

THE HISTORY OF THE ANNE ARUNDEL BAR ASSOCIATION

By Melvin Hoffman, past AABA Historian

The "Bar Association of Anne Arundel County, Incorporated" received its Certificate of Incorporation from the State Tax Commission of Maryland on the 7th October, 1931.

The initial meeting for the formation of the proposed Anne Arundel County Bar Association was held in the local Courtroom (which was the only courtroom at the time still located at the front of the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County building located, Church Circle, Annapolis) at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, January 2, 1931. The following 17 founding members were present at this meeting as recorded in the minutes: Judge Robert Moss; James M. Munroe; Nicholas H. Green; Ridgely P. Melvin; John S. Strahorn; Eugene P. Childs; Benjamin Michaelson; Robert Kindred; Arthur Trader; Marvin I. Anderson; Louis Strauss; Noah A. Hillman; Hyman Ginsberg; Albert Jerome Goodman; Isidore Ginsberg; James G. Woodward; and Charles Schlegel. At this meeting, James M. Munroe was elected the Association's first president, and Albert J. Goodman was elected secretary.

It was at this important meeting that local attorneys decided it was time to organize a county bar association. At the meeting, Judge Moss was asked to state, "just what could be gained by having the members of the local bar organize?" He replied, "that while by nature a pessimist, he was glad to admit that the advantages were numerous. Of particular importance is the opportunity to collectively recommend reforms to the County administration officers, that individually we would hesitate to do."

In response, "President Munroe also suggested the adoption of a Code of Ethics, whereby the client's interests would be primary, and the attorney's secondary." There is no question that our forebearers had the wisdom to set a solid foundation for us to attain today.

By 1936, the Association had grown to 28 members, and then President William J. McWilliams was tackling the issue of where to locate a bar library. A plan was mentioned to remodel part of the second story of the Court House to provide room for a bar library.

On January 2, 1937, six years to the day after the first organizational meeting, the Association's first president, James M. Munroe, passed away. At the meeting that day, the board also discussed a motion to increase the salary for the State's Attorney to \$4,000 plus \$100 a month for expenses.

By 1947, necessity was leading the way to modernization as Judge McWilliams suggested the use of microfilm to file old records in order to save space.

In 1954, a list of the Anne Arundel Bar Association's following seven committees was published: Unauthorized Practice of Law; Grievance; Judiciary; Professional Ethics; Membership; Bar Library; and Amendment of the Law. By 1959, the Association's membership list boasted 108 members.

One of the more enjoyable tasks of being historian is tracking the growth of our organization, and being on hand at our Law Day Dinner when we present Certificates for 50 and 35 years of membership and service in our association. We have grown from an organization in which the volunteer President did all of the administrative work, to the creation of a complete professional staff.

From the humble beginning in 1931 with 17 members and a Treasury of \$63.00, we are now a united group of more than 1,100. Our forbearers would be very proud of our accomplishments as an association, service to the community, and service to our clients.