Homewood, Cushwa and Calvert
some of the big names in brick city

Anyone here who’s ever dug a hole for a rose bush knows that Baltimore is a city built on clay.
This silicate is what makes Baltimore a brick city. Our rowhouses, schools, hospitals and industrial buildings all began as reddish pulverized shale that sits just under the surface of the ground.

Maryland does well by its masonry tradition, dubbing many brick varieties and colors with historic, ancestral names. In fact, most local bricks come in two trademark categories — Calverts or Homeweeds.

For example, the bricks in the new ballpark are Camden Blends, made near the Patapsco River town of Williamsport in Washington County. The bricks in Memorial Stadium are Homewood Plantations, made years ago at Monument Street and Edston Highway.

There also are bricks named Essex, Annapolis, Hunt Valley, Shenandoah, Potomac and Cambridge.

The Baltimore Brick Co. was long a familiar sight with its beehive-shaped kilns along East Monument Street. From the late 1890s until 1968, the ovens registered a terrid 1,500 degrees seven days a week. At one time, the firm had dozens of mules to haul the finished product to construction sites.

Today, the same firm, though owned by the Australian giant Boral Bricks, still fires its wares impressed with the Homewood name in Rocky Ridge, outside Thurmont in Frederick County.

The Homewood name has been going on the bricks for the last 75 years. It takes its name from Homewood House, the residence of the son of Charles Carroll of Carrollton. The house is preserved on the Johns Hopkins campus, in the 3400 block of N. Charles St.

Many homes in the surrounding neighborhoods — Guilford, Tuscany-Canterbury and Oxonahawke — are made with Homewood bricks.

Homewood’s local competitor is the Cushwa Brick Co., founded in 1872 on the banks of the Patapsco River and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at Williamsport. A descendant of the founders is former state Sen. Victor Cushwa.

The Cushwa bricks are typically sold under the name Calvert. The company won the contract for a special brick for the Camden Yards baseball stadium known as the Camden Blend. It has not yet been introduced into regular production.

There are nearly as many varieties of Homewood and Calvert bricks as there are paint colors, wallpaper patterns or ice cream flavors. Each brick firm keeps many varieties in production.

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Name of the game in brick city

Jacques Kelly

Some were named for Baltimore Brick Co. employees, like secretary Virginia Miles, who came to work there right out of Eastern High School. Her brick is the Home-
wood Milva — Miles, Virginia. James Lor-
ber, who ran the Monument Street brick kiln for many years, provided the name for the Homewood Jasper.

A street in the north Baltimore neighborhood of Guilford identifies the Homewood Charlotte.

Charleston Place is one of the best ad-
dresses in town Guilford. The homes along the street were constructed some 70 years ago in a fine Colonial-style brick. At the end of the street is imposing and aristocratic Charlotte House — a mansion among mansions — surrounded, naturally, by a brick wall.

The eastern Baltimore County community of Essex is the namesake for a dark chocolate variety of brick used in the construction of Essex Community College. The same model was also used to provide contrasting color in some of the Franklin Square Hospital buildings. Buildings on Anne Arundel Community College’s Arnold campus are built with an off-white Homewood brick known as “rustique.”

Construction of Walbrook Senior High School in West Baltimore also inspired a variety of brick. The story goes that architects Tom Smith and Graham Veale wanted a certain “light pink-tan” shade of masonry. The Baltimore Brick Co. fired up a batch of them that pleased the designers.

The brick became popular and assumed a life of its own. The Baltimore Brick Co. christened this tone the Grand — using the first three letters of Graham’s name and transposing Tom.

Cushwa’s Calvert-brand bricks have the names Rose Red, Sante Fe, Victorian, Shen-

But the Baltimore Brick Co.’s local of-
"See KELLY, D10, Col. 1"