's "The Hermitage". Soon, a store and a post office were built on Charles Street close to the station, and the town began to develop.

By 1878 there was a population of 35. That number had grown to 120 by 1887, when La Plata boasted several general merchandisers, a grist and saw mill, a hotel, and a millinery and dressmakers' shop. The county seat was moved from Port Tobacco to La Plata in 1896. Despite numerous fires and two devastating tornados in 1926 and 2002, the Town of La Plata has continued to

*prosper through the present day.*



**THE RAILROAD** played an important role in the life of the community, as both a freight and passenger line. Farm equipment and automobiles were shipped by rail, as was coal, oil and tobacco. Passengers had easy access to Washington, D.C. and all destinations on the east coast. Passenger service ended in 1949.



**CHAPMAN'S STORE**, built circa 1875 at the corner of Charles Street and north Oak Avenue, was one of the first mercantile establishments in the growing town.



**FIRST COURTHOUSE** in La Plata, erected 1896 in the Romanesque style. The building was designed by Washington D.C. architect Joseph C. Johnson and constructed by James H. Haislip. The current courthouse was built to encase the original structure in the 1970's.



**TOBACCO AUCTIONS** were held in a large wooden tobacco warehouse and packing house which was located at the end of Maple Avenue. A fire led to the building being replaced by the current metal warehouse in the 1960's.

# Historic LA PLATA

## LANDMARKS



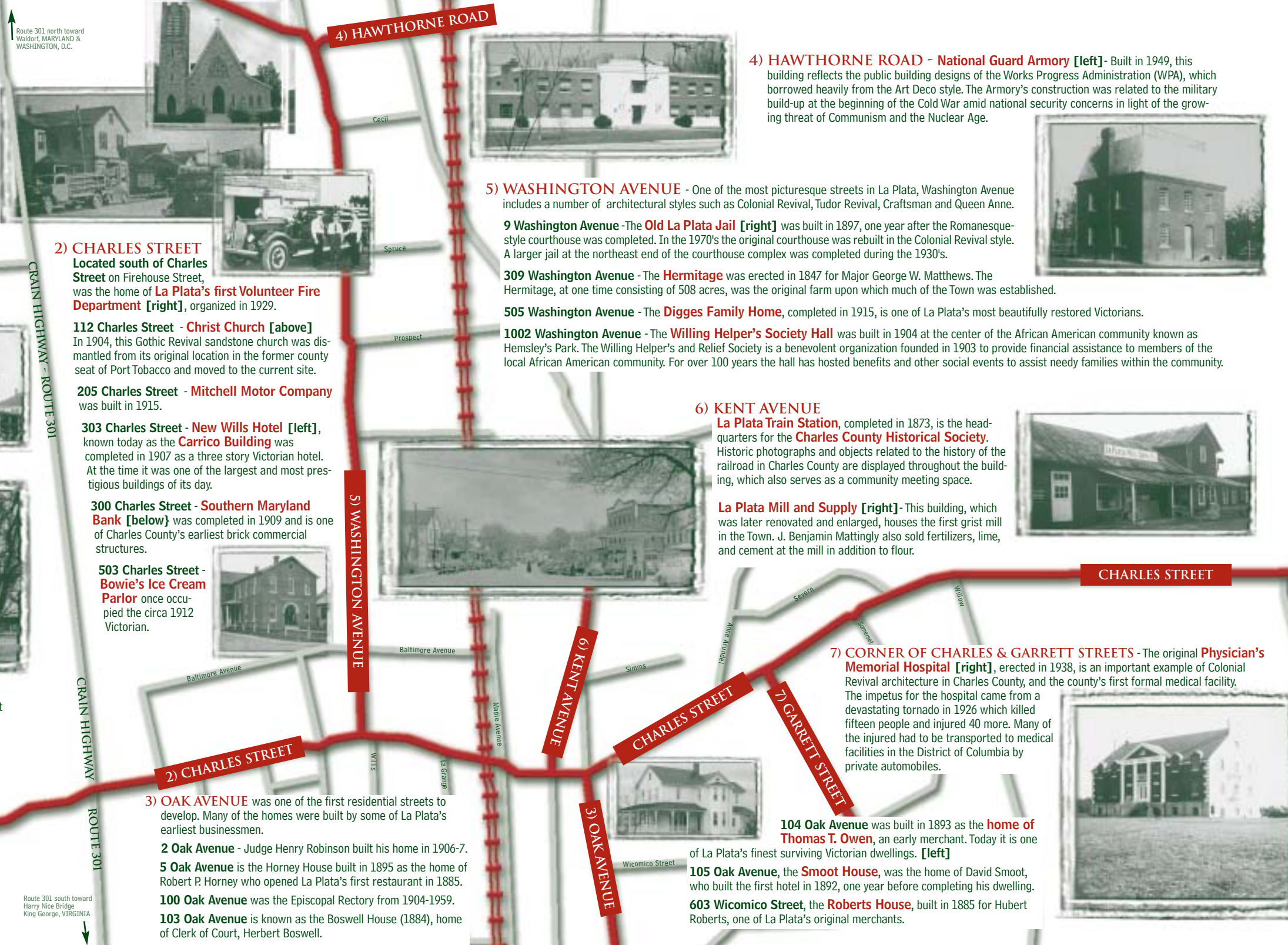
*Early beginnings*

The Town of La Plata began as a...

Funded and developed by the Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management, the Town of La Plata and the La Plata Historic Preservation Commission.

# Historic LA PLATA LANDMARKS

Route 301 north toward  
Waldorf, MARYLAND &  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



**1) PORT TOBACCO ROAD**  
**120 Port Tobacco Road - Nelton**, was built in 1915 by P.D. Brown.  
**150 Port Tobacco Road** - The Maples, also known as the **Adrian Posey House**, was built in 1915.  
**201 Port Tobacco Road - La Grange**, [above] erected in 1763, was the home of James Craik, Surgeon General of President George Washington.

**1) PORT TOBACCO ROAD**

**2) CHARLES STREET**  
 Located south of Charles Street on Firehouse Street, was the home of **La Plata's first Volunteer Fire Department** [right], organized in 1929.

**112 Charles Street - Christ Church** [above] In 1904, this Gothic Revival sandstone church was dismantled from its original location in the former county seat of Port Tobacco and moved to the current site.

**205 Charles Street - Mitchell Motor Company** was built in 1915.

**303 Charles Street - New Wills Hotel** [left], known today as the **Carrico Building** was completed in 1907 as a three story Victorian hotel. At the time it was one of the largest and most prestigious buildings of its day.

**300 Charles Street - Southern Maryland Bank** [below] was completed in 1909 and is one of Charles County's earliest brick commercial structures.

**503 Charles Street - Bowie's Ice Cream Parlor** once occupied the circa 1912 Victorian.

CRAIN HIGHWAY - ROUTE 301

Route 301 south toward  
Harry Nice Bridge  
King George, VIRGINIA

**3) OAK AVENUE** was one of the first residential streets to develop. Many of the homes were built by some of La Plata's earliest businessmen.

**2 Oak Avenue** - Judge Henry Robinson built his home in 1906-7.

**5 Oak Avenue** is the Horney House built in 1895 as the home of Robert P. Horney who opened La Plata's first restaurant in 1885.

**100 Oak Avenue** was the Episcopal Rectory from 1904-1959.

**103 Oak Avenue** is known as the Boswell House (1884), home of Clerk of Court, Herbert Boswell.

**5) WASHINGTON AVENUE** - One of the most picturesque streets in La Plata, Washington Avenue includes a number of architectural styles such as Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Craftsman and Queen Anne.

**9 Washington Avenue** - The **Old La Plata Jail** [right] was built in 1897, one year after the Romanesque-style courthouse was completed. In the 1970's the original courthouse was rebuilt in the Colonial Revival style. A larger jail at the northeast end of the courthouse complex was completed during the 1930's.

**309 Washington Avenue** - The **Hermitage** was erected in 1847 for Major George W. Matthews. The Hermitage, at one time consisting of 508 acres, was the original farm upon which much of the Town was established.

**505 Washington Avenue** - The **Digges Family Home**, completed in 1915, is one of La Plata's most beautifully restored Victorians.

**1002 Washington Avenue** - The **Willing Helper's Society Hall** was built in 1904 at the center of the African American community known as Hemsley's Park. The Willing Helper's and Relief Society is a benevolent organization founded in 1903 to provide financial assistance to members of the local African American community. For over 100 years the hall has hosted benefits and other social events to assist needy families within the community.

**6) KENT AVENUE**

**La Plata Train Station**, completed in 1873, is the headquarters for the **Charles County Historical Society**. Historic photographs and objects related to the history of the railroad in Charles County are displayed throughout the building, which also serves as a community meeting space.

**La Plata Mill and Supply** [right] - This building, which was later renovated and enlarged, houses the first grist mill in the Town. J. Benjamin Mattingly also sold fertilizers, lime, and cement at the mill in addition to flour.

**7) CORNER OF CHARLES & GARRETT STREETS** - The original **Physician's Memorial Hospital** [right], erected in 1938, is an important example of Colonial Revival architecture in Charles County, and the county's first formal medical facility. The impetus for the hospital came from a devastating tornado in 1926 which killed fifteen people and injured 40 more. Many of the injured had to be transported to medical facilities in the District of Columbia by private automobiles.

**104 Oak Avenue** was built in 1893 as the **home of Thomas T. Owen**, an early merchant. Today it is one of La Plata's finest surviving Victorian dwellings. [left]

**105 Oak Avenue**, the **Smoot House**, was the home of David Smoot, who built the first hotel in 1892, one year before completing his dwelling.

**603 Wicomico Street**, the **Roberts House**, built in 1885 for Hubert Roberts, one of La Plata's original merchants.

**4) HAWTHORNE ROAD - National Guard Armory** [left] - Built in 1949, this building reflects the public building designs of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which borrowed heavily from the Art Deco style. The Armory's construction was related to the military build-up at the beginning of the Cold War amid national security concerns in light of the growing threat of Communism and the Nuclear Age.

