

5. Urban Services Program Files. 1965-81. 4.5 cu. ft.
Arranged topically.
6. Administrative Files, Bookmobile. 1947-present. 1 cu. ft.
Arranged topically.
7. Scrapbooks. 1946-65. 1 cu. ft. (3 vols.).
Arranged topically.

Sub-group 19. Enoch Pratt Free Library Training Class

1. Miscellaneous Records. 1928-48. 2 cu. ft.
Arranged topically.

Sub-group 20. Service Reports

1. Statistical Records. 1927-32. 4 cu. ft.
Arranged chronologically.

RG58 Street Improvement Records (1828-1924, 1953-74)

History

The original physical plan of Baltimore consisted of several streets laid out in a traditional grid pattern. As the town slowly expanded, streets were extended from the original grid. Acquisition of property for new streets was relatively easy because land was either publicly owned or worth very little. By the 1780s, however, Baltimore was growing very quickly and the process of street improvement became more complex. Dozens of streets had to be extended and many others required widening and straightening. These actions became increasingly more expensive and complex as privately owned property appreciated in value.

In 1783, the state government authorized the Baltimore Town Commissioners (RG1, RG2) to widen Hanover Lane when two-thirds of the property owners fronting the street agreed to divide the cost for the work. Money was to be collected through payments of benefits (the assessed increase in value of private property adjacent to the improved street) and a special tax levy. Damage costs (the value of private property condemned for public use) were credited to property owners against benefit charges. The process of carrying out benefit and damage assessments required the preparation of a plat detailing proposed improvements and display of a public notice of intent.

Basically the same procedure preceded every street improvement project in Baltimore for the next fifty years, except that a specially appointed team of assessors handled the job of benefit and damage assessment. The 1796 charter did not give the municipality condemnation power or the authority to levy benefit charges. Every type of street improvement requiring these actions still depended upon approval by the state.