



I Remember . . .

When Geese, Cows Roamed Lansdowne Streets

By Maurice J. Bahr

PRESENT-DAY realtors may find this hard to believe, but the photo above was used—64 years ago—as a real estate advertisement.

The community you see is Lansdowne as it was in 1902. Specifically, it is Elizabeth avenue, in the center of what Lansdowne old-timers remember as the Joshua Section. C. W. Hull, who developed the section, named it for his son.

The house in the foreground is the house where I live. I was born in it. The place was built in 1897, by Mr. Hull's builders, for my father, Leonard Bahr. I have no idea what he paid for it, nor what he paid for his lots, but an old plat I have tells me that prospective home owners then were offered lots in this area for \$10 down and \$5 a month. Our house and its surroundings cover four lots.

The house next door was built a year or so later by my father's brother, Centennial Bahr, so named because he was born during the big centennial in Philadelphia.

The white picket fence around the houses was there for a practical reason. Folks who lived in Lansdowne then were casual about the way they grazed their horses and cows. They just turned them loose. The fences kept the animals out of your yard, and also kept out flocks of neighborhood geese which were forever moving about, foraging at will.

Lansdowne in those days was what many people called a "B. & O. town." Many residents worked for the B. & O. Railroad. And

if there was what could be called a community center in town it was the Lansdowne Station on the B. & O. line. It was a pretty little wooden frame station, heated by egg stoves in the winter, with a waiting room for the ladies and a smoking room for the men. The railroad kept it decorated with beds of flowers that bloomed from early spring until late fall. People met there morning and evening as they rode the train into or out of Baltimore for a 5-cent fare.

THE picture above was taken from a high ore heap in a part of Lansdowne worked by the Whitaker Iron Company, which mined a great deal of ore in the vicinity. Digging out ore left many depressions, some of them quite deep, and as they were exhausted and abandoned these pits collected water. As a result there were several ponds and small lakes there, and they were fine for swimming, fishing and ice skating. We called one Red Lake, because the red clay of the area colored it. There were also Pine Tree Lake and Third Lake. I can't remember any more now, but as boys we had names for all of them.

Red Lake overflowed to feed that little stream you see in front of our house. It was a foot wide and a foot deep there, but got twice that big in other places. It wound its way over to empty into the Patapsco River. Many times, as boys, we saw fish swimming up that little stream. As a child, I put half a dozen baby ducks into the stream to watch them swim. I went inside

A 1902 view of Lansdowne. The street running down the right side of the picture is Elizabeth avenue, in the center of what was then called the Joshua Section. Below Mr. Bahr tells of the community in that era.



Mr. Bahr

to eat, and when I came back the ducks were gone. I presume they found their way to the Patapsco.

What you see in this picture was pretty typical of Lansdowne in the early days. The streets were red or blue clay. The houses were set well back from the streets, and in front of most of them were boardwalks.

As an early suburb, we didn't have many of the refinements of the city. On the horizon you can see a tree, rising above the back of our house. There was a spring there at the base of a twin maple tree, and from it we once hauled our water for cooking, drinking and general household use. I hauled much of it with a tub on a wagon in the summer, on a sled in the winter. Later my father installed a 1,000-gallon cistern, and in it we caught rain-water for general household use.

Across the meadow, at the far left in the picture, was a German family which operated a small dairy. We hauled our milk supply from there. There was a garden behind our house, of course; we grew most of the vegetables we used.

WE got meat down the road, in the building you see at the right. It was operated, as I recall, by a family named Fineberg.

Staple groceries we bought from the Z. A. Wilson General Store & Coal Yard at Elizabeth avenue and Hammonds Ferry road. Sometimes we carried groceries home by the basket. For bigger loads, Robert ("Hoaney") Walters, who worked at the

store, would deliver in a two-wheeled mule cart.

In the right foreground of the picture you can see a patch of woods. Deep in this we found a fine variety of fruits—pears, apples, wax and black-heart cherries, hickory nuts and persimmons. The place may have been a farm many years earlier, but the woods had reclaimed it. There was also a beautiful collection of wild flowers—tremendous violets, lady slippers, trailing arbutus, laurel and a carpet of crowfoot.

LANSDOWNE was quiet and peaceful. In winter the whole town turned out to skate on the ponds. In summer there were church picnics, both at the church and in the woods. May 30 was always exciting, for then we celebrated "Grand Army Day." A pastor at the Christian Church had dedicated a memorial there to the Union Army, and in years to come old soldiers (both Confederate and Union) came from all over the area, on special B. & O. trains, for our Grand Army Day program of picnicking, marching and speech-making. Grand Army Day hasn't been observed now for many years.

One old memory of Lansdowne doesn't show in the picture. That would be the many willow gardens—swampy places from the picture site down to the Patapsco—where residents grew willow switches for basketmaking. Like the old railroad station and the open, rolling pastureland around Lansdowne, the willows are long since gone.

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