

POPPLETON HISTORIC STUDY

B-2714

MAGI #0427145702

<u>Block</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Address</u>
238	40	851-853 Hollins Street

Approximate age

1800-1845

1845-1860

1865-1880

1880-1896

1896-on

(1921)

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Architectural</u>	<u>Condition</u>			
A	Significant-save	good	fair	poor	bad
B	Quality-Indiv./groups-save	good	fair	poor	bad
C	Important to street/groups	good	fair	poor	bad
D	Insignificant/detrimental	good	fair	poor	bad

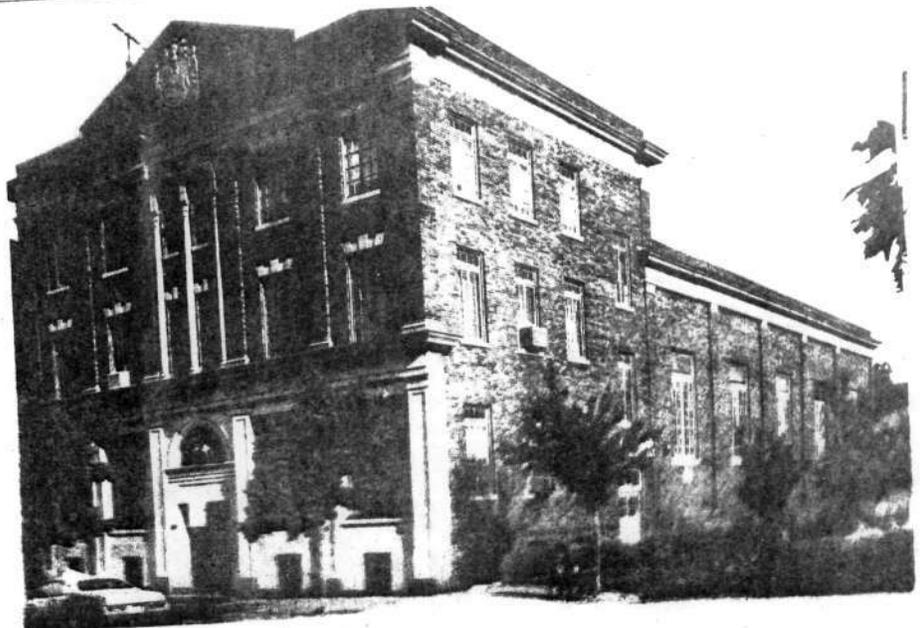
Notable features:

The history of this site shows it has long been in institutional use. The 1851 maps and the Sachse view, however, show a large building of eccentric outlines which was the mansion of Ross Winans. By 1896 this corner was described as "F. Knapp's Institute." The Knapps had earlier run a private German School in East Baltimore. They moved to this location.

The Lithuanians settled in Lloyd Street then moved to West Baltimore. The building is used, well-maintained, necessary and symbolic to the neighborhood.

Environmental context:

Across-street from truck parking lot; quiet, handsome street which deserves better on the north side than now exists.



Sun, 21 September 1924

The Lithuanian Hall -- Doric in design, erected in 1921. The Hall was built as a social, educational and political center for Lithuanians of Baltimore. The architect was Stanlaus Russell. On the stone pediment of the front of the building is carved the coat of arms of Lithuania.

Lithuanian group is culturally cut off

By EARL ARNETT

OCT 1 1973

"Sveiks," said Kestutis Chesonis as he raised his glass of viritas, a Lithuanian beverage made from almost pure alcohol, water, honey and various spices and essences.

"Cheers," replied the guest in the English equivalent to his host's toast. Thus began a conversation with Mr. Chesonis and his wife Kristina about the Lithuanian community in Baltimore.

Mr. Chesonis is a paint chemist who also calls himself an amateur historian. Born in Lithuania, he came to the United States with his parents in 1949, when he was 8 years old. Mrs. Chesonis was born in Kaunas, Lithuania. For the past two years she has served as principal of the Lithuanian Saturday language school at St. Alphonsus Church, Saratoga street and Park avenue. She visited the mother country in July to see her 80-year-old grandmother and other relatives.

"The first mention of a Lithuanian in Baltimore was 99 years ago," began Mr. Chesonis. "From the 1880's through World War I the immigration was steady. Everybody came through Ellis Island in New York, where they had basically two choices: work in the coal mines in Pennsylvania or find a trade in New York.

"It seems a few people didn't like New York and made their way down to Baltimore, which was the Southern frontier, you could say. After that it was 'I'm here, come on down.' It appears that about three quarters were involved in the tailoring business. In the 1890's in Baltimore there were about 1,000 Lithuanians, who operated about 30 tailoring shops."

Lithuania has had a long and complicated history, he explained. A predominantly agricultural country, it came into existence during the Thirteenth Century when a group of Lithuanian tribes formed a federation to resist the Teutonic Knights. They decisively defeated the knights in 1410, thus remaining the last

pagans in Europe. A pagan influence still exists in the Catholicism which did not take root in the country until the Fifteenth Century.

Lithuania and Poland established a political union in 1569, but growing Russian and Prussian strength eventually led to its collapse. Lithuania became part of the czarist empire in 1795 and was to remain under Russian control until 1915.

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The first immigrants to Baltimore were "fire brand type characters," said Mr. Chesonis, many of them veterans of the nationalist insurrection against Russia in 1905. Four or five Lithuanian newspapers were published briefly in Baltimore in the late 1800's and early 1900's, he said, including an anti-clerical, Socialist weekly. A theater group also give plays in Lithuanian from about 1900 to 1920, and the Women's Citizens Club was established to help new immigrants pass their citizenship tests.

"The first Lithuanians lived near the old Jewish section on Lombard street," he said. "The Catholic parish of St. John the Baptist was organized by Lithuanians in 1897. From 1889 to 1905 they used the old Lloyd street synagogue; then they moved to Saratoga and Paca streets and finally in 1917 to St. Alphon-

OCT 1 1973

sus. "The movement of the people was always west in the city. The main concentration was where University Hospital now is to Fulton street. Around Hollins street is still the center of the old population. The Lithuanian Hall at Hollins and Parkin streets was built in 1921 with nickels and dimes."

The Germans occupied Lithuania during World War I, but in 1918 Lithuanian nationalists proclaimed their independence from Russia and for the next two years fought against Russians, Germans and Poles to achieve it. Immigration generally stopped during the country's independence.

SUN

Chicago, particularly the area around the stockyards, housed the largest numbers of Lithuanians in the country, but those in Baltimore continued to work as tailors and develop their way of life.

Then came 1939 and the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Lithuania was occupied by Soviet troops in 1940 and admitted into the Soviet Union through blatantly rigged elections.

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The Nazis occupied Lithuania the next year during their attack on their former ally, the Soviet Union. Like all small countries in Europe with no natural barriers, Lithuania suffered while opposing armies swept back and forth.

The Soviets re-occupied the 31,600 square mile country in 1945, thus beginning another large immigration. Refugees fled to western Europe, where they lived in camps until United States immigration laws were lifted in 1949 to allow them into this country. Other Lithuanians moved to Canada or South America.

"When we showed up here in 1949 the language of the Baltimore Lithuanians was different," said Mr. Chesonis. "They spoke the older language with borrowing from Russian and other languages; it sounded quaint. We had lived in Lithu-

ania during its independence and spoke a clearer Lithuanian, which is an old language resembling Sanskrit. I can tell just by listening to a person whether he's old immigration or new immigration.

"There was some resentment by the older Lithuanians in Baltimore. The later immigrants were generally more educated. The older ones thought we had it easy."

The post World War II immigrants, perhaps as many as 700 in Baltimore, have retained an active concern over the "Russification" of their country, which they see as a fundamental violation of human rights.

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Partisans maintained an active resistance to the Soviet Union in Lithuania until the early 1950's, said Mr. Chesonis. Perhaps as many as 50,000 people wasted their lives believing that the provisions of the 1941 Atlantic Charter, promising restoration of self government in occupied countries, would be honored by the Allies, he said.

"There was guerrilla warfare until 1950," he said. "Juozas Lukša, a famous partisan whose code name was Daurmantas, was parachuted by the United States into Lithuania in 1951 but had to kill himself to avoid capture. There was no coming back; once you went out in the woods there was no return. They just died. In the early 1950's there were no letters from Lithuania; people just disappeared."

SUN

"The partisan songs tell of bodies thrown in the square to see who would claim them. Everybody showed up to mourn so nobody could be identified. Flowers would mysteriously be placed around the body during the night."

The United States and some other European countries have never recognized the Soviet annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. But for the last twenty years these countries have been passive parts of the Soviet Union. Occasional outbursts of resistance plus reports of visitors indicate that a strong nationalism still exists there, but it has no effective outlets.

The United States has often been accused of economic imperialism, said Mr. Chesonis, but the cultural imperialism practiced by the Soviets is more cruel. Suppression of religion, language and other aspects of Lithuanian culture has continued, he said, including encouragement of new settlement by Russians in order eventually to outnumber the natives.

The Lithuanians in this country are trying to perpetuate their culture, he said. Perhaps because of the threatened loss of national identity, they tend to be more clannish than some other ethnic minorities. A Lithuanian Foundation in Chicago provides funds for cultural affairs.

SUN

"In the last 10 years the Lithuanian population in Washington D. C. has been growing," he said. "Their Saturday school has around 40 students now and is growing. The Saturday school in Baltimore is stable, around 25."

"There is no new input of Lithuanians in Baltimore. This is not the place with the writers and other talented people."

The Lithuanians in Baltimore

by DR. WILLIAM F. LAUKAITIS

In 1861 the Russian government with a view to the more complete "Russification" of the Lithuanian people, forbade the printing of books and periodicals in Latin type, and which had been in use since the sixteenth century. It strongly recommended, and tried to introduce by means of the schools, the Russian type. Finally, the teaching of the Lithuanian language was strictly forbidden in the schools. These measures were enforced with a truly Draconian zeal. The possession of a Lithuanian book or calendar was deemed a sufficient cause for imprisonment or deportation to Siberia, solely on the judgment of the administration or without any court proceeding. These, together with the desire to escape military duty are the main reasons why emigration from Lithuania started as early as 1868.

Emigration of the Lithuanians to the City of Baltimore began sometime in the early part of the year of 1881, and within five years thereafter, some two hundred and fifty (250) person met and organized what was at that time known as The Saint John the Baptist parish, and invited a Reverend Polianski, of Texas, to head their congregation. In 1887 the first fraternal beneficial organization, known as The Saint John's Beneficial Society, was organized with a membership of 250. It was this organization which was responsible for the purchase of the first Lithuanian house of worship in Baltimore. The society purchased an old synagogue located on Lloyd Street in East Baltimore, which was readily renovated and turned out to be what was known as Saint John the Baptist Church.

It was in the early nineties that the great tide of emigration felt itself in the eastern cities of the Atlantic Coast. In 1891 the Lithuanian population in Baltimore had increased to some five thousand and the desire and urge was felt for a larger place of worship and meeting house.

A few years later the church was moved from the Lloyd Street location to the corner of Paca and Saratoga, where it was located until the early part of 1915.

In the early part of 1900 the six or seven then existing beneficial organizations, together with the fraternal bodies, purchased a building on West Barre street, in South Baltimore, to be used as a meeting place and civic center for the colony, which at that time was located in the immediate vicinity thereof. In 1921 the new Lithuanian Hall, located at Hollins and Parkin streets was built. This building, bought and built by the joint contributions of the various beneficial and fraternal orders and the people as a whole, represents an outlay of some three



Old American Building

hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00) toward a civic enterprise.

The Lithuanian, who is fundamentally thrifty and saving, as early as 1906, felt the desire to organize an institution whereby the saver could purchase as the result of his savings a home for himself and his family. On February 8th, 1906, a special meeting was called by some of the outstanding Lithuanians among whom was Joseph Vasilauckas, Vladislovas Dreiginas, Vincas Kilinkevicius, Mathew Kilinkevicius, John Damukaitis, George Zebrauckas, Vincent Aleksa, Joseph Danielus,

Frank Bubnis, Anthony Mondravickis, Ambrose Lauis, and the Reverend Joseph Lietuvnikas (who later became the pastor of the church), and the organization of what is now known as the First Lithuanian Building Association of Baltimore City was started. Since its inception this institution has been represented by the Honorable William F. Broening (now Mayor of the City of Baltimore), under whose guiding influence the Association has rapidly progressed until now it has capital assets of almost a million of dollars. At the present time there are four Lithuanian Building Associations in the city, representing a total capitalization of three millions of dollars, and paying an annual dividend of six per cent to its members. It can fairly be estimated that 75 per cent of the present Lithuanian population of the City of Baltimore own their own homes. These real estate holdings can be fairly valued at about twenty-five million dollars.

At present there are about fifteen thousand (15,000) Lithuanians in the City of Baltimore. The Colony known as "Little Lithuania" is located in southwest Baltimore and the principal streets are South Paca Street, West Lombard Street, South Green Street and Hollins Street.

The Lithuanian is principally a tailor by industry and at the present time there is located in the City of Baltimore some twenty-eight Lithuanian tailoring establishments. It can be fairly estimated that some 85 per

cent of the present population is engaged in this industry.

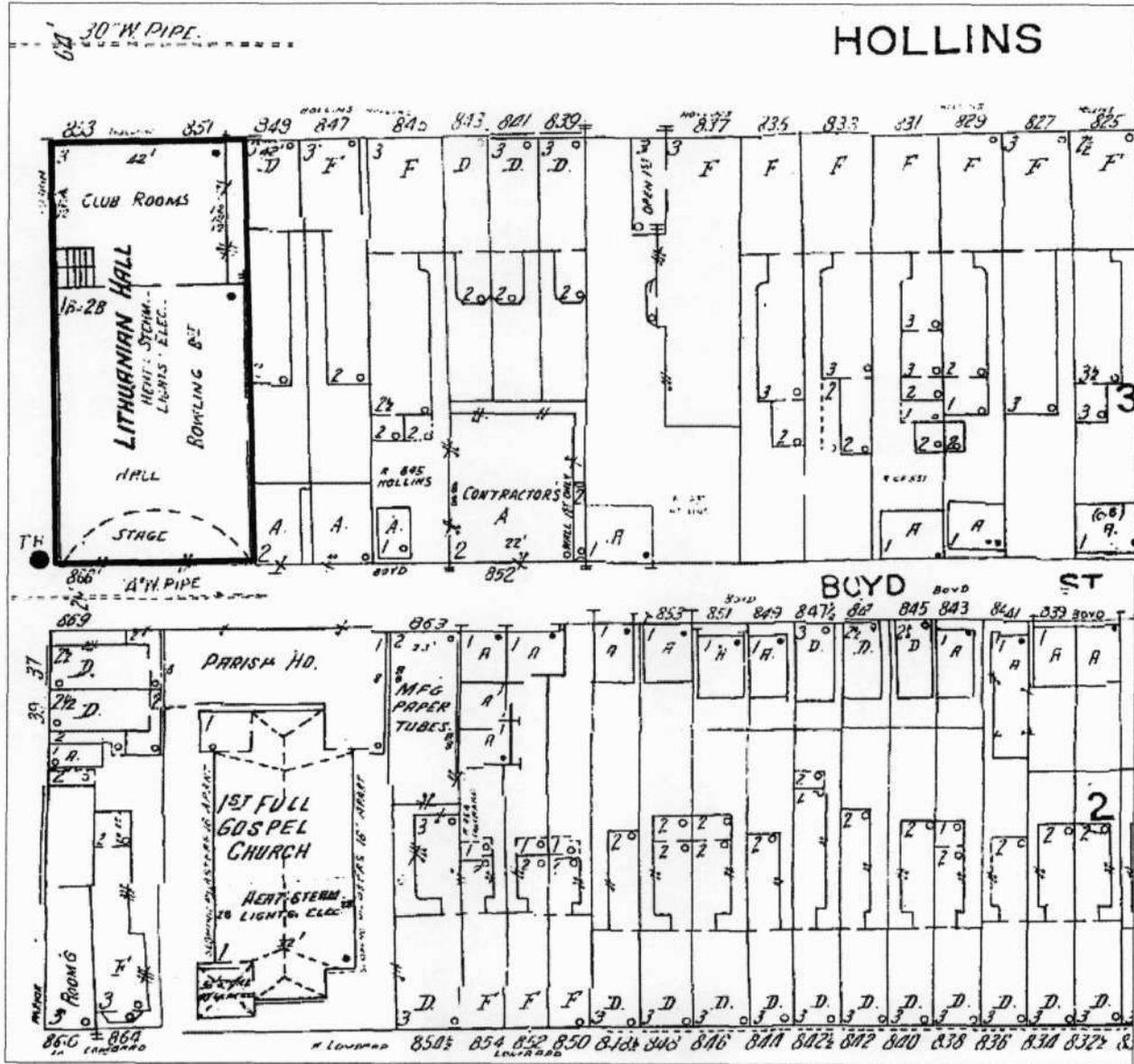
On September 7th, 1914, the Lithuanians of Baltimore realizing the necessity and duty of participating in the political life of this country and the city in which they live, organized what is now known as the First Lithuanian Republican Club of Baltimore City. In addition to this club in 1920, there was organized what is known as the Lithuanian-American Democratic Club of Baltimore City. In 1915 there was organized what is known as the Lithuanian-American Athletic Club. This institution has its club house located in the center of "Little Lithuania," and affords its members an opportunity of physical development under proper instruction.

The professional and business roster of the Baltimore Lithuanian includes the following: ten physicians, five dentists, five lawyers, four graduate nurses, four public school teachers, four civil engineers, six pharmacists, four real estate dealers, two undertakers, two photographers, two insurance and steamship agencies, eight general insurance agents, two bakeries, twelve lunch rooms, three public garages, twenty-one grocery and provision stores, six soda fountains, five confectionery stores, and twenty-eight tailoring establishments. Their civic and educational roster contains the following: one church, one school, three halls, four building associations, ten beneficial organizations, seven clubs, three local branches of fraternal organizations and one Lithuanian library.



An old fashioned sledding party- Lexington street from Charles to Calvert

B-2714
 Lithuanian Hall
 851-853 Hollins Street
 Sanborn Map, 1951, Volume 1, Sheet 15



B-2714
Lithuanian Hall
851-853 Hollins Street
Block 0238, Lot 040
Baltimore City
Baltimore West Quad

