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The Story of MACo Offices

MACo has conducted Association business from four different offices, two at the University of Maryland and two in downtown Annapolis. The current office is familiar to most Marylanders involved with the modern-day organization. These offices, however, have done much more than simply provide a workspace for the Executive Director and staff, a meeting space for members and affiliates, and a headquarters for the Association. The buildings themselves help to tell MACo's story, and all four have rich histories of their own.

The University of Maryland – College Park

As previously mentioned, the Association opened its first office at the University of Maryland, College Park in June 1960. Through a joint agreement with the University, the Association was provided with temporary office space in Symons Hall, home to the Agriculture and Entomology Departments and formerly named the Poultry Building. In June 1960, Executive Secretary Lovelace reported to the Executive Committee on the "establishment of the [first] office in Symons Hall pending completion of the new Business and Public Administration Building." SACCOM would relocate the office from Symons Hall to the new building in February 1961.

The remainder of the Association's stay on campus, through August 1966, was spent in that Business Administration building. Those offices included a "suite of four air-conditioned, elevator-served rooms on the fourth (top) floor" and the Board of Directors agreed that the building was the "class of the campus." Neighbors included the Maryland Municipal League (MML) and the Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS). These offices were ideal for the new organization's purposes, but by 1966, staffing needs, space issues, and the intensified responsibilities of the Executive Secretary dictated that a new office be sought.

The Move to Annapolis

At their June 1965 meeting, Board members discussed the future of the Association and the need for increased visibility in Annapolis regarding legislative issues. The Board instructed Executive Secretary Bill Ratchford to develop background information and costs for moving the Association office to Annapolis. Such a move would enable the Executive Secretary to devote full time to the Association's work.

Ratchford submitted a proposal for the Annapolis move to the Board at their August 1965 meeting. He suggested that the office space "should be located as close as possible to the State House" to best address the legislative issues that had, in significant part, fueled the move.

The next step in the moving process was to determine a funding source for supporting the new offices. As previously discussed, the University had not only paid half of the Executive Secretary's salary, but had provided the office space free of charge. Now the Association would need a plan for covering those expenses on their own. Fiscal provisions called for a dues increase

from \$50 to \$100 per county and that the "office would be financed by contributions of each county in such amounts as determined by the Board of Directors." Ratchford prepared a six-month budget (January 1, 1966 to June 30, 1966) and a 12-month budget (July 1, 1966 to June 30, 1967) to offer the Board several options for realistically financing a new location.

Ultimately, of the many "sliding scale" options for county contributions, skillfully drafted by Executive Secretary Ratchford, final approval went to a \$500 per county fixed assessment, with a variable charge based on population, in addition to \$100 increased membership dues from each county. The Board approved the six-month budget, and estimated \$16,583 in revenues and \$13,873 in expenditures. The following 12-month budget reflected \$35,035 in revenues and \$41,380 in expenditures. The Board gave preliminary approval for the proposed budgets and instructed that the membership be notified for input.

Accordingly, a letter was mailed to the membership with the proposed budget for operations and allocation of costs among the counties. Association President, Caroline County Commissioner John W. Eveland noted in the letter that, "the time has come to change the emphasis of the organization from a clearing-house, informational orientation and to place more emphasis on its role as a representative spokesman before administrative and legislative bodies of the State." He wrote that, "relocating the office would enable the Executive Secretary to devote full-time to the Association's work" and that he or she wouldn't be "restricted in working with the General Assembly by [the] position with the University."

Following the membership's approval of the budget at the 1965 Annual Summer Meeting, the Association notified the University of its intent to discontinue the arrangement with the University and move the office to Annapolis. It was an amicable parting. In his response to the Board in October 1965, University of Maryland President Wilson H. Elkins noted that "from our point of view, the relationship . . . has been both pleasant and, I think, profitable."

At their November 18, 1965 meeting at the Maryland Inn in Annapolis, Board members approved a bylaws amendment "to reflect the movement of the office to Annapolis." That winter, on January 12, 1966, the membership also approved bylaw changes that reflected the dues increase and the restructuring of the Association's fiscal year to July 1 through June 30. Plans ensued for the move to the State Capital.

5 State Circle

In the spring of 1966, Ratchford visited and considered several office locations in downtown Annapolis, including the corner of Main and Francis Streets, 228 Main Street, 5 State Circle, a two-room office above Tilghman's jewelry store on State Circle, an office on West Street, and the second floor of the Weems Building on Maryland Avenue. The 5 State Circle location, containing 900 square feet of office space on the first floor, was the first choice of the Board of Directors, who advised Ratchford to secure a lease. He negotiated the first lease at 5 State Circle for the bargain price of \$252 per month.

It was important that both the lease and the new office be settled before the Winter Meeting and the beginning of the 1967 General Assembly Session. The April 1966 *Courthouse News* reported that the Association would officially open the new headquarters at 5 State Circle on August 1, 1966, following the unusually early Summer Meeting in Ocean City in June of that year.

Two years later, Ratchford reported to the Board that he had negotiated a new, five-year lease at 5 State Circle with landlord Ronald C. Paape at \$312 per month, beginning February 1968. The organization would remain at that office until the next move to 169 Conduit Street in October 1973.

Court records about the 5 State Circle property and building revealed only sketchy details. The building was known to house such businesses as Beazley's Delivery Service, the Fashion Lounge Beauty Shop, a temporary employment agency, a collections agency, and medical and dental offices. The League of Women Voters has confirmed that their organization occupied part of the second floor for a short period, but did not have the exact dates; otherwise the upper level was vacant during the Association's tenure there. MCCA occupied the first floor of the building with access to half of the basement for storage.

Just a few years before 5 State Circle became MCCA's home, it was also the home of an Annapolis institution: the photography studios of M. E. Warren. Warren, a renowned photographer of architecture, life, and history in Annapolis since 1947, operated his studio on the building's second floor from 1954 until 1959. Just a few of his many notable artistic and archival accomplishments include The Bay Project, "an effort to document the critical condition" of the Chesapeake Bay; the donation to the Maryland State Archives of "over 100,000 black and white negatives and prints;" and several books of Annapolis photographs.

Twenty-four years after MACo relocated from 5 State Circle, the century-old building was completely destroyed. A notorious five-alarm fire that ravaged several buildings on Annapolis's Main Street in December 1997 took 5 State Circle along with it. In a letter to the author of this history, Ratchford recounted a mystifying coincidence surrounding MACo's early home:

On the day the fire destroyed 5 State Circle, I was being honored at a ceremony on the first floor of the State House where a portrait of me was being unveiled. I recall looking out of the window as the flames began to come out of the building and thinking how strange it was. I was being honored at the end of my career and the building where I began was going up in smoke.

Although there was no serious discussion over the next few years about moving the MACo office again, the Maryland Municipal League (MML) approached MACo in 1970 to propose an arrangement. MML inquired as to whether the Association would be interested in sharing office space and some personnel in their newly purchased Maryland Avenue building. According to the October 1970 MACo Board meeting minutes, MML planned to "improve the building, purchase ...sophisticated office equipment, and increase its staff." Citing concerns that the sharing of office space and equipment would actually increase expenditures, and that the Association still had two and a half years remaining on their lease at 5 State Circle, the Board determined that the proposed arrangement was not feasible. Given the tenuous relationship between the two organizations at that time, perhaps more than financial considerations impacted the decision.

Commenting on the MML offer, then Baltimore City Council Fiscal Adviser Janet Hoffman told the Board that she anticipated that an unspecified Mayor's Task Force would need additional space in Annapolis soon. Hoffman suggested that if the Association decided to acquire new or expanded quarters, she believed the City would be interested in making "appropriate arrangements

for cooperative use of space and equipment." However, there is no record of such an arrangement being pursued further.

By 1971, those offers of assistance in sharing office space, staff, and equipment had prompted Board members to begin thinking about the future of the headquarters office. Once again, increasing staff was one of the first issues that the members wanted to address. Howard County Commissioner James M. Holway requested that the Board draft a budget including the hiring of additional staff to help increase MACo's legislative effectiveness.

The membership approved the ensuing "Holway Resolution" during the Summer Meeting on August 28, 1971. At the Board's October 27 meeting that fall, Executive Secretary Joe Murnane was directed to draft alternative budget proposals, one reflecting the current staffing level, and another reflecting the "Holway Resolution" request for two additional staff members.

As before, when the Association first hired full-time staffers, more staff meant a challenging issue for the Association: office space. Ratchford recalled that the 5 State Circle office was "too small... great for only two people." Former staff member Mavis Spence, who worked with Murnane, remembered that, "Joe told the Board that we had to hold meetings, including the Legislative Committee meetings, in restaurants. We needed more space to house additional staff and add a lobbyist." Photos and board minutes from this era indicate that the Maryland Inn at the top of Main Street was a popular gathering spot for these meetings.

At their August 24, 1972 meeting, Board members discussed the approved FY 1971-1972 budget, which included the addition of two new staff members as prompted by the Holway Resolution. But Board members echoed Executive Secretary Murnane's concern that the current offices were inadequate to house more staff. "The Association is not now able to both buy a building and employ additional personnel that the budget calls for," noted the Board minutes. The obvious first step was to attempt to find adequate rental space.

169 Conduit Street

During that search, Spence remembers that Murnane and the Building Committee members and "began walking the streets, looking for another building." Many frustrating attempts to find adequate rental office space had proved unsuccessful, but several sites, all in need of extensive renovation, were available for sale at affordable prices. Building Committee members MACo President Charles E. Miller of Howard County, George Aud of St. Mary's County, Marion McCoy of Anne Arundel County, and Mark O. Pilchard of Worcester County examined several sites in downtown Annapolis, including buildings on Duke of Gloucester Street, South Street, Main Street, and 169 Conduit Street. Of those, the Committee determined that if the Association were to purchase a building, then, the Conduit Street location was the best choice, costing \$60,000 and containing 3,000 square feet of usable space. It was also a short walk to the State House, an important factor when considering that increasing legislative activity was important to the Association. The century-old building, however, was in dire need of renovation, and had been vacant for some time. The cost of purchasing the building and the restoration would require substantial restructuring of the intended budget.

The Board voted to recommend to the membership that the Building Committee proceed with the purchase of 169 Conduit Street and that the employment of additional personnel be delayed

until the next fiscal year. They further decided that the Fiscal Year 1972-1973 budgeted salaries of \$24,000 for new staff members be deferred and instead be designated for a down payment on the 169 Conduit Street building.

In November, Murnane reported that the sellers would not accept less than the \$60,000 selling price but the area was adequately zoned for the planned use of the building. He further noted that, "reasonable assurances had been given that a tax exemption would be granted," and that, "Maryland National Bank had agreed to finance the purchase price plus a percentage of the necessary improvements."

Two bids on such "necessary improvements" had been received, one from Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc. for \$70,000 and the other from Patrick Kelly & Son from Baltimore for \$35,000 which "provided for more in the way of improvements than did the other bid." At that November 1972 meeting, the Board asked Murnane to request specific plans and a final bid from Patrick Kelly. That bid, based on further consideration of the specific renovations by the contractor, was increased by \$23,000. The Board approved further delay of staff employment, citing the need to spend those funds instead on renovations, and accepted the revised bid for \$58,700.

Executive Secretary Murnane was authorized by the Board to represent MACo at the settlement on December 27, 1972. An \$85,000 loan was obtained from Maryland National Bank for the first mortgage. The note would be repaid over a 15-year period at 8% with monthly payments of \$812.31.

Patrick Kelly & Son did all of the major work necessary for renovation, according to former staff member Spence, but Murnane himself designed the renovations. Spence recalled that there was "no architect... we used [our] footsteps to mark the rooms... where the desks would go." Because of the building's historical status, there were renovating restrictions; it was important to preserve everything, from the façade to the doorknobs. The budget allowed only for basic, practical changes to the building, including installing a security system, widening the stairs, and removing the walls in the front area to create one large room. The result was a unique combination of rooms and purposes. Spence remembers that the existing structure featured a boardroom "set up like a meeting room for a lodge," and an "enormous kitchen for suppers."

The Lucas Brothers Company of Baltimore helped with the interior decorating, especially the walls and carpet, which were originally a golden mustard color. Murnane and the staff collected framed photographs of each county courthouse and each county seal for display in the public areas of the headquarters, where they are located today. By August, Murnane reported that the renovations were "progressing very well" and occupancy would be possible as early as September 15. It was agreed that Association offices be closed for two days for the transition.

Once MACo moved in, the Board initially rented out the second floor to an unrecorded renter for an unspecified amount of time, and the unfinished basement was used only for storage. When the new MACo offices were finally opened in October 1973, a grand reception was held, celebrating what Spence called the staff's "labor of love."

Dedicated as the Joseph J. Murnane Building in September 1978, it is listed on the National Historic District Site and Building Survey and is also listed on Historic Annapolis's list of historic buildings. During the dedication ceremony, then MACo President, Prince George's County

Councilman Frank Francois unveiled the plaque on the exterior of the building. In remarks to the group, Acting Governor Blair Lee, III expressed his respect for the building's patriarch Joe Murnane and his contribution to the Association. A reception for state and local dignitaries was held in the second floor Library.

Murnane's widow, Sara, attended the dedication of the building. Her husband had passed away just a few months earlier after a long battle with stomach cancer. Two plaques, an exterior one that simply reads "The Joseph J. Murnane Building" and an interior plaque that commemorates the dedication of the building, hang at the MACo offices today.

Finally, on January 1, 1988, MACo retired its \$85,000 mortgage on 169 Conduit Street after paying \$812.31 monthly since its purchase in 1972. Executive Director Raquel Sanudo reported that fact to the Board of Directors at their January 27 meeting, and recorded in the minutes that "all directors present celebrated this very momentous occasion." Proud that the organization was able to pay its debt in full, Sanudo said that the staff held a ceremony to which they invited Governor William Donald Schaefer and literally burned the mortgage note.

A Building That Tells a Story

In historic downtown Annapolis, the structure at 169 Conduit Street is a building that has survived many years, many uses, and many changes. Many stories exist about the history of the building. Twenty-year MACo staff veteran Mickey Geisler believed the building once served as a feed store, and later as a soup kitchen. Former staff member Mavis Spence remembered hearing that the building used to be a women's group lodge during the Civil War. While neither staff member could remember precisely, their memories were not far from the truth. The property and the building itself both have a diverse history.

Research reveals that the 169 Conduit Street property is situated directly opposite a landmark of significance concerning the U.S. Constitution. This was the site of the "Annapolis Convention" that took place September 11-14, 1786 at what was then Mann's Tavern, now the Masonic Lodge. An exterior building plaque documents the historical significance:

Just north of this building, facing Main Street, stood Mann's Tavern where twelve delegates from five states met in 1786 to discuss commercial problems of the new nation. Their call for another convention in Philadelphia to render the Government 'Adequate to the exigencies of the Union' resulted in the creation of 'The Constitution of the United States of America.'

In a plan of the city of Annapolis dated July 28, 1718, the north side of Conduit Street was included as "Parcel No. 47." While Parcel No. 47 changed hands several times in the 1700s, the earliest record dates from 1788 when James Carroll advertised "lots for lease fronting on Conduit Street opposite the new and elegant building of George Mann." In 1792, John Hyde advertised his boot and shoemaking business in the *Maryland Gazette* as "in Conduit Street opposite George Mann's new building." It is believed that the original building that occupied the MACo lot was burned in one of many city fires.

The current building is representative of Victorian Italianate architecture, and although the Historic Annapolis Foundation has dated it as "late Victorian," evidence suggests it was built prior

to 1866. County land records do not go back earlier than 1839. The earliest deed, dated June 5, 1866, confirmed that Lewis Tydings and his wife Elizabeth G. Tydings owned the property. According to the deed, the couple sold the property for \$1 to their daughter, Elizabeth V. Davis, who married Samuel Davis, owner of the adjoining property.

169 Conduit Street was home to several different trades through the years. Following John Hyde's "boot and shoe-making business" in the 1790s, Lewis Tydings kept a tailor shop, and Samuel Davis was a "tobacconist" who could "provide gentlemen with the best Scotch snuff." Beginning in 1905, the building was jointly owned by R. R. Magruder and William Fennimore Childs, who operated a grocery known as "R. R. Magruder." After R. R. Magruder died, the building and the family grocery were renamed "W. F. Childs and Sons," and passed down to co-owners William F. Childs and G. Roland Childs.

Notwithstanding the emphasis on trade, early non-commercial ventures had their place in the property's history. Samuel Davis was "one of the publishers of the Maryland Republican," R. R. Magruder's son Daniel became Chief Justice of the Circuit Court, and William F. Childs, Jr. became Chief Engineer of the State Roads Commission.

Between the years 1943 and 1972, the "Capitol Council Number 92— Daughters of America, Inc." owned the building. Although owned by the Daughters of America, 1949 City records list the occupant as "Eddie Leonard Sporting Goods Company." In addition to the Daughters of America, 1960s records show that the property was occupied by a miscellany of philanthropic or religious organizations including the County Unitarian Fellowship Church, Metropolis No. 17, Rebekah Lodge No. 173, and the Anne Arundel County Chapter of the American Red Cross.

The office space has since been renovated and repaired, with meeting space added, and office space created. Changing times and a growing organization have necessitated these changes and continue to affect the operation at 169 Conduit Street.

The Flood

Shortly after Executive Director David Bliden was hired in 1991, a water pipe burst in the building located next to 169 Conduit Street, which was vacant at the time. The pipe spewed water into the surrounding area, including the basement at the neighboring MACo office. Because the basement was not frequently visited, more than a foot of water covered the floor before the damage was discovered days later.

MACo staff member Karen Lowe remembers that that damage was discovered during a Wednesday Legislative Committee meeting in January during the General Assembly Session. The Annapolis Fire Department was called in to pump out knee-high water from the basement, where MACo records and supplies floated about. Former MACo staff member Doris Campbell "pulled up her pants above her knees and went into the water" to salvage as much information and materials as possible, said Lowe. Countless old records and materials were destroyed, not to mention the extent of the damage to the room's floor and walls, and room itself.

Renovations ensued with the collection of insurance payments, and today, the basement is still used for storage, but the records are kept well above "the water line." "The Flood" remains a

type of urban legend for MACo staff members as it is often blamed when archive information cannot be found and becomes more of a tragedy with each telling of the story. In fact, some information pertaining to this particular history was certainly “lost to the flood.”

Recent Expansions and Improvements

Not since the initial renovations in 1973 had any major improvements been made to the physical structure at 169 Conduit Street, though in June 1994, the entire office was painted and re-carpeted. In 1984 the Board of Directors appointed a committee, chaired by Anne Arundel Council member Maureen Lamb, to investigate the availability, cost, and desirability of relocating to another, larger facility, or constructing an addition to the rear of the current office. The Board wanted to evaluate these possibilities to accommodate growth in anticipation of retiring the debt in 1987, but decided not to undertake either major change at that time. Again in 1999, the Association began exploring the possibility of relocating the MACo office to a larger facility to accommodate a growing staff and mounting needs. The June 22, 2000 Board of Directors minutes reflect Frederick County Commissioner Terre Rhoderick’s recommendation to abandon efforts to “purchase two floors of the adjoining condo office building, as directed by MACo’s 5-year finances plan.” Commissioner Rhoderick instead preferred pursuing internal rehabilitation immediately, suggesting that MACo “continue efforts to rehabilitate and expand the existing building with future consideration of acquiring the building next door on the other side,” now owned by the Maryland Retail Merchants’ Association.

After careful and lengthy consideration of a variety of addition and renovation ideas, the decision was ultimately made to renovate the existing space to add an additional office and workstation, and to overhaul the kitchen. That renovation took place in early 2001 and was completed just after the 2001 MACo Summer Conference.

Technology

Today the MACo office staff is equipped with desktop Internet access and email, high-speed computers, and modern software, fax machines, and copiers. This level of technology has been a fairly recent development. While technology advances were mainstreaming into America’s offices in the 1970s, MACo had been slow to follow the trend. It was not until May 1983 that then Executive Director Tee O’Connor reported to the Board that she was meeting with a consultant to finalize plans to purchase a computer. After its purchase, it remained the only computer in the MACo office for many years. When Sanudo was Executive Director, she remembers that fellow staff member Chip McLeod “would bring in his Apple computer from home, because it was a much more efficient way to get work done than what we had at that time.” By 1994, every staff member had a computer, a 286 system with a 13-inch black and white monitor. By 2002, every MACo staff member had a modern desktop computer, Internet access, a printer, and faxing and emailing capability from the desktop. *Technology at MACo is discussed further in Chapter 7.*

The Beast

Once computer upgrades in the office were well underway, Executive Director David Bliden’s attention began to focus on other equipment in the office that was grossly outdated. Most notable among archaic items was a temperamental Kodak 225 copier, fondly referred to as “The Beast” by MACo staff. A large, awkward, and loud machine, “the beast” dominated the workspace

for many years in the large workroom, located in the back of the MACo office. Sharing that space as late as 1996 was an antique “Addressograph,” still used as late as 1995 to manually hand-punch metal plates with names and addresses that were later transposed onto mailing labels. By October 1999 the Board approved the purchase of a smaller, quieter and more efficient replacement copier for “The Beast.” At the same time, it was determined that "large printing jobs" would now be contracted out to the Maryland Department of General Services (DGS), located in Baltimore, further closing the chapter on “The Beast” at MACo.

From College Park to Annapolis, from a new academic building to an old shoemaker’s shop, MACo’s offices have been more than space. Their walls have seen the rise and fall of local politicians, the constant discovery of new ways to look at governing Maryland, and the birth and death of State-changing legislation. These buildings are certainly an important part of MACo’s story, but more so are the men and women who have kept the offices within those buildings running.