TIMELINE:

PORT COVINGTON & ENVIRONS

<u>Native American Era</u>: The area around what is now called Port Covington lay on the border between the Susquehannock communities to the north and the Algonquin settlements to the south; Patapsco is a derivative of an Algonquin word, meaning "froth covered tide."

<u>Colonial Era</u>: To the extent it was developed, the area was farmland with associated livestock. Port Covington avoided the heavy settlements to the north and did not have the mineral and iron deposits that lay under land to the east. Port Covington retained some of its agrarian nature into the early twentieth century.²

<u>War of 1812</u>: The US Navy erects fortifications to the west of Fort McHenry to guard against British landings. One of these batteries was called Fort Covington. Under Naval command, the "Sea Fencibles" defended the batteries. The Sea Fencibles were drawn from Maryland regiments, naval forces, and army regiments. On September 14, 1814, the Sea Fencibles repelled attempted British landings. The fire from the batteries' guns shook houses throughout the city.³

<u>Early Nineteenth Century</u>: Smith's Distillery becomes the first industry to set up business in the Port Covington area. The distillery takes advantage of a natural artesian well, lying about 125 feet below the surface in Fort Covington.⁴

1840s: Paul Rodes opens a bar at Ferry Bar, presumably at a ferry crossing of the Patapsco River.⁵

1844: Ferry Bar Fish House opens.⁶

1848: Abraham Busch opens, "The Old Ferry Bar" on the site of the "Ferry Bar Fish House."

<u>1854</u>: Baltimore City asked that the US government properties in and around Fort Covington be donated to the city in order to build a public park. The US government declines.⁸

<u>1856</u>: Wharfs and buildings erected to the east of Port Covington, along what is now Gould Street. The "Long Bridge/Light Street Bridge" opens, replacing the ferry service across the Middle Branch. The bridge increases the commercial value and promise of the "Ferry Bar" restaurant and bar.

1861-1865: Civil War.

<u>1866</u>: Earliest extant record of a regatta on the Middle Branch. The race involved the Ariel, Undine, and Zepher Clubs.¹¹

1869: US government sells Fort Covington and surrounding land at auction to William Callow for \$10,800. 12 Records indicate that George Busch has taken over operations of "Busch's Ferry Bar" from his father. 13

1873: Baltimore City announces plans to route sewer water from the Inner Harbor to the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River. ¹⁴ Brothers James and Robert Harrison purchase the "Ferry Bar" from the Busch family. ¹⁵

- <u>1875</u>: The completed sewer line opens with an outlet to the east of Donaldson Street and at a depth of four feet below mean tide. There is no record of any consideration given the effect of the line on the freshwater wells in the area.¹⁶
- <u>1876</u>: Two 35 foot piers go up in Fort Covington, the predecessors of the Western Maryland piers. The city opens private land and streets in the area around Fort Covington for public use.¹⁷
- 1878: After James' death, Robert assumes full ownership of "Harrison's Ferry Bar." 18
- 1879: A fertilizer plant and an animal control facility open near Fort Covington. 19
- 1880: Additional bulkheads and piers constructed in and around Fort Covington. 20
- <u>1880s-1890s</u>: The area in and around what will become Port Covington becomes a center for shipping and limited industry. To the north, row houses are erected along Light and Charles Street. The area is a mixture of shipping, agriculture, residences, and industry.
- <u>1884</u>: Cutair and Murray purchase the "Ferry Bar Pleasure Resort" at auction after the death of Robert Harrison.²¹
- 1886: Francis Cutair assumes full control of what is now called, "Curtair's Ferry Bar Resort."22
- <u>1891</u>: Baltimore City replaces the original bridge with a new steel and wood structure that is 4,754 feet long. A full time staff of five work on the bridge: one engineer, two deck hands, and a night watchman.²³
- <u>1894</u>: The Baltimore Athletic Club buys and refurbishes the boathouse near Ferry Bar from the Neptune Club; there is no record of when the Neptune Club built the original boathouse.²⁴
- 1895: Francis Cutair sells the "Ferry Bar Resort" to George Kahl, who opens "Kahl's Ferry Bar Resort." 25
- 1897: The Arundel Boat Club buys the Baltimore Athletic Club properties at the Ferry Bar for \$1200.26
- 1902: The Western Maryland Tidewater Railroad Company finishes surveys of the land in South Baltimore on the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River, to the West of the Long Bridge.²⁷
- 1903: Construction on the "Tidewater Terminals" begins.
- <u>1904</u>: Construction on freight piers complete on September 20th. In November, the Western Maryland RR announces that the "Tidewater Terminals" will be called "Port Covington," as a nod to the area's history. During the War of 1812, Fort Covington guarded the Western approaches to Fort McHenry.²⁸
- <u>1905</u>: The coal pier opens in February. The British steamer *Fernfield* carries the first load of coal, shipped from West Virginia, to Santiago de Cuba.²⁹
- 1909: The Maryland Yacht Club move to the Middle Branch on land between the Hanover Street Bridge and the Arundel Boat Club.
- <u>1910</u>: The Western Maryland RR expands Port Covington with land purchases to the east and north of the original terminals.

- <u>1911</u>: The Western Maryland RR builds new coal piers made of steel and structural iron, doubling the capacity of the 1905 piers.³⁰
- 1913: Panama Canal opens. Port Covington expands capacity by expanding its grain elevators. The Western Maryland RR expands in the east towards Locust Point and in the north to Donaldson Street. 31 "Kahl's Ferry Bar Resort" closes after Baltimore City denies George Kahl a liquor license. Within a year, both Kahl and his wife would die. 32
- 1914: The First World War begins in Europe and Africa, increasing demand for coal and grain.
- <u>1915</u>: The Western Maryland RR responds to growing demand by constructing new grain piers and elevators, incorporating the latest technological advances in reinforced concrete and in more efficient means of drying and cleaning grain.³³
- <u>1916</u>: The Hanover Street Bridge opens, diverting traffic away from Light Street and significantly decreasing the value of the Ferry Bar resort property. The Western Maryland RR builds new coal piers once again expanding capacity.³⁴
- <u>1917</u>: The United States enters the First World War. The Western Maryland RR opens new offices in Port Covington.³⁵
- <u>1918</u>: The bulk of the United States Expeditionary Force arrives in Europe in the Spring. On November 11th, hostilities cease.
- 1919: Treaties agreed to formally end the First World War. In January, the Baltimore Chamber of Commerce declares the Port Covington facilities the most efficient and modern in the city, far surpassing those of the Pennsylvania RR in Canton and the B&O RR in Locust Point. In April, the Department of Agriculture concludes that Port Covington has the "best equipped" facilities on the Atlantic Seaboard. In September, fire devastates the Port Covington terminals and piers to the water's edge. Estimates put the loss at \$1,000,000. 36 Baltimore City dismantles the most of the Long Bridge/Light Street Bridge. 37
- <u>1920</u>: In March, construction on the new coal pier starts. In September, the WMRR takes out a \$1.7 million loan (bond issue) to build new piers for freight and grain and for railroad cars and equipment. In December, the WMRR purchases a "steel-barge float" to take raw materials to Sparrows Point via a water route, by-passing rail congestion on land.³⁸
- <u>1921</u>: In April, the Steamer Melrose (Boston) takes on the first load of coal from the new pier, which is equal in size to the old coal pier, but able to process 2,000 tons of coal per hour as opposed to 700 tons from the old pier. In August, the WMRR begins construction on new grain elevators that will treble storage capacity. By November, on-site innovations enable the new coal pier to process up to 3,000 tons of coal per hour.³⁹
- <u>1922</u>: In March, the WMRR open the world's largest grain elevator in Port Covington, with a capacity of 5,800,000 bushels, surpassing the previous record holder in Kansas City, Missouri by 600,000 bushels. In May, the WMRR begins constructions of new repair shops and offices in Port Covington.

<u>1923</u>: In June, the WMRR allocates \$1.5 million to refurbish rail cars and engines in Port Covington. In October, construction begins on McComas Street piers, at a projected cost of \$4 million. ⁴⁰

<u>1926</u>: In May, the WMRR sets a record for a coal shipment. Within 100 hours, 5,000 tons of coal were ordered in New York, mined in West Virginia, shipped 350 miles to Port Covington, and loaded on a ship bound for Italy.⁴¹

<u>1927</u>: The WMRR allocates \$2 million for capital improvements, including the Hanover Street viaduct, track refurbishment, and coal pier upgrades. 42

<u>1929</u>: The WMRR purchases an electronic "travelling crane," signaling the mechanization of loading and unloading ships. In October, the stock market crashes, starting the Great Depression.

1930: The economic downturn slows the US and global economies, but the Depression's effect on Baltimore is less severe because of the city's industries, including the WMRR at Port Covington, are key transportation hubs for fuel and food. Further, money spent on infrastructure in the 1920s puts Port Covington in a favorable position within the city's economy. Therefore, the WMRR has resources for additional upgrades in Port Covington. The railroad invests in new steel-floating barges and a new, electronically operated ore crane. 43

<u>1931-1936</u>: The Depression restricts spending on further improvements and innovations in Port Covington.

1936: In July, the Spanish Civil War begins.

1937: In July, Japan invades China. In December, Baltimore City announces plans to dredge the harbor and widen shipping lanes, in anticipation for increased demands for coal and grain.⁴⁴

<u>1938</u>: In September, German troops move into Czechoslovakia. With war in Europe and the Far East, grain, coal, and steel shipments from Port Covington approach pre-Depression highs.⁴⁵

1939: In January, a ship of Jewish refugees, from Germany, docks in Port Covington, in route to Brazil. It is the first shipload of Jewish refugees allowed safe harbor in the United States. All 143 passengers disembark, enjoying a warm welcome in the city before reboarding their ship. In September, the Second World War begins in Europe, with the Nazi invasion of Poland. Britain declares war on Germany. The WMRR announces plans for a steel mill in Port Covington. Steel coal and grain go through Port Covington to Germany, Italy, the Philippines, Japan, and to ports in Britain and its empire in Africa, India, and the Far East. The WMRR invests in new tracks and warehouses in Port Covington.

<u>1940</u>: Imports and exports pour through Port Covington as the Second World War increases the demand for coal, grain, and other raw materials. The port sees ships from both Allied and Axis powers and from combatants in Asia, both Chinese and Japanese. The port begins to become the middleman for Australian grain, bound for besieged Britain. Ships damaged crossing the Atlantic also find safe harbor in Port Covington.⁴⁷

1941: United States military shipments to Panama and the Far East increase, testing Port Covington's capacity. Exports increase by 80% over 1940's records for the first quarter. In December, the Japanese

attack Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States into the War. Germany and Italy declare war on the US. Also in December, the Japanese sink the HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse in the South China Sea. Together with German U Boat success in the Atlantic, US exports and imports are put under increasing threat. The US navy seizes hostile ships and neutral ships carrying cargo to hostile nations in Port Covington.⁴⁸

<u>1942</u>: Air Raid warnings sound in Port Covington in an exercise, but the sounds, together with the increasing dangers to shipping bring the war home to Baltimore. Women begin to work at the Western Maryland Yards in Port Covington, as men mobilize for war. Refugees from Europe and African arrive in Port Covington.⁴⁹

<u>1943</u>: As the war progresses, the press begins to report less about the Port of Baltimore's activities for fear of providing information that might be beneficial to the Axis war effort. Workers in Port Covington are housed in dorms to increase work hours and productivity. Port Covington serves as proxy for Morocco and Algeria during rehearsals for US troop landings in Africa.⁵⁰

1944: USS Refuge, a hospital ship, holds an open house in Port Covington.⁵¹

<u>1945</u>: With the war in Europe ending, Port Covington resumes grain exports to Italy and Germany. As the war in Asia ends, truck and car parts are loaded for export to India and the Far East. In October, a US Navy fleet docks in Port Covington for "Navy Week." ⁵²

<u>1948</u>: With the War and immediate Post-War boom ending, the Western Maryland Railroad begins to furlough workers. The railroad industry nationwide begins to contract for the first time in its history. Long shoreman stage trikes and work stoppages in port facilities across the country.⁵³

<u>1949</u>: The Western Maryland Railway posts modest profits for its operations, including the yards in Port Covington. The railroad is one of the few in the industry to report profits. The WMRR begins to switch its focus from exporting coal to importing ore as the US economy begins to a post-war transition.⁵⁴

<u>1951</u>: Baltimore City and the Western Maryland Railroad plan for \$10 to \$12 million investments in new infrastructure in Port Covington. The WMRR begins to transition to 100% diesel locomotives. Port Covington reports at a net loss in income. ⁵⁵

<u>1953</u>: The WMRR scales back the planned infrastructure improvements even as Port Covington returns to profitability. The RR plans to spend about \$3 million to improve the Port Covington facilities.⁵⁶

1954: Port Covington posts a \$7 million profit, with the shift to imports and a scaled back building scheme.⁵⁷

<u>1956</u>: Baltimore City buys the property of the Maryland Yacht Club and the Arundel Boat Club. The Arundel Club would field 26 East Coast championships in its history. The City Garage built.⁵⁸

1957: Port Covington opens new pier and a newly-expanded grain elevator. Port operations post a record profit.⁵⁹

<u>1958</u>: WMRR announces plans to lease the Port Covington grain elevators. The move, while controversial, ensures a steady revenue stream for the WMRR at a time when the railroad industry nationwide is suffering.⁶⁰

<u>1961</u>: The B&O Railroad buys 44% of Western Maryland stock. Port Covington sells its piers to the Maryland Port Authority.⁶¹

1962: Port Covington posts a 25% increase in gross profits. 62

1964: The B&O and C&O railroads move to take over Port Covington and the Western Maryland RR.63

1973: The Chessie system assumes full control over Port Covignton.

1980s: CSX begins selling land and other assets in Port Covington.

<u>1990s</u>: Baltimore City considers building a new baseball park in Port Covington but opts instead for the Camden Yards site.

2002: Walmart opens store in Port Covington

<u>2016</u>: Sagamore Development acquires Port Covington. Walmart closes.

2019: Construction begins on the new Port Covington.

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