

In commenting on the fine homes built in the early 1800's, Griffith's ANNALS OF BALTIMORE refers to "those eight commodious dwellings erected on part of the grounds of Lewis Pascault, Esq. by that gentleman, M. Rezin Wight, and others, on Lexington near Pine." (1) The houses are all still standing and appear much the same as they did in the 1936 HABS photograph. (2) Unfortunately, they had been converted into store-fronts even at that time, but the row is intact and many of the fine architectural details remain.

Jean-Charles-Marie-Louis Felix Pascault, Marquis de Poléon, came to Baltimore about 1780 from San Domingo, where his family owned a plantation, and he married Mary Magdalen Sligh (Slye) of St. Mary's County. Their estate was part of a tract of land originally called "Chatsworth". An outline of the Pascault property and its location can be seen on the 1801 Warner & Hanna map of Balto. (3) It extended from Saratoga Street to Lexington Street and from Green Street to Pine Street. The row of eight houses was built on the southwestern edge of the property. Pascault, a wealthy and influential merchant, was much admired by his peers. It was to him that approximately 1500 San Domingo refugees fled in 1793 when their homes were lost in a slave revolt. He arranged for their shelter and livelihood and established a library for their use which later became the Library Co. of Baltimore. (4) Pascault was also an active member of St. Peter's R. C. Church which preceded the Cathedral. Unfortunately, though, he was excommunicated by Archbishop Marechal in a dispute over his daughter's marriage to a non-Catholic.

Pascault counted among his friends William Lorman, President of the Bank of Baltimore. Lorman arranged mortgages on the eight rowhouses. (5) Lorman was also acquainted with Benjamin H. Latrobe, having employed him to build his house on Charles and Lexington Streets in 1816. Thus Robert L. Alexander states in his description of Pascault Row, "The motifs, the rectangular panel bearing an oval in relief and the distyle-in-antis entry at ground level were taken directly from (the Lorman house)." (6) These panels are still in place and one doorway remains, that of the Good Hope Hall (655 W. Lexington Street). Alexander concludes that the architect for the houses may have been William F. Small who was the son of Colonel Jacob Small, a friend of Latrobe. It is a fact that Latrobe wanted the youth to become a draftsman in his office. (7) Wilbur H. Hunter, Director of The Peale Museum, however, has said that it may have been Colonel Small, the father, who was the builder. He bases his idea on the listing for Jacob Small as a builder in the Baltimore City Directory of 1819, whereas William Small is not listed until 1827, some years after the houses are known to have been erected.

The date of Pascault Row has been a matter of debate. It was recorded as "between 1815-20" by the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation survey. Recently, however, after careful research, I have become convinced that the houses were erected in the year 1819. Previous to that time, deeds for this property mention a farm. (8) In 1819, the first mortgage was recorded and in May, 1820, Louis Pascault sold a corner lot to George Warner, and in the deed, mention is made of the "8 brick buildings lately erected." (9) Furthermore, the tax assessments for 1820 list Louis Pascault as owner of a lot on the south side of Lexington Street east of Pine Street which "covered a large stack of Improvements." It would seem, therefore, that the dwellings were erected in the latter part of 1819, and this is borne out by Griffith's ANNALS OF BALTIMORE.

Pascault Row (651-665 West Lexington Street)

This range of eight three-and-one-half story dwellings is Baltimore's last remaining example of early 19th century town houses. In style, they represent an important phase in the evolution of the row house in the great Eastern cities, for they illustrate the transition between the Federal and the early Greek Revival periods. The structures are attributed to William F. Small, at that time employed in the architectural office of Benjamin H. Latrobe, and they display the Latrobe influence in their dignity, plain surfaces and bold composition.

These houses were built on the southwestern edge of the property of Louis Pascault in 1819. Part of the tract originally called "Chatsworth," his estate was bounded by Saratoga, Greene, Lexington, and Pine Streets. Pascault's position and influence as a wealthy merchant enabled him not only to extend financial aid to the shiploads of refugees who fled the 1793 revolt of their slaves in San Domingo, where Pascault was born, but also to secure them employment with his friends and business acquaintances.

The neighborhood, though primarily commercial, has remained stable. The row of houses backs up to the University of Maryland Hospital buildings, and plans are now being formulated for the University of Maryland to renovate all eight houses and use those, as well as the surrounding site, to enlarge their physical plant.