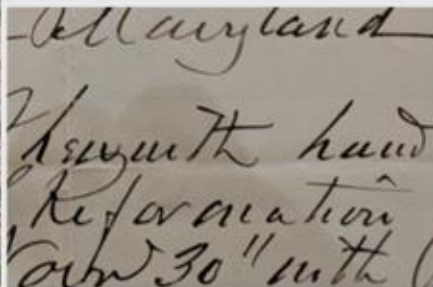


Remembering Cheltenham



Remembering Victims of Cheltenham

‘Lost to the System’

Uncovering Cheltenham’s History
Through Archival Research,
Data Analysis

Baltimore Data Day
July 17, 2026

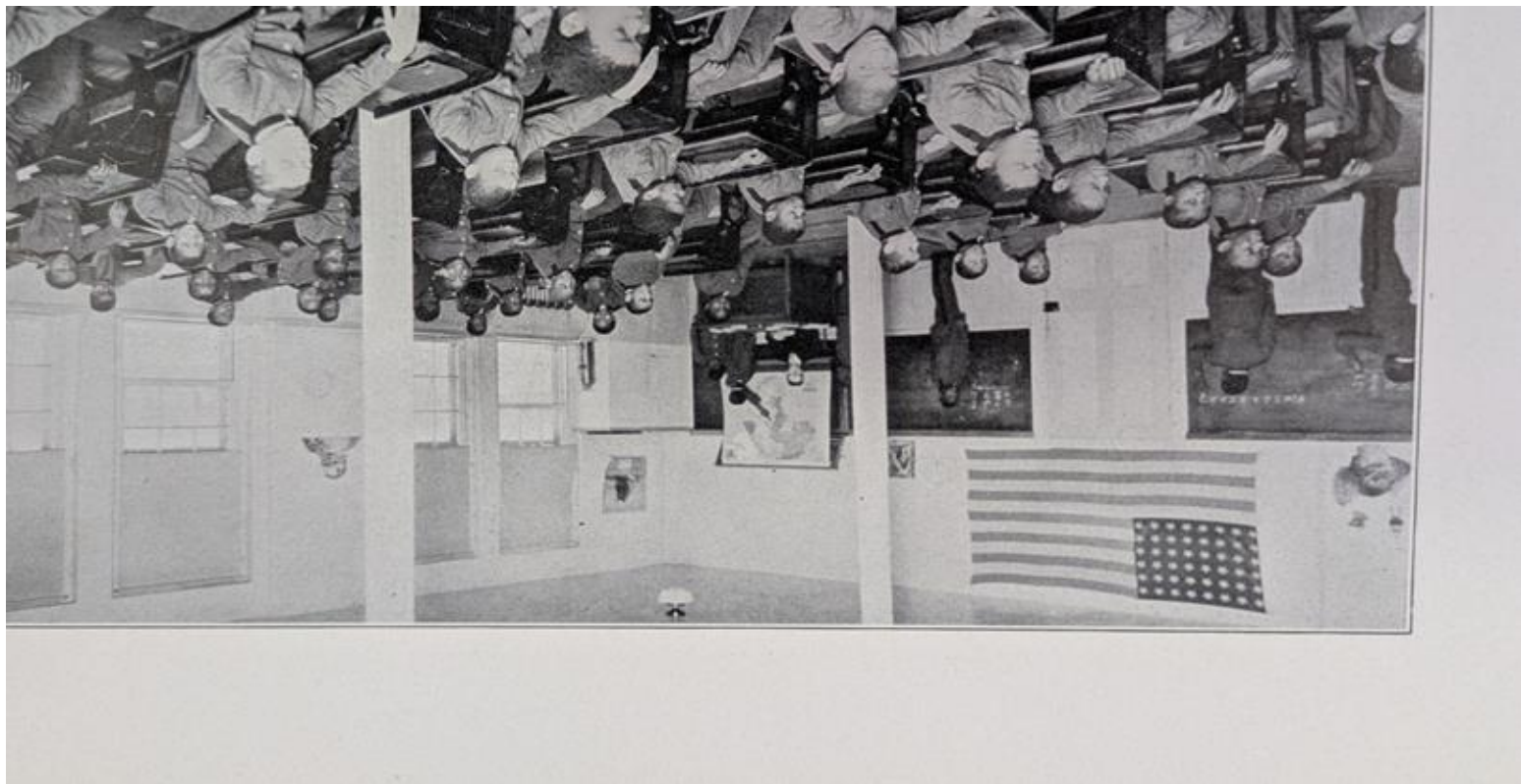


PHILIP MERRILL
COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM

Presenters

- Mara K. Bell, journalism student, Philip Merrill College of Journalism
- William Kelly, Ph.D., research archivist, Maryland State Archives
- Nicole Ramos, master's of journalism student, Philip Merrill College of Journalism
- Rob Wells, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Philip Merrill College of Journalism

1936 at Cheltenham



1913



NEW ARRIVALS



Remembering Cheltenham

Remembering Victims of Cheltenham

<https://cnsmaryland.org/cheltenham>





Capital News Service

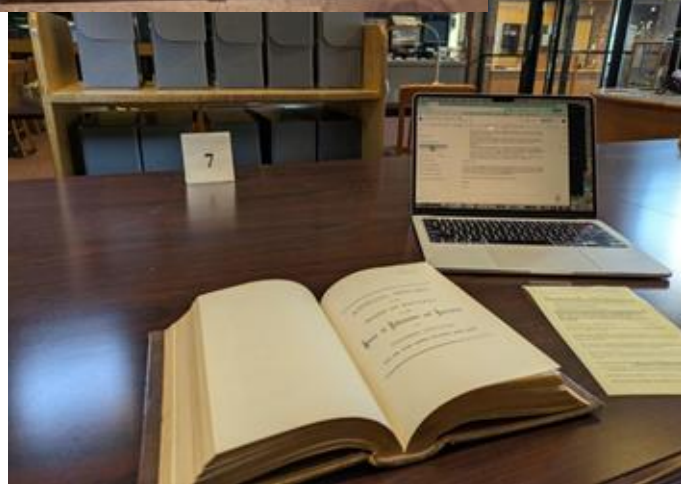
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

“Not fit for a dog’: Maryland reformatory
boys died through
years of disease, neglect”



Archives

- Maryland State Archive, Annapolis
- University of Baltimore Archives
- Thurgood Marshall Law Library, Annapolis
- Enid Pratt Central Library, Baltimore
- Baltimore City Archives, Special Collections
- Hornbake Library, University of Maryland
- NAACP online archival records
- Newspapers: The Afro-American, Baltimore Sun, Chronicling America





Data Analysis of Historical Documents

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING

N. B.—WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK.—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD. Every item of information should be carefully supplied. AGE should be stated EXACTLY. PHYSICIANS should state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

STATE OF MARYLAND—CERTIFICATE OF DEATH 01870

1. PLACE OF DEATH
 County Dorchester Registration Dist. No. 240
 Village or City Chesapeake No. 792 Ward 1
 Length of residence in city or town where death occurred. yrs. none mo. 0 (If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give in NAME, instead of street and number.)
 How long in U. S. if of foreign birth? yrs. none mo. 0

2. FULL NAME Fred Ames If U. S. Veteran, specify WAR WAR
 (a) Residence: No. --- St. --- Ward ---
 (b) (Classification of death) If nonresident give city or town and State

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS				MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
3. SEX <u>Male</u>	4. COLOR OR RACE <u>Caucasian</u>	5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED (only the word) <u>single</u>	21. DATE OF DEATH <u>Feb 1</u> 19 <u>39</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)		
6. If married, widowed, or divorced, give name of (a) wife of <u>---</u>			22. I HEREBY CERTIFY, that I attended deceased from <u>Oct 1</u> to <u>Feb 1</u> 19 <u>39</u> I last saw him alive on <u>Jan 1</u> 19 <u>39</u> death in bed		
7. AGE Years: <u>19</u> Months: <u>1</u> Days: <u>24</u> If LESS than 1 day, specify in hours, minutes, or seconds.			to have occurred on the date stated above, at <u>10 a.</u> The PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF DEATH and related causes of importance were as follows: <u>Heart disease</u> <u>Myocardial infarction</u> <u>Coronary atherosclerosis</u> Other Contributory Cause of Importance: <u>---</u>		
8. DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year) <u>Dec 8-1919</u>			11. Total time (years) spent in this occupation <u>---</u>		
9. TRADE, PROFESSION, OR PARTICULAR KIND OF WORK DONE, as DRIVER, SAYER, BOOKKEEPER, etc. <u>Immater</u>			12. (Date of onset) <u>---</u>		
10. Date (month, day, and year) of this occupation (month and year) <u>---</u>			13. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country) <u>Ind</u>		
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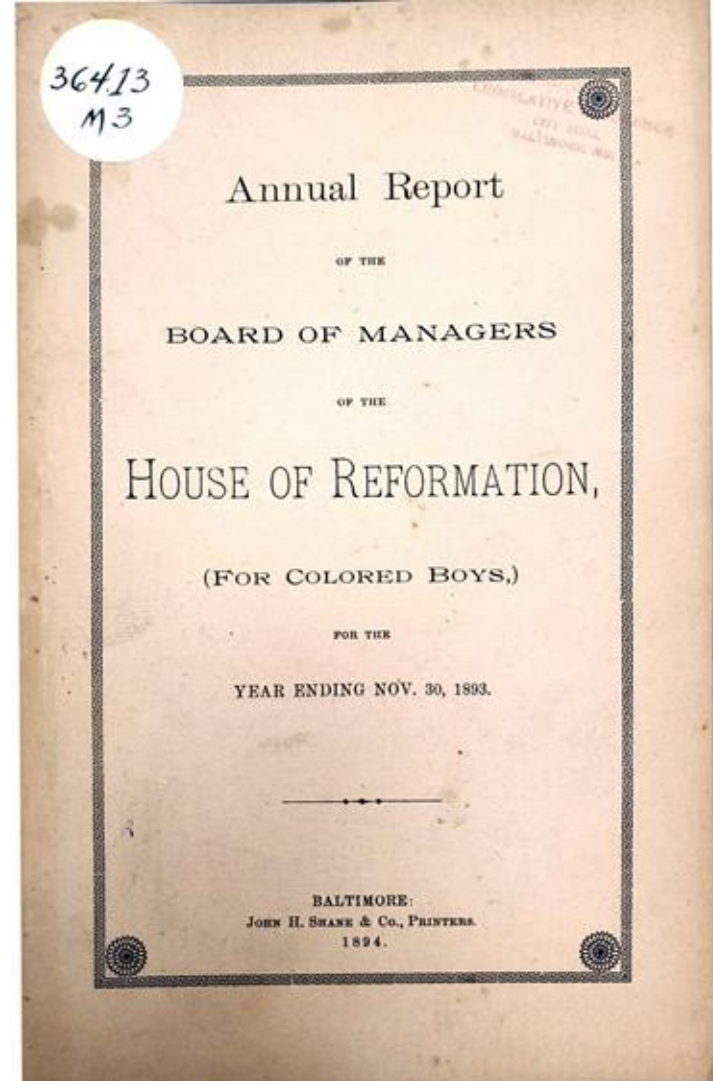
If more than one death, add in last figure, 2411 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, Reporting St. & No. 2.

Historical document to structured data

```
Ames Jr, Fred .txt
Fields,Results
Registration Dist. No.,240
1. PLACE OF DEATH County,Prince Georges
1. PLACE OF DEATH Village or City,Cheltenham
1. PLACE OF DEATH No.,
1. PLACE OF DEATH St.,
1. PLACE OF DEATH Ward,
1. PLACE OF DEATH Length of residence in city or town where death occurred yrs.,
1. PLACE OF DEATH Length of residence in city or town where death occurred mos.,
1. PLACE OF DEATH Length of residence in city or town where death occurred ds.,
1. PLACE OF DEATH If U. S. Veteran, specify WAR,
2. FULL NAME,Fred Ames
2. (a) Residence: No.,
2. (a) Residence: St.,
2. (a) Residence: Ward,
2. (a) Residence: (Usual place of abode),
2. (a) Residence: If nonresident give city or town and State,
3. SEX,Male
4. COLOR OR RACE,Colored
5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED,Single
5a. If married, widowed or divorced HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of,
6. DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year),Dec 8-1919
7. AGE Years,19
7. AGE Months,1
7. AGE Days,24
7. AGE IF LESS than 1 day, ...hrs. or ...min.,
8. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done,Inmate
9. Industry or business in which work was done,
10. Date deceased last worked at this occupation (month and year),
11. Total time (years) spent in this occupation,
12. BIRTHPLACE (city or town),Md
12. BIRTHPLACE (State or country),
13. FATHER NAME,Fred Ames Sr
14. FATHER BIRTHPLACE (city or town),Md
14. FATHER BIRTHPLACE (State or country),
15. MOTHER MAIDEN NAME,Unknown
16. MOTHER BIRTHPLACE (city or town),Unknown
16. MOTHER BIRTHPLACE (State or country),
17. INFORMANT,Supt. Cheltenham School for Boys
17. INFORMANT (Address),
18. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL,Burial
18. Place,Cemetery
18. Date,Feb 3, 1939
```

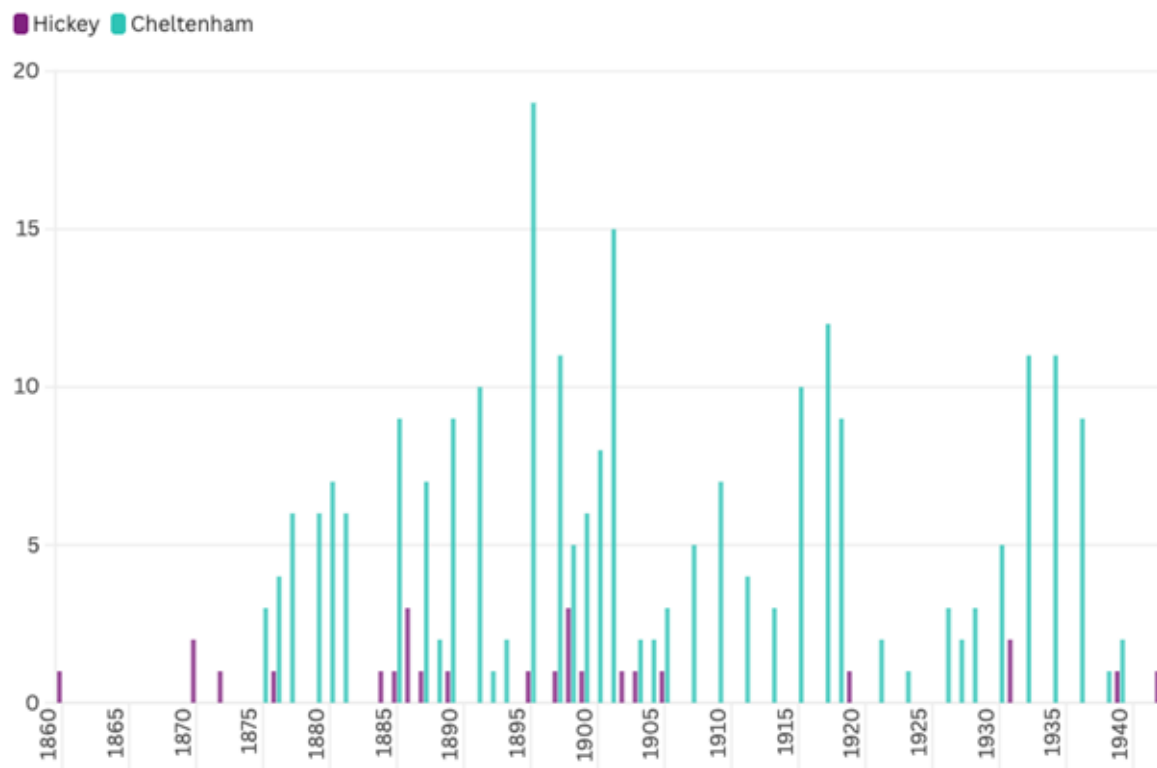
Analysis - Annual Reports

- Manually extracted death count from Cheltenham annual reports
- AI extraction would have been messy
- Manually verified extracted data
- Aligned death totals with death certificate data
- Ela Jalil and Tiasia Saunders



Cheltenham's death count is nine times higher than Hickey's

Nineteen boys died at Cheltenham in 1895, which the facility attributed to high rates of tuberculosis, typho-malaria and the "shattered condition of the health of some when received."



 Aline Behar Kado • Grand Jury Reports



 Documents

 Saved sessions

 Search documents



 Add documents

☐ Documents 1 - 46 of 46 

 1900-09 grand jury report.pdf

 1901-01 grand jury report.pdf

 1926-05 Grand jury report.pdf

 1927-05 Grand jury report.pdf



 Gemini



Click each option to customize according to your research needs

 Find answers

 Summarize

 Compare

 Extract data

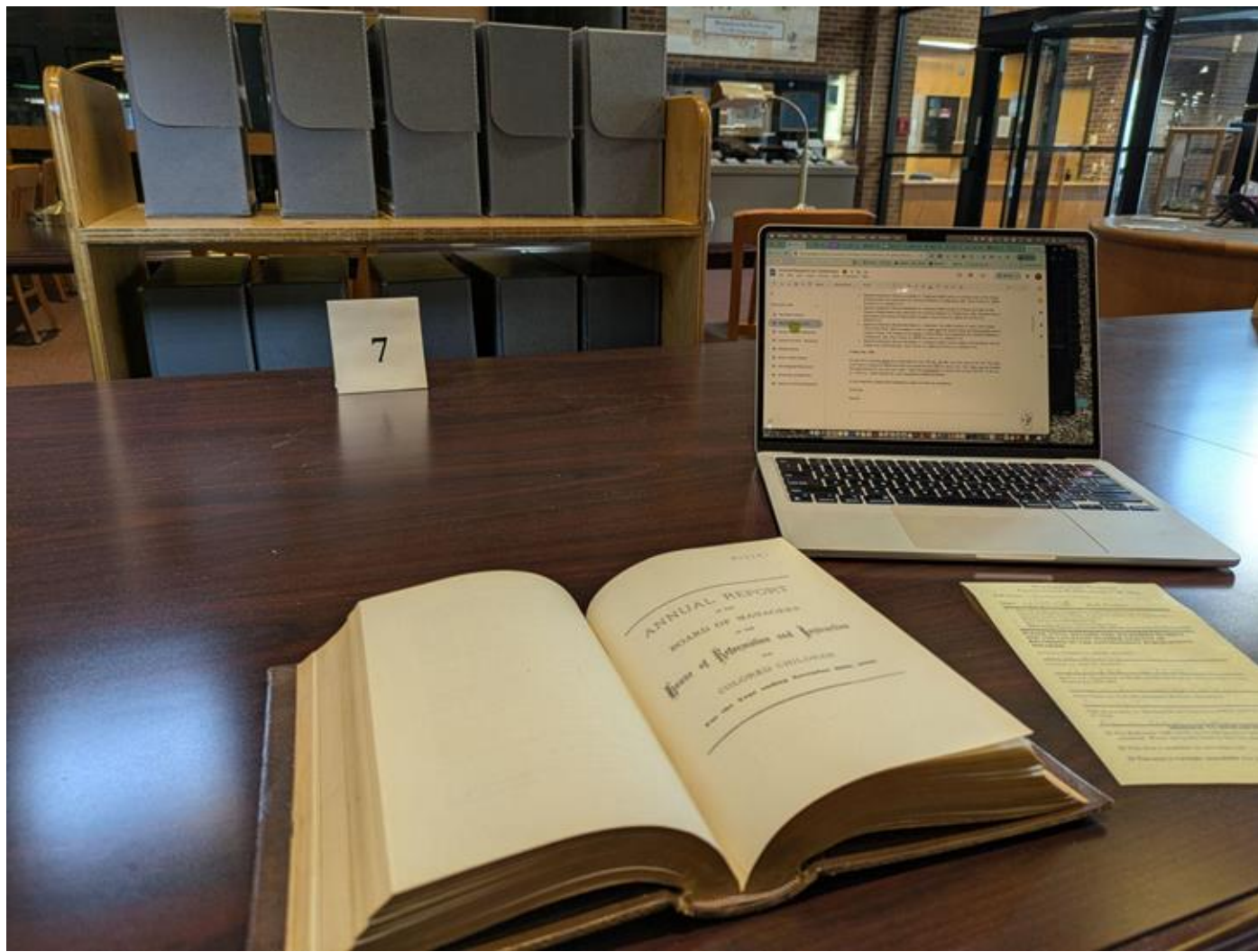
 Label documents

 Create timeline

 Entire collection

Ask anything about the documents

Pinpoint generative AI features may display inaccurate information, including about people, so always review any responses.





1 FIND OLD OBITUARY BY NAME

3 FIND DECEASED PERSON BY NAME

2 LOCATE GRAVE USING LAST NAME

4 FIND A GRAVE BY LAST NAME



Boy's Village of Maryland Cemetery Memorials

[Back to cemetery](#)

First Name

Middle Name

Last Name(s)

Year Born

Exact ▾

Year Died

Exact ▾

SEARCH

[More search options ▾](#)[Search tips >](#)

119 matching records found

[Less](#)

Page 1 of 6

[Settings](#)

Name (A-Z) ▾



No grave photo

William Allsopp



1885 - 25 May 1901



No grave photo

Fred Ames Jr.



8 Dec 1919 - 1 Feb 1939



Arthur Anderson



Filtrete
1000

COLD ALERT!
Before you turn up the heat, change your filter

[Shop Now](#)

Walmart

[Remove Ads](#)

"I just wanted their story to be told, and I didn't really know how to go about doing that, so I thought, well, I can at least... I'll put it on the internet, and then when people find it, maybe someone can... will do something about it."

-Rosie Clark

Genealogical Research/Descendent Searches

“

The Blagmond family originated within a rural community probably not far from where they once lived as slaves and remained as share croppers. They were poor, uneducated owning very small homesteads in Essex County, VA.

“

But they were a tight-knit family community who migrated north in small groups with a hope to survive better than they could at home. There are no records of incarcerations or criminal histories, just poor people trying to find a place where they could work for adequate food and shelter.

-

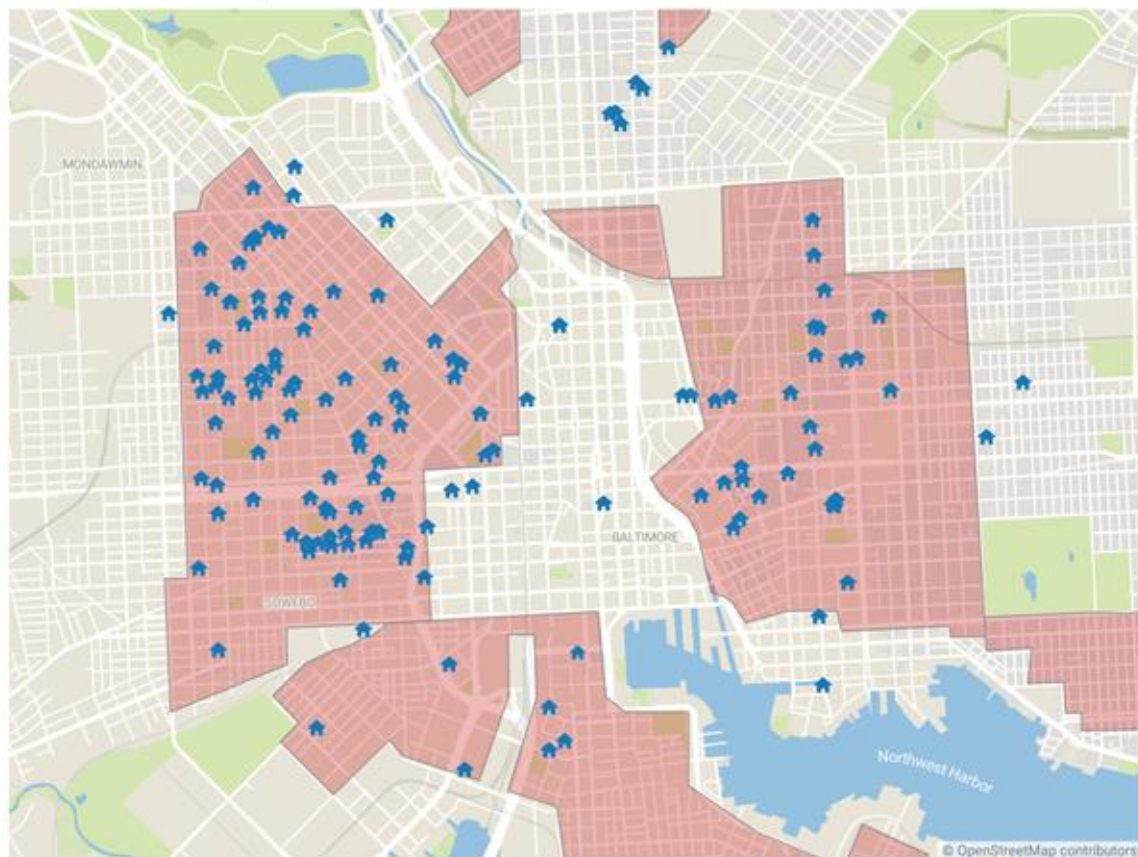
Cheryl Hill-Herder

distant cousin of Blagmond

Many Cheltenham boys came from West Baltimore

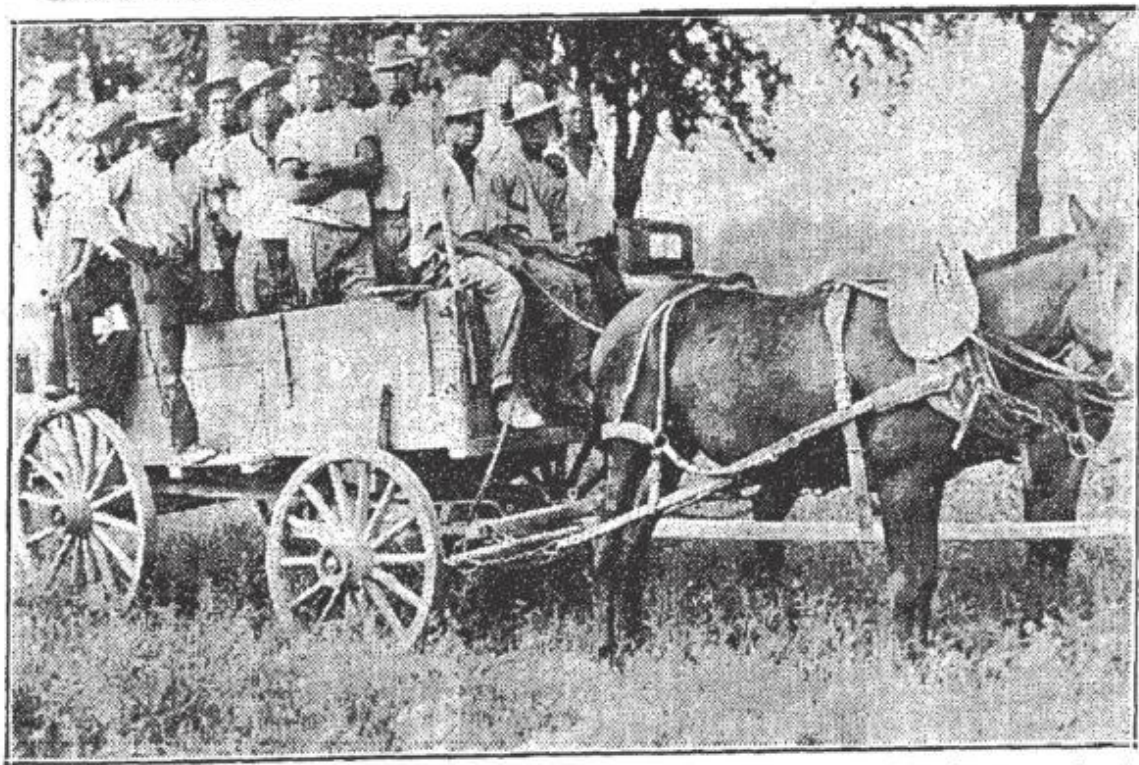
Archival documents show the addresses of some 160 boys from Baltimore City who were sent to House of Reformation for Colored Boys at Cheltenham in 1938 and in 1945. Many came from Black neighborhoods that were redlined, which is a denial of financial services, beginning in the 1930s.

Hover over the icon to see the specific address.



DATE WHEN ISSUED	UNDERTAKER	NAME OF CORPSE	AGE	
			YRS.	MOS.
1-19-31	L. L. Brown + Son	Frank Carter	46	
1-19-31	Mrs. Katie R. Williams	Cora Randolph	40	
1-19-31	" " " "	Minnie L. Jones	41	
1-20-31	" " " "	Lucy J. J. Jones	71	
11-20-31	Thomas E. Kelson	Viola J. J. Jones	34	
11-21-31	Samuel J. Stensley	John C. C. Jones	45	
11-21-31	Thomas E. Kelson	Roland Freeman	22	
11-21-31	Mrs. Katie R. Williams	Eddie E. Harrison	41	
1-20-31	" " " "	" " " "		
1-21-31	Daniel Easton	Charles E. E. Blagmond	19	

PLACE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF DEATH	WHERE BURIED	DATE
Var.	901 S. Howard St.	Public Ground	11-23-31
Ind.	Provident Hospital	1005 Mt. Monah	11-23-31
Var.	716 W. Mulberry St.	Public Ground	11-23-31
Var.	825 Edmondson Ave.	" "	11-23-31
Ind.	City Hospital	" "	11-23-31
Ind.	Provident Hospital	307 Mt. Zion	11-23-31
11th.	Franklin Square Hospital	Public Ground	11-23-31
Var.	203 N. Arlington Ave.	" "	11-23-31
	210 S. E. St.	1002 Mt. Monah	11-23-31
Not given	Chatterham P. Co. Co.	143 Private Grove	11-23-31
		D. O. O.	11-23-31



DOWN ON MARYLAND'S CLUB FARM—Group of boys coming from work at Maryland House of Reformation at Cheltenham. Many complaints have come from the institution recently about brutal treatment of boys by white guards. John Pyles, white superintendent, says it's all right for guards to strike boys.

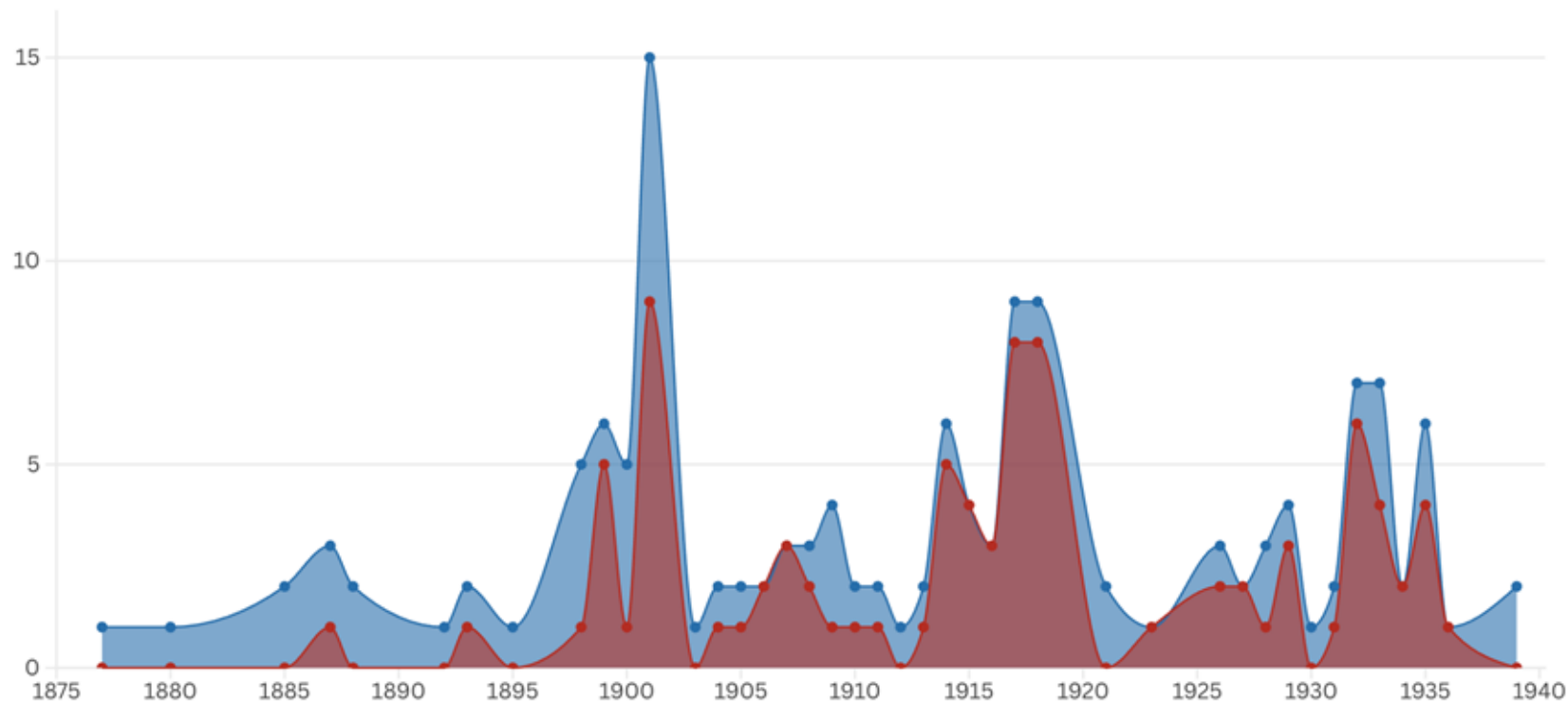
The Investigation: Health

- Aline Behar Kado, Mira Beinart and I investigated tuberculosis outbreaks at Cheltenham
- Reporting drew on health records, historical documents and expert interviews
- Our question: Were these deaths preventable?

Tuberculosis deaths surged in Cheltenham from early to mid 1900s

■ Total Deaths ■ Deaths Caused by Tuberculosis

Total deaths



Source: Cheltenham annual reports; Death certificates • Molecule Jongwilai / Capital News Service

Hover over the dots to see the number

Methodology

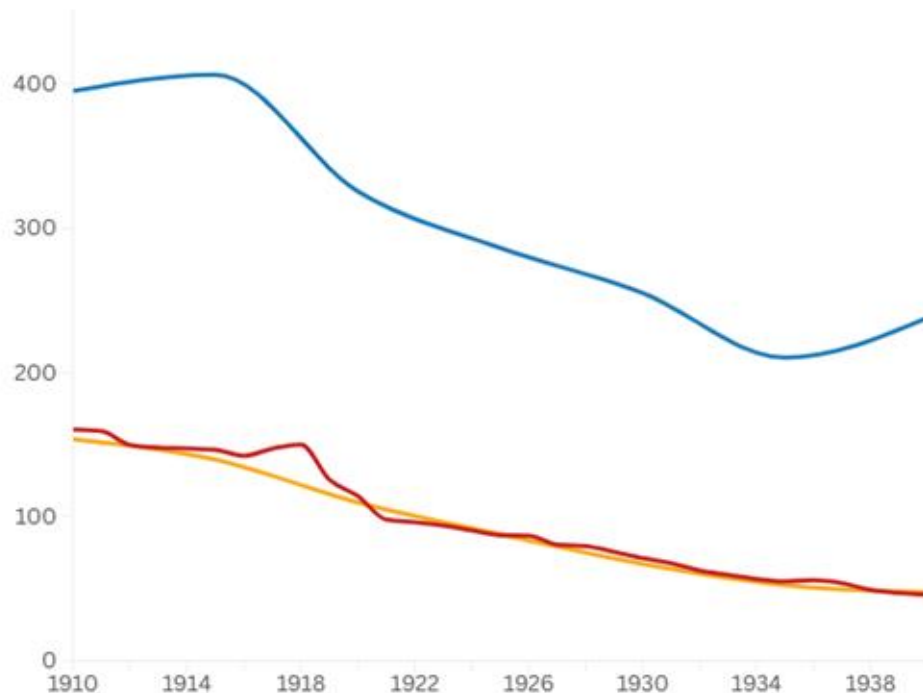
- Joined the Cheltenham team this spring,
- Built on a death certificate database originally built by Professor Wells and Nicole Ramos
 - Our class's contribution: expanded the dataset to capture parents' names, enabling genealogical research
- Anchored our analysis in death certificate records
 - One of the strongest, most countable records available from this era
- Core approach: comparing Cheltenham to its white counterpart facility to test whether a real disparity existed
- Limitation: historic records are incomplete
 - "at least 86 boys" is a floor, not a precise count

What we found: The scope

- At least **86 boys died** of tuberculosis at Cheltenham between 1887 and 1936
 - Analysis of death certificate records
- All-white counterpart (House of Refuge, now Hickey School) reported an estimated **26 deaths total, from all causes**, over the same 60-year span
 - There were no more than a dozen were TB cases, most of which ended in recovery
- Black Marylanders were dying of tuberculosis at roughly twice the rate of white Marylanders statewide by 1916
 - **Cheltenham's numbers reflect a much sharper disparity**

Black and nonwhite Marylanders faced high tuberculosis death rates

Deaths per 100,000 people



Source: [Vital Statistics Rates in the U.S., 1900-1940](#) • Chart: Mira Beinart, Rob Wells and Zaka Hossain

What we found: Conditions

- Boys slept back-to-back in crowded dormitories with poor ventilation
 - Conditions grand jury reports directly linked to disease spread
- Bathing was limited to once a week, often with shared towels
- For years, Cheltenham had no full-time physician; a 1934 review found the facility's "nurse" was a former plumber and factory worker with no formal medical training
- A 1935 grand jury visit described patients "waiting for death" in an unstaffed hospital ward

Cheltenham



NO. 5 DORMITORY

Hickey

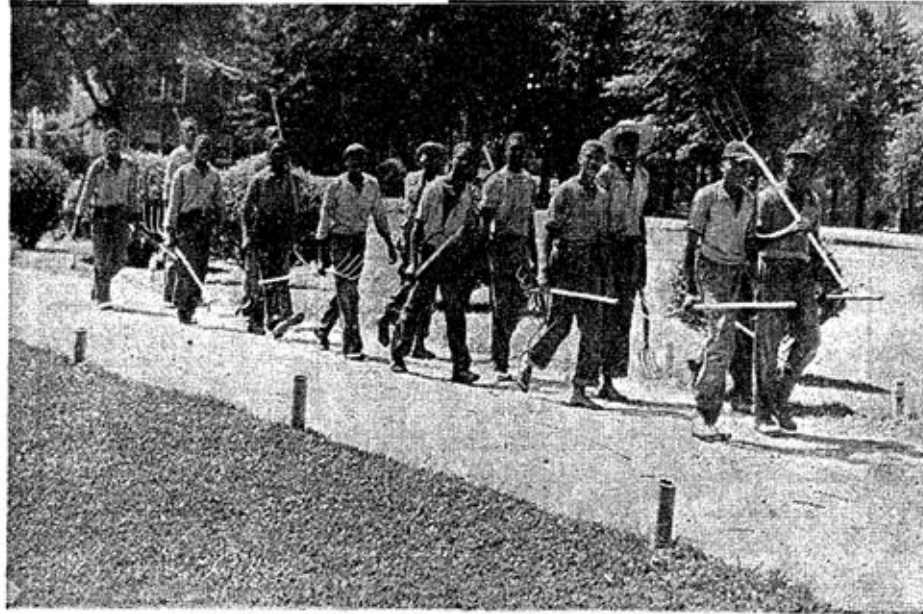


A COTTAGE DORMITORY

What we found: Accountability

- Independent monitors (grand juries, the Child Welfare League of America) flagged conditions for years, as early as 1926
- Even when transfer to treatment was proposed, the state's only Black sanatorium (Henryton) refused to accept Cheltenham boys
 - 1929 letter from the hospital's superintendent
- One 1934 Cheltenham report stated plainly that the health conditions "cannot be condemned too strongly"

Forced Labor - Haley and Isabella



Two Days of Rioting at Md. Reform School

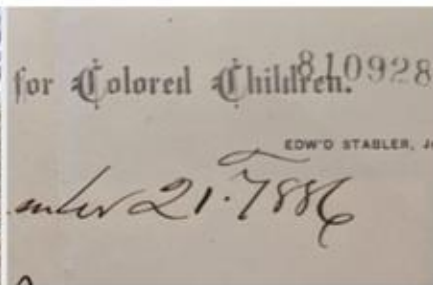
A group of boys at Cheltenham, Md., Reformatory who do farm work. They complained they were given oatmeal (unsweetened) for breakfast, cabbage for dinner and prunes for supper with three slices of bread. This is a private institution which the State takes over October 1.

The Investigation: Forced Child Labor

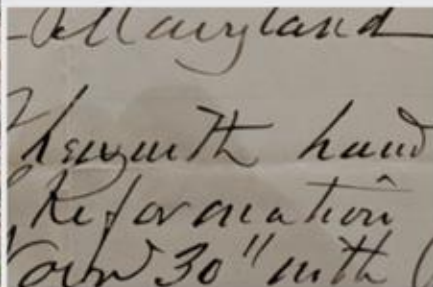
- Reviewed 60+ years of records (1873–1937): Cheltenham annual reports, Baltimore grand jury reports, and Afro-American coverage
- Boys performed manual labor from day one: farm work, broom binding, chair caning, basket weaving, stocking knitting, some as young as 7
- Schooling took a back seat: half-day school per 1883/1895 reports; 1930 grand jury called it "a farce"
- Practice's roots: MD indentured 3,000+ Black children post-emancipation; Cheltenham revived it 6 years later

Findings

- Broom factory flagged as fire hazard 7+ times (1926–1937); poor ventilation risked TB/respiratory disease
- 1930 fire destroyed part of the factory; it stayed operational for years after
- Contract labor = up to 15% of revenue (1926); state funded Cheltenham far below Hickey (\$15K vs. \$135,360)
- Former inmates paid little/nothing; one recalled being "worked just like slaves"
- Outside pressure built for a decade; grand juries kept flagging problems after 1937 takeover



Remembering Cheltenham



Remembering Victims of Cheltenham