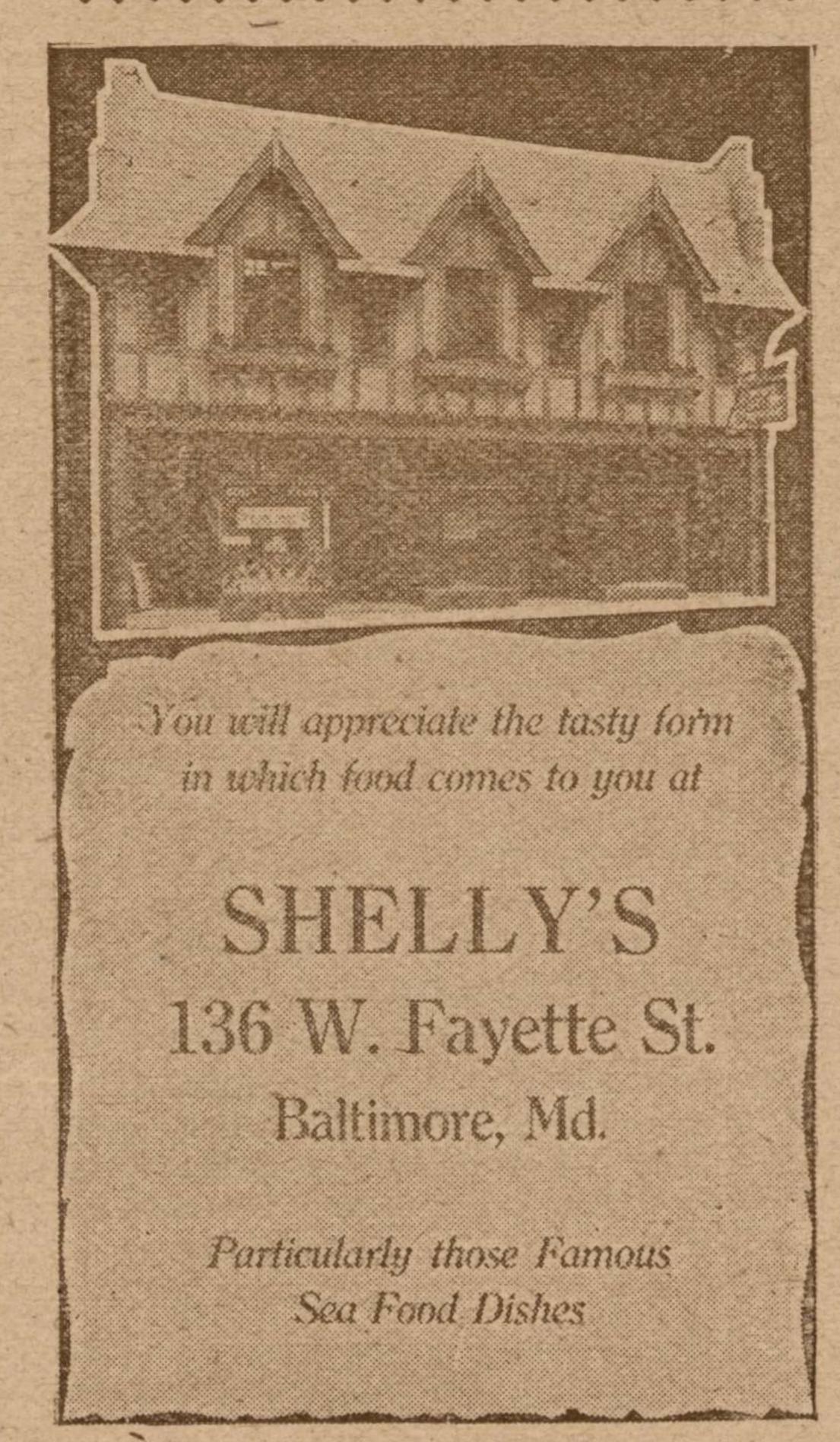
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### PEARL DIVERS AT TATOKA, JAPAN, FORM AN INTERESTING GROUP.

Are All Young Women, Vigorous And Muscular, And Preferred To Men Because They Can Stay Under Water Longer.

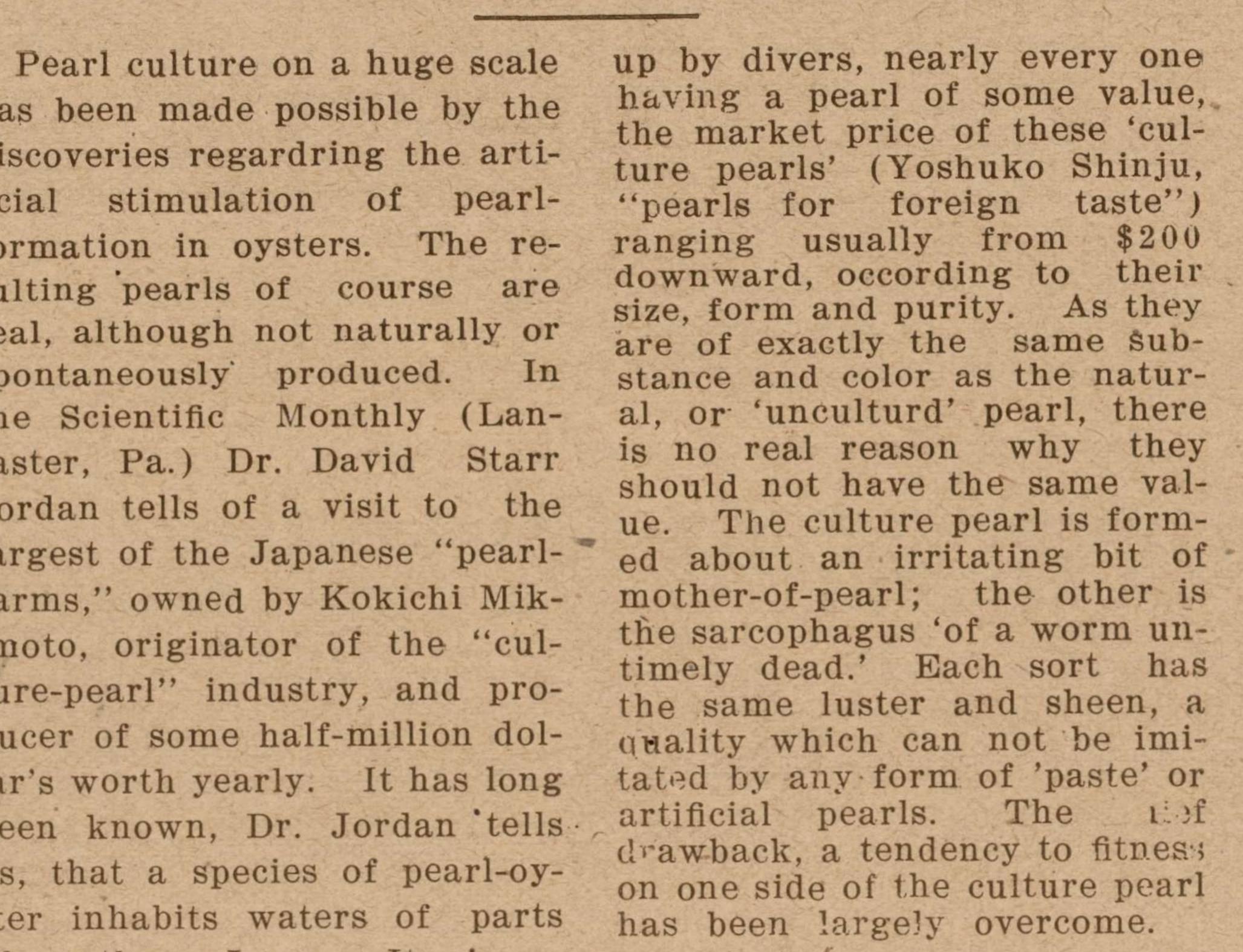
has been made possible by the discoveries regardring the artificial stimulation of pearlformation in oysters. The resulting pearls of course are real, although not naturally or spontaneously produced. the Scientific Monthly (Lancaster, Pa.) Dr. David Starr Jordan tells of a visit to the largest of the Japanese "pearlfarms," owned by Kokichi Mikimoto, originator of the "culture-pearl" industry, and producer of some half-million dollar's worth yearly. It has long been known, Dr. Jordan tells us, that a species of pearl-oyster inhabits waters of parts of southern Japan. It is a small species, much less robust than the "Panama" oyster of the Gulf of California and the west coast of Mexico. He goes on:

"The Japanese people cared little for pearls or other jewels but they have found a ready foreign market for the relatively few gathered by the pearldivers of Shima, who used to bring them in along with abalon and agar--agar, a seaweed largely used in medicine.

"In pearl fishing, Kokichi Mikomoto became early interested. It is well known that the pearl is secreted, layer by layer, from the mantle or soft nvelope of the pearl oyster to cover a form of irritation, usually that of some parasite worm. In the early nineties, Dr. Kokichi Mitsukuri, dean of the College of Science in Tokyo, suggested to Mikimoto the possibilities of producing pearls by artificial irritation. This idea was carried into practce by Prof. Isao Iijima, and Mikimoto, aided by his clever sonin-law, Dr. Nishigawa, undertook in 1880 the bold plan of pearl--farming on a great scale, a large and costly venture demanding great initial faith, the first harvst being marketed eight years later.

"Lasing the pipcturesque island of Tatoku as a base of operations, he secured the right to about fifty miles of the bays around it. A portion of this area is given to the spat or young oysters. Small stones are scattered over the bottom, and to these the newly hatchd fasten themselves by a byssus or set of threads. These are left to grow for about three years. They are then gathered and under the mantle of each is introduced a round fragment of oyster shell (mother of pearl). These are then transferred to the south side of Tatoku Island into water so deep (thirty to forty feet) as to prevent all danger of freezing. The animalss are 'planted' about a foot apart and held for some five years more, when they are brought

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"The best methods of irritating the pearl-oyster have been carefully studied, and patents of this process have been taken by Mikimoto. Following his methods several other pearl-farms have been established in similar waters elsewhere in southern Japan. Th output of the Mikimoto farm for 1921 amounted to about 1,200,000 yen (600,000). The total yield from Japan now approaches \$5,000,000 yearly.

"The pearl-divers at Tatoku form an interesting group. These are all young women from eighteen to thirty-five years of age, vigorous and muscular. It is said that the profession has become hereditary in the province of Shima. Women are preferred to men for this work, as it is claimed that they can stay under water longer (two to three minutes). Their husbands find employment in taking care of the shells and pearls, and in other duties about the island. Mikimoto's divers wear cotton suits not unlike pajamas, white cotton caps, and a large water glass for better vision. Each one as she dives from the boot has with her a floating tub in which to deposit her clutch. In the interval between plunges the divers keep up a sharp whistling, a process which is said to give thm lung-strength for their work.

"The salt water tends to

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coarsen the skin and to redden the hair, but the women seemed unusually robust, and in their way not unattractive. Like all other Jopanese, they are endlessly good-natured. These women are in their way aristocrats among divers, unlike the red-skirted, nakedshouldered water sprites who gather abalones and agar-agar of other places in Japan.

"The rearing of pearl-oysters is not without its difficulties. Star-fishes sometimes invade the beds, thrusting their protusible stomachs into the opened shell and then digesting out the animal. Carnivorous sea-snails attack the oysters, and boring worms and mollusk do their share of mischief. Sting-rays are often destructive as on ordinar yoyster beds. The growth of certain seaweeds sometimes chokes the young animal. Worst of all an invasion of a type of minute organisms from the Kuro Shiwo occurs at times.

"The harvest season pearls is in December, but Mikimoto sent out for our edification nine of the divers, each one bringing in a pearl oyster. Opening these in his summer house on the hill, a pearl was found in each one. Two of the oysters were friend for my luncheon and in one of these (very delicious by the way) I found a minute natural pearl. Our visit ended, Mikimoto gave the whole pearl catch of the day as a present to Mrs. Jordan, a friendly souvenir of a delightful and instructive vis-

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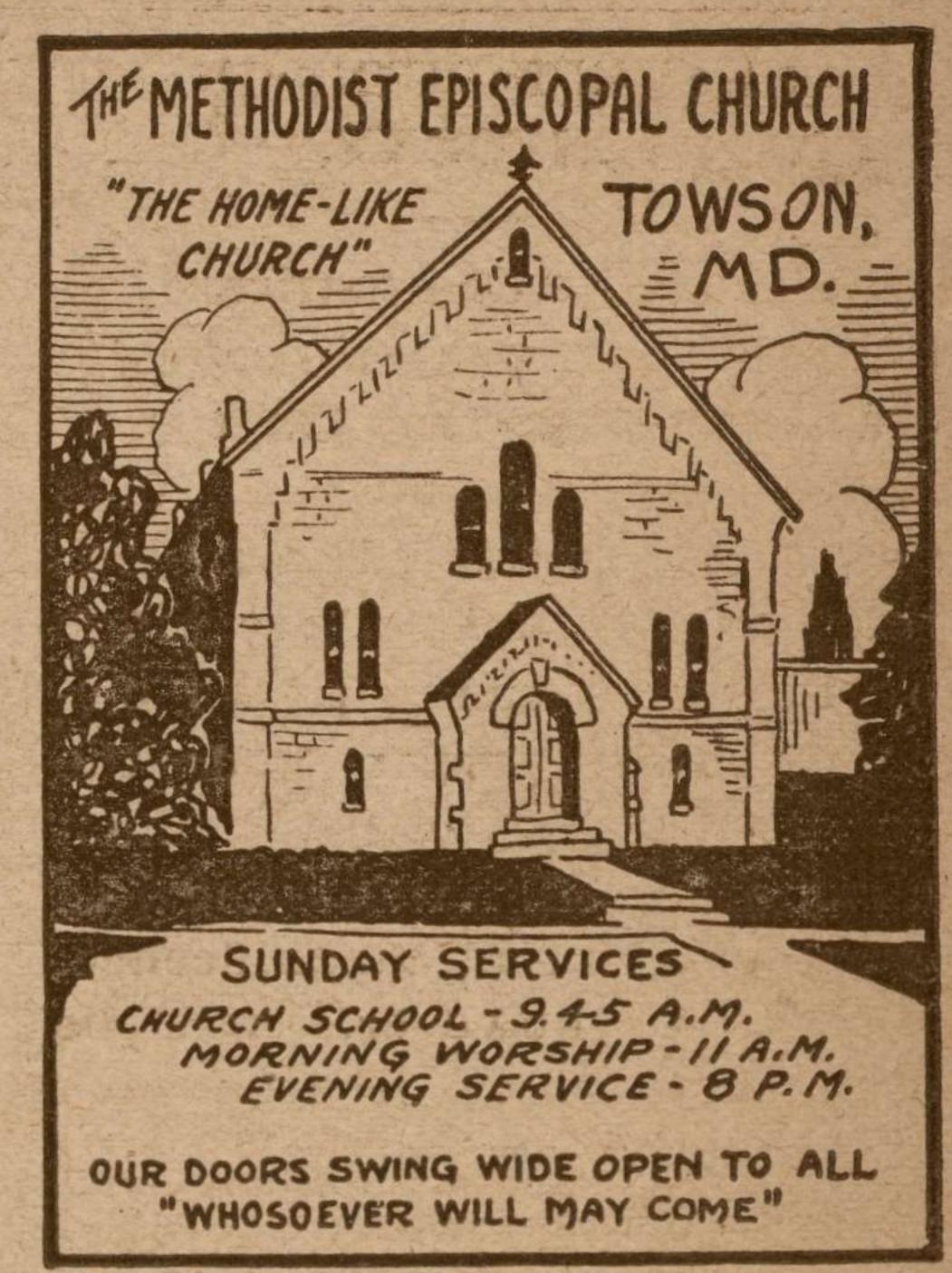
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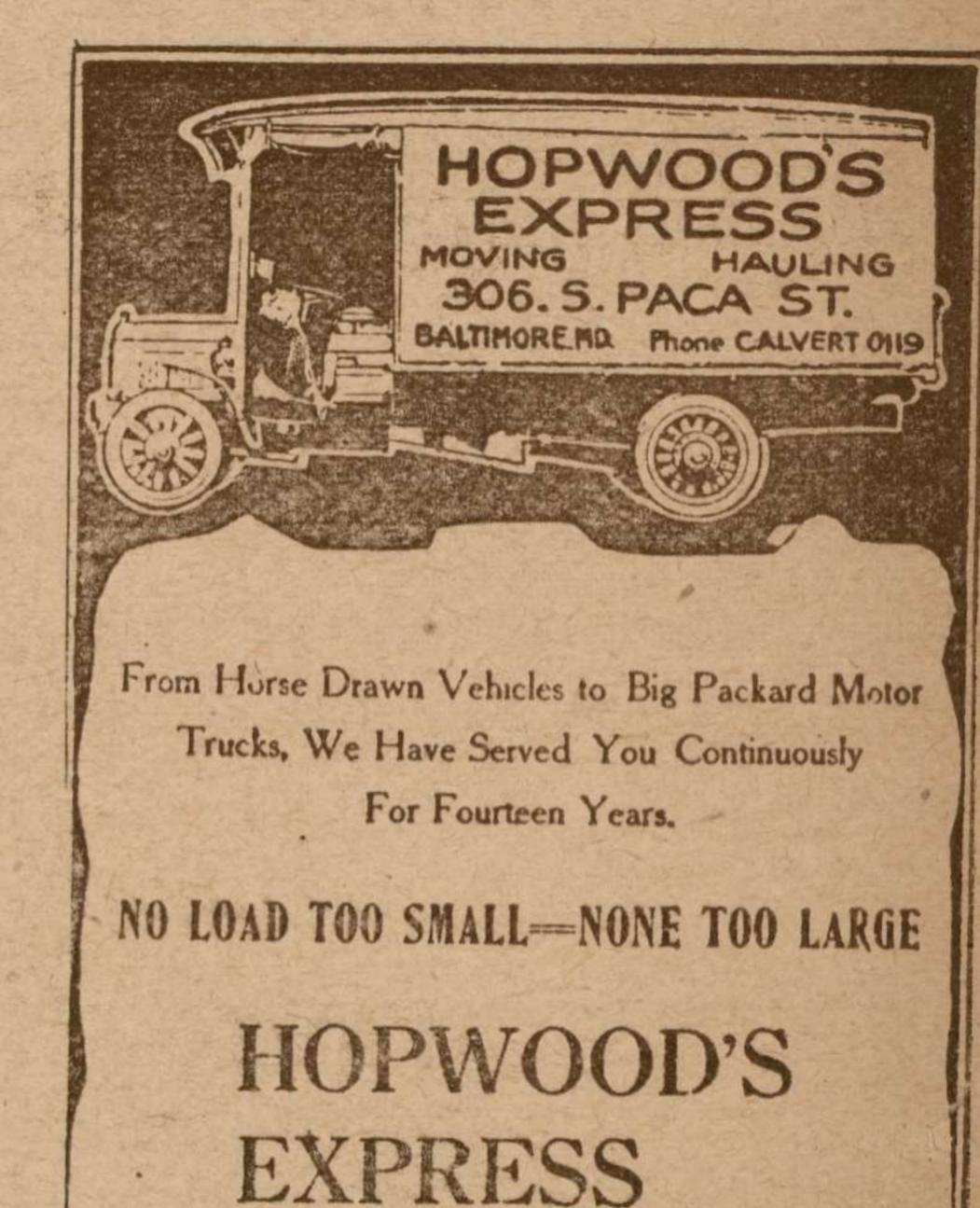


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