

# Mount Airy: A Breezy Town

By STANLEY BAITZ  
MOUNT AIRY, Md.

**G**USTY IS the word for Mount Airy. This village of 1,100, situated along a ridge in Western Maryland, 37 miles from the District, was named after a breeze.

In the latter part of the last century, so the story goes, an Irish section boss working on the roadbed for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad immortalized himself with a chance remark about the weather:

"It's kind o' airish around here. They ought to name this place Mount Airy."

Back in those days this was considered a wisecrack of heroic proportions, and it was remembered when the time came for the local residents to incorporate into a town in 1894. Mount Airy it became.

Residents of this town along route 27 speak fondly of the ever-present wind, in much the same manner San Franciscans or Londoners might speak of their fogs, or the residents of southernmost France of their mistrals.

George Clay, 83, one of the oldest inhabitants, says, as the wind whips the words from his mouth: "Man, this is nothing. It really blows up here some times. And out on the ridge, beyond the high school, you get a good stiff breeze all the time."

Mayor Walter L. Spurrier says, with some pride, "There are precious few nights in the summer that you don't have to sleep under blankets."

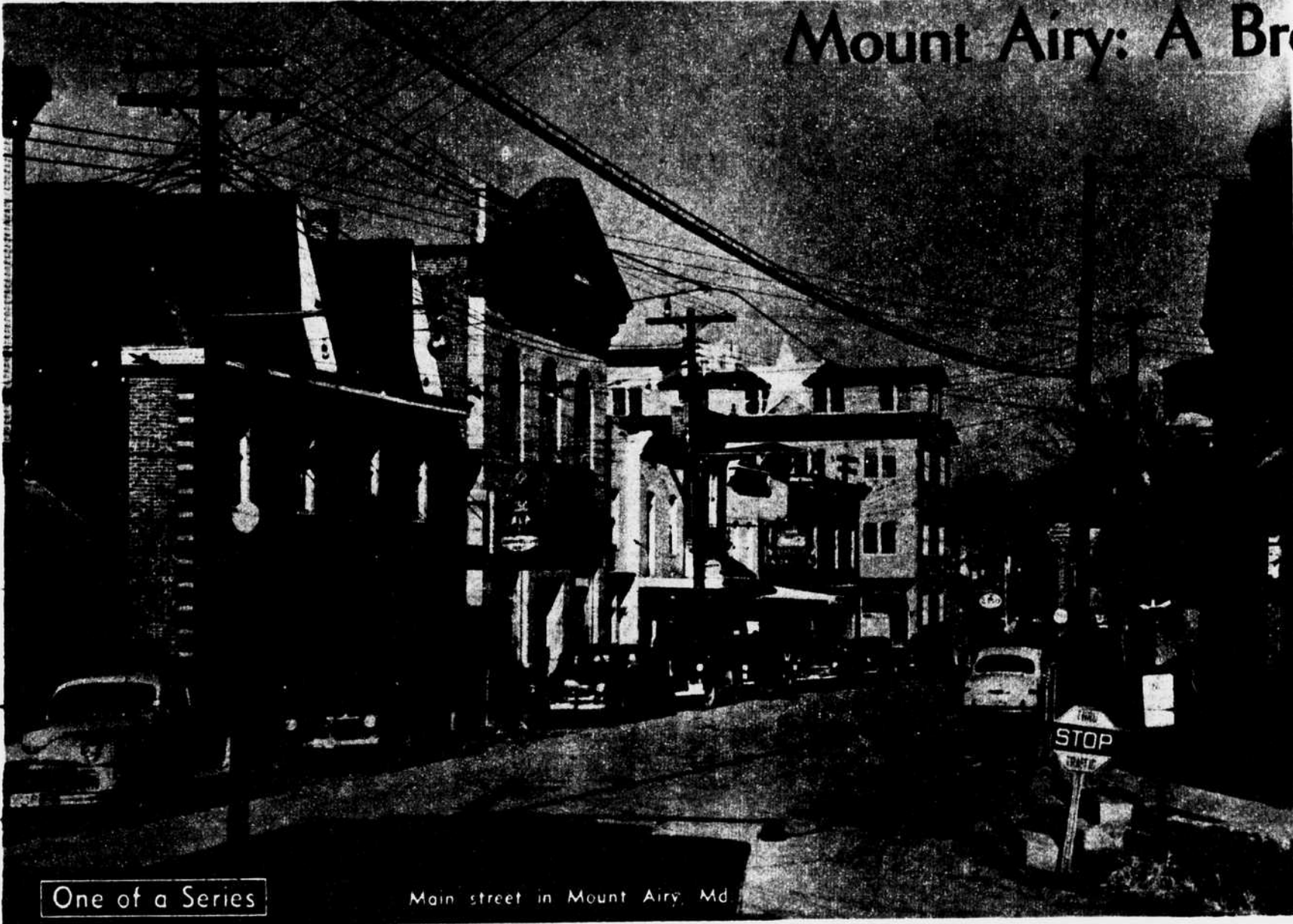
This is not to say, of course, that the inhabitants are totally preoccupied with weather. Another thing they like to talk about is professional football. Because of their geographical situation, people here split their interest between the Baltimore Colts and the Washington Redskins, with the preponderance on the side of the Colts.

The wonder is that the townsfolk find time to talk about much of anything, at least during business hours. This is a throbbing little agricultural, industrial and mercantile community, catering not only to their own but to the people of nearby towns as well: Damascus, Taylorsville, Woodbine, Unionville, Libertytown and New Market.

For instance, R. Francis Sappington, formerly a builder in Silver Spring, who owns a food locker plant, a small shoe factory and a grocery, says that in his locker plant alone he stores meats and vegetables for 575 families from the surrounding area.

"On Saturday nights this town is so chockfull of people you can hardly get through it," he says.

Mainstays of the town's industry are a pants factory, a tuxedo coat factory, a creamery and a feed mill. The latter, owned by Mr. Spurrier, provides an outlet for farmers' excess wheat and corn, some of which is shipped to Baltimore and Philadelphia. The creamery is the collecting point for milk from the sur-



One of a Series

Main street in Mount Airy, Md.



The men may wear "the pants of the family," but in Mount Airy, the women make them. This factory turns out 550 dozen pairs of work pants a week.



George Clay, 83, who says there were not more than 18 houses in Mount Airy when he settled there.



Mayor Walter L. Spurrier (left) and Robert E. Perry, a lifelong resident of the town.

