

HISTORIC OTTERBEIN

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An Arabber Stable on Hughes Street

by David Safier

The picture at right, taken by Marion Warren in 1969 or 1970, shows an Arabber stable (pronounced AY-rabber) in what now is Hill Street Park, with four or five peddlers' carts parked alongside. Below it is another photo Warren took at the same time showing the area to the right of the stable.

According to the website [Mapping Baltimore Arabbers](#), this stable's address is 108 W. Hughes Street. Its use began in the 1960s. Two more stables were to the east of Hanover, at 19 and 23 W. Hughes Street.

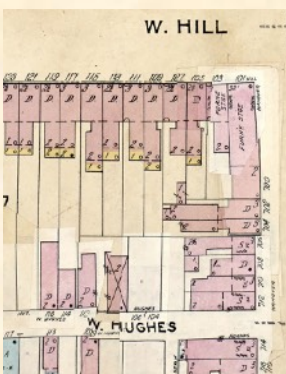
The following definition of Arabbing comes from the same website:

“Called ‘Arabbing,’ street peddling in Baltimore became a means by which black people could achieve some economic independence and demonstrate their ability to succeed in the context of an American culture that limited their opportunities.”

Baltimore is the last city in the U.S. to continue the Arabbing tradition. I took this color photo in front of Cross Street Market in 2021.



Yesterday and Today



On the 1950 Sanford map showing Hughes Street, the stable is on the right hand side of the cluster of four buildings, with the X through it. The other three houses must have been torn down between 1950 and 1970.

To duplicate the point of view of the original photos, I took a few photos of Hill Street Park facing the backs of the homes on Hill Street.

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Though the Hill Street homes have changed over the 50 year time span, the buildings' shapes as well as the position of some of the chimneys and windows indicate my photos are reasonably close to the originals.



A Note About the Term, Arabber

The word "Arabber" has been used proudly by Baltimore peddlers to identify themselves and their trade. However, the term itself does not have a proud history. It originated in 19th century England to describe people who lived on the cities' streets: "street arabs." Knowing that it was coined during the British Empire, and considering the general English attitude toward people in the countries they controlled, which was patronizing at best and racist at worst, the term "arabber" would definitely have had derogatory racial and ethnic connotations at the time.