

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Community Health Center at Parole meets Criteria A and B in its request for determination of eligibility as an Annapolis Local Landmark by the Annapolis Historic Preservation Commission. Under Criteria A and B a property must be

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- B. Associated with the lives of significant persons in our past.

### **BROAD PATTERNS OF HISTORY: 1936-1949; SIGNIFICANT DATE: 1949**

Under Criterion A, the Community Health Center at Parole is significant for historical events that initiated a much-needed trend of improved health care for local African-Americans in the Parole community from modest beginnings of monthly maternity care housed in a church sanctuary in 1936 to a multi-purpose community health center constructed by 1949.

The history of the Community Health Center at Parole reflects the development of the Annapolis area, in general, over more than three centuries and the transition of the Parole community, in particular, from farmland to suburb. It also reflects the 20th century emergence of public health as a societal priority. Sandgate, the 1718 tract on which the Community Health Center at Parole is currently located, was owned and presumably used for wood and agriculture by a few wealthy men who lived in Annapolis.<sup>1</sup> The name “Parole” derives from Camp Parole, a camp in the area during the Civil War for paroled soldiers waiting for exchange. A support community was created around the Camp during its existence; however, the transition from farmland to suburb did not begin until 1907 with the first plat for 38 lots on Parole Street followed by additional lots from developer Thomas McGuckian on land now owned by the Community Health Center at Parole.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the need for quality housing was addressed through McGuckian’s subdivision in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the value of having quality health services available for the Parole community was also apparent. Under a program developed in 1930, the Anne Arundel County Health Department provided free prenatal and postpartum care, as well as immunizations and other medical services, but the Parole community had to provide a suitable building for delivery of these services by Health Department nurses and physicians. Walter S. Mills, principal of Parole Elementary School, and Reverend John T. Chambers, Sr., president of the Parole Elementary School PTA took the lead in 1936 organizing the community to start a much-needed health care program for the Parole community. Seeing that no local maternity care was available to Parole-area African-American mothers, Mills and Chambers

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<sup>1</sup> Edward C. Papenfuse, et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1634-1789*, 1:147 (Bordley); Jane Wilson McWilliams, *City on the Severn* (2011), pp. 146, 159, 188; Robert McIntire, *Annapolis, Maryland, Families*, 1:749.

<sup>2</sup> Louis H. Bolander, “When Annapolis Was an Army Town,” *The (Baltimore) Sunday Sun Magazine*, 8 November 1931, for instance; McWilliams, *City on the Severn*, p. 198, 232-235, 236; *Western Appeal* newspaper, 10 Sept. 1887; AA Co. Circuit Ct. Charter Record, SH 3, 271 (MSA T2787-3; 3/61/12/69); *Afro American Ledger* 1906/05/26; Annapolis DPW, plat cards.

used their energy and positions to rally the community to establish the first health center in Maryland financed entirely by African-Americans. Mills coined the hallmark phrase still used today at the center: "Every Child Has the Right to be Born a Healthy Child." After 10 years of housing the health center first in the Asbury Methodist Church Sanctuary and then the Mt. Olive African Methodist Church parsonage followed by the church hall, the community raised the necessary funds to construct the current building.<sup>3</sup>

Fund-raising for the new building began in 1944 and as Community Health Center at Parole Past-President Lawrence Harris describes it: "The citizen response was overwhelming. Dinners, bazaars, raffles, and a variety of entertainment events were sponsored by groups to raise funds for the building. To provide an opportunity for everyone to participate, a door-to-door solicitation was conducted with every person contacted contributing something." Groundbreaking took place on Sunday, June 30 1946, with parades, prayers, and speeches, followed by the laying of the cornerstone on May 16, 1948. Construction was largely done by local volunteers including trade workers and shop students of vocational and industrial arts teacher James Marchand. On one Saturday alone, volunteers stuccoed almost the entire building, and more volunteers came in at night to lay floors.<sup>4</sup> Moneys raised from a baby show, a softball game, a school play, and the American-Legion were added to the balance. As constructed, the building had a basement room for recreation with showers and lavatories and a first floor with three examining rooms, a waiting room, and offices for a clerk and nurse. One of the examining rooms could be used for x-rays or dental work. The construction was completed with the dedication of the new building on June 5, 1949. The Community Health Center at Parole now had a permanent building which has served the health needs of the Parole community and beyond through today.<sup>5</sup>

By the late 1990s, the aging facility and the increase in patients and services made it necessary to expand and renovate the building. In 1999, the center had approximately 4,000 walk-in patients, provided 3,000 immunizations, and made more than 1,700 home visits: all services provided without charge. With an initiative led by France America Pindell, long-term board member and president from 1984-1998, the Community Health Center at Parole received support from both public and private resources with residents in the Parole community contributing money and time to the effort. The present facility on Drew Street was dedicated on June 15, 2002 as one of the "most modern, well-equipped health centers in Anne Arundel County."<sup>6</sup> The interior of the 1949 building retains some original doorway and window openings with trim and casing plus a particularly interesting interior stained plywood wainscoting and trim lining the central corridor of the health suite. The building retains the factors of historic integrity associated in its historic association, location, design and neighborhood setting.

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<sup>3</sup> Jane Wilson McWilliams, *The First 90 Years* (1992), p. 57; Jane Wilson McWilliams, *City on the Severn* (2011), pp.302-303; *Evening Capital* 20 Dec. 1948; Lawrence L. Harris, Jr., "The Community Health Center at Parole, Inc., "Our History" (2013).

<sup>4</sup> Harris, "Our History"; *Evening Capital* 27 March 1944, 26 June 1946, 2 March and 1 May 1948, 29 January, 2 August, and 8 August 1949; *Washington Afro-American* 30 June 1959.

<sup>5</sup> Harris, "Our History"; *Evening Capital* 27 March 1944, 26 June 1946, 2 March and 1 May 1948, 29 January, 2 August and 8 August 1949; *Washington* . 30 June 1959.

<sup>6</sup> Harris, "Our History"

Thus, the Community Health Center at Parole is historically and cultural significant to the history of health care for Annapolis and Anne Arundel County's African-American community.

#### **PERSONS OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1936-2002**

Under Criterion B, the Community Health Center at Parole is significant for the following persons associated with its historic period:

##### **WALTER S. MILLS**

Walter S. Mills was Principal of Parole Elementary School when he spearheaded a project in 1936 to start the much-needed health care program in Parole, culminating with the construction of the Community Health Center at Parole in 1949. Mills organized the effort to incorporate the Community Health Center Parole as a 501(c)3 nonprofit charitable organization. He established a strong bond between Parole Elementary School, its staff, faculty and students, as fundraising, operations and service needs expanded. He also established immunization days for all Parole Elementary School students and made sure that dental services were provided for all local students enrolled in local African-American (Rosenwald) schools. Mills was active on the Board of the Community Health Center at Parole and provided for a leadership succession strategy, recruiting Lawrence L. Harris, Jr. and others to serve as the next leaders of the organization prior to his death in 1994.<sup>7</sup>

Mills was born in 1909 on a farm in St. Mary's County, earned his bachelor's degree from Virginia's Hampton Institute in 1939 and spent 46 years as educator and principal at Parole Elementary School before retiring in 1978. He successfully sued the Anne Arundel County Board of Education in 1939 with representation by Thurgood Marshall (at the time a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People attorney) for equal pay for black principals and teachers. Walter S. Mills died in 1994 at the age of 85; a funeral service was held at St. Philips Episcopal Church where Mr. Mills was a member for 62 years.<sup>8</sup>

##### **REVEREND JOHN T. CHAMBERS, SR**

John T. Chambers, Sr. was President of the Parole Elementary School PTA when he was approached by school principal Walter Mills in 1936 to start a health care program for the community. Together the two men organized PTA members and the community to raise the necessary funds and resources to begin construction of the Community Health Center at Parole.

Chambers served as the administrator for the health center, going into the neighborhood and recruiting volunteers for construction and raising funds for ongoing operational needs. When the nurses at the facility requested equipment, Chambers would see to it that funds were secured to purchase air conditioning or portable heaters,

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Community Health Center at Parole Board of Directors, 14 September 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Obituary, "Walter S. Mills, Educator Who Won Pay Bias Case." Fred Rasmussen, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 July 1994.

particularly for the poorly insulated examining rooms. To assist in that effort, Chambers and Mills, would call on Howard Beard, health officer for Anne Arundel County, to participate in meetings and advocate with the community on the importance of donating to serve the health care needs of Parole residents.<sup>9</sup>

Chambers was a preacher serving mostly Maryland's Eastern Shore communities, as well as a barber. He owned and operated Chambers Barber Shop first on Clay Street, then West Washington Street, and finally West Street in Annapolis from the 1940s until his death in 1975. In addition, Chambers was the President of the Anne Arundel County Federation of Parents and Teachers, past president of the Anne Arundel County Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and on the Board of the Citizens Planning and Housing Association. John T. Chambers, Sr. died 7 January 1975 with services at both Mt. Olive AME Church, Butlertown, MD (eastern shore) and Mt. Olive AME Church, Annapolis. He is interred in Brewer Hill Cemetery.<sup>10</sup>

#### JAMES MARCHAND

When James Marchand settled in Annapolis in the 1930s, he was an experienced carpenter and building contractor. A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Marchand had worked as a carpenter at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and in Newport News, Virginia, and as a building contractor in Westchester County, New York. His position as vocational and industrial arts teacher at Wiley H. Bates High School was a natural progression in his professional life.<sup>11</sup>

An original member of the board of Community Health Center at Parole, Marchand served as treasurer during the construction of the center on Drew Street. He applied his building expertise to the construction of the health center between 1946 and 1949 as he did to the "Veteran's Building Trades" classes that he organized at Bates under a program developed by the state board of education. Marchand brought in many of the trade workers with experience in bricklaying, carpentry, electrical and plumbing. Some of the men involved with the construction had been students of Marchand's "shop" classes. Some returned from World War II on the GI bill looking for a trade and found themselves back in high school learning construction from Marchand. Some of those graduates from Marchand's classes - William Matthews and James Booth - went on to build their homes in the Parole area.<sup>12</sup> In 1947, Marchand chaired a health center committee focusing on Social Hygiene. County health officer, Dr. William

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Community Health Center at Parole Board of Directors, 14 September 2016.

<sup>10</sup> The Washington Post 30 Dec. 2001; Evening Capital 3 April, 1963; Plaque in Freedom Grove at Adams Park, near J. Albert Adams Academy; Evening Capital 18 April 1952; Evening Capital 10 Jan. 1975.

<sup>11</sup> Registration State: *Louisiana*; Registration County: *East Baton Rouge*; Roll: *1684671*, online at Ancestry.com. *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line]; 1920 Census, Enumeration District 104, sheet 7 A, Newport News City, Warwick County, VA; Ancestry.com. *New York, State Census, 1925* [database on-line]; 1930 Census, Enumeration District 60-366, sheet 1B, White Plains, Westchester County, NY; *Retrospective*, Bates High School yearbook, 1940, Wiley H. Bates Legacy Center.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Community Health Center at Parole Board of Directors, 14 September 2016.

J. French, had chosen the Parole health center to initiate this program in the county because of the center's strong community involvement.

Marchand served as vice president of the Anne Arundel County Chapter of the NAACP and as Sunday School superintendent of First Baptist Church. He was often called upon to speak on issues of concern to the African-American community. Following his sudden death on January 31, 1954, at the age of 61, Anne Arundel County's scouting organizations recognized his years as scoutmaster and chairman of the South Shore District Boy Scouts by dedicating a drinking fountain at the new Camp Woodlands in his honor.<sup>13</sup>

#### FRANCE AMERICA PINDELL

France America Pindell, named in recognition of his father's military service in World War I, devoted many years to the Community Health Center at Parole as a board member and as president from 1984 to 1998. During the late 1990s, Pindell saw that the Parole neighborhood was changing. With an increasing number of Latino families moving to the neighborhood, providing health care services to a larger and more diverse population meant increasing the size of the facility. It was France Pindell's initiative that led to the renovations and enlargement of the center in 2002. Pindell worked in a variety of ways to raise funds from state, county, and city government sources as well as from private and corporate donors, even running his own thrift shop in order to complete the \$650,000 renovation. Pindell even served as the project manager for the renovation once it was underway.

Pindell graduated from Wiley H. Bates High School. He then joined the army and served in World War II as a supply sergeant, where he received commendations for his organizational skills. He owned a construction business, Pindell and Pindell Contracting, which he ran with a younger brother and a cousin. Pindell was active in the Mt. Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church and served as trustee for more than fifty years. He freely offered his construction expertise to the maintenance and improvement of neighborhood church buildings. Whether on the Parole (now Walter S. Mills-Parole Elementary School) PTA, the Annapolis Civil Service Board, the Stanton-Bates Alumni and Scholarship Association, or as campaign manager for the city's only African American mayor John T. Chambers, Jr. (son of Reverend Chambers, Sr.), France America Pindell demonstrated a lifelong commitment to his community.<sup>14</sup>

Roberta G. Laynor  
29 September 2016

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence L. Harris, Jr., email 20 September 2016; *Evening Capital* 21 December 1944, 16 February and 12 December 1946, 3 and 31 March 1947, 2 March, 10 April, and 11 June 1948, 3 March 1949, 2 February and 16 March 1950, 3 May 1954, 9 April 1976; Maryland State Department of Health, Certificate of Death, 1954 [MSA SE44-692].

<sup>14</sup> The Pindell Family, "Celebrating the Life of France America Pindell," (prepared for his funeral services, 9 November 2010); *The Capital*, 7 November 2010; Jane Wilson McWilliams, Interview with France America Pindell, 27 October 2003; Jane Wilson McWilliams, *City on the Severn, A History* (2011), p. 256.