
Legacy of the “Hoes Heights” Neighborhood

One of Baltimore’s first Black neighborhoods, located in northwest of Baltimore (1841).

Serena G. Mills, Author
and Researcher

First Issue 1995

Second Issue 1998

*Dedicated to the Original HOES families and
their oldest neighbors, and to their children.*

Introduction

One of Baltimore's first Black neighborhoods, located in northwest of Baltimore (1841).

Heathbrook and Hoes Heights occupy an area south of Cold Spring Lane between Falls Road. The Evans Chapel Road runs parallel to Roland Avenue and once was a link between Job Evans' "Poplar Hill" estate and Baltimore City.

Settlement began in this area in the nineteenth century. The earliest houses here were detached frame structures that belonged to framers and laborers who serviced the local estates. Development has taken place since 1918 when this area was annexed to the city. Most of the 70 row houses between Hickory and Roland Heights Avenues were constructed in the 1930s.

The present population of these three neighborhoods north of 41st Street is a mix of working class and young professionals. Many of these have roots in Hampden going back several generations. Along Evans Chapel Road in Hoes Heights is a small black population whose roots go back several generations. Like many other pockets of blacks in Baltimore County, areas like Hoes Heights, that were formerly in Baltimore County, were neighborhoods that furnished the labor for servicing the local farms and large estates.

Although Roland Park was formerly known as Hampden, Baltimore County – prior to 1841, it was divided at Evans Chapel Road, which was a farm road – a small portion of which still runs behind the Water Tower of Roland Park. The Water Tower was constructed by Baltimore City in 1904, but before that took place, the sewerage system was put under ground in 1891, following the natural contour of the land toward Stony Run Creek (1892).

The developer, Frederick Law Olsted, Jr., hooked every house into the system. The development plateau secured the success of Roland Park. It was known as Plat 2, and the Water Tower was located at the intersection of Roland Avenue and University Parkway. However, the water, which was pumped 70 feet high into the tower and distributed under pressure through a large main, went to every community residence, except the residents of Roland Park, although the tower was within Roland Park. It serves, however, as a friendly landmark, and is fervently defended as a significant monument to the area's historic beginnings.

Copyrighted 1993 All Rights Reserved

*A Very Important Person

The legacy began with Charles Grandeson Hoes, Jr. (1841-1896), who was born of slave parents at Hampden, Baltimore County, Maryland, now known as Roland Park. His father, Mr. Charles Grandeson Hoes, was born a slave in Charles County, where he married Ms. Mary Myers, of Baltimore County.

Being a very ambitious man, Mr. Hoes' father became quite an ambitious farmer, prospered and bought his freedom many years before the Civil War. He purchased a large tract of land situated on the south side of Roland Park, on a beautiful hill directly in front of the Water Tower. He died at his home at 55 years of age.

Much like his father, Charles Grandeson Hoes, Jr. was also an ambitious man. He was married to Ms. Rachel Ann Woods at old Sharp Street Church, by Rev. Benjamin Brown, and was the father of eight children: Ms. Mary Hoes, deceased; Mrs. Laura Hawkins, deceased; Mrs. Anne E. Bishop; Ms. Lulu Smith; Mrs. Clarence Johnson; Mr. Charles G. Hoes, III; Mr. Jessie Hoes, deceased; and Mr. Richard Hoes.

His early life was spent as a coachman for some of the best of Baltimore's aristocracy, such as Mr. J. Hall Pleasant, and Mr. C.R. O'Donnell, president of the Gas Company at the time. He was also sexton of Mt. Vernon Church at Monument and Charles Streets, which is the most wealthy congregation in Maryland. Desiring something still better than this, he went into the Furniture Moving Business on little Monument Street near Orchard, in which he remained for 15 years. He was an old member of Sharp Street Church.

Mr. Hoes has a very interesting nephew, who is Mr. Albert Peters, one of the oldest and most trustworthy employees of the American Ice Company. Mr. Peters bought a large tract of land from Mr. Hoes and on it he built one of the prettiest homes in Baltimore – colored or white. He retired from active business and lived with his daughter, Mrs. Clarence Johnson, of Roland Park, where frequent visitors could be seen their beautiful front porch, and made to feel happy to behold the beautiful scenery there about. Much credit should be given to the conspicuous character, as he was a self-educated man, who did not have the opportunities that are afforded today; but through thrift, economy, and industry educated his children and assisted them all to begin life.

It should be remembered that Charles Grandeson Hoes, Jr. purchased land in the hilly grounds once owned by David Carroll, that rose 360 feet above sea level, affording a splendid view down into the Jones Falls Valley, and south along the Fall Turnpike. The refreshing water was a great asset. He built house in front of the Water Tower, east of Falls Road. He split the land between his children and they lived comfortably. They also hired out as servants to the affluent in Roland Park.

Eventually, difficulties arose, after generations of taxes, and possible loss of jobs, and in order to save more hardship from real estate biddings and increasing taxes, many of the Hoes family sold their beloved lands. General development of the lands by outside forces which included Providence Road, Dewey Avenue, Wood Heights Avenue, Weldon Place, Newport Avenue, Redfren Avenue, Medford Avenue, Elin Avenue, Mt. Vernon Street, and Roland Avenue. However, the families chose to remain and to keep the name of Hoes Heights alive.

The neighborhood interests decided to create an authoritative association, so it was incorporated on March 23, 1965, in the city of Baltimore, as the HOES HEIGHTS Improvement Association, Inc., a domestic corporation, and received its status on December 27, 1977.

They are not isolated. Hoes Height is in the midst of the well-known community in Baltimore Region, encompassing Roland Park, which has national significance, because of the innovations its developers introduced in 1894, to the American suburbs and residential development.

Hoes Heights is a 20th century planned urban outgrowth on land that was once rural, with scattered hamlets, but is now a modern residential area. The eastern part of Hoes Heights, along Evans Chapel Road, next to Roland Park, has been predominately Black. Geographically, no social isolation has caused preservation of homogeny and identity of the neighborhood.* Some of Hoes Heights residents go to the churches on Roland Avenue, but there is no one church where residents attend, since some people in Hoes Heights (now) grew up in other parts of the city. Thus, they still attend churches in their old neighborhoods, such as West Baltimore.

As the Water Tower: It is still owned by the Department of Water and Sewerage, at the address known as 4210 Roland Avenue, on Lot 5-3591 A, Ward 27-13. Although in the early years the MTA used the grounds as a turn-a-round for Bus #27 that came from

town on Howard Street, up into the Roland Park area, the Transit Commissioners have not expressed plans for further action there.

*Since the publication of the *Legacy of Hoes Heights Neighborhood*, the community has changed tremendously. In 1997, the community integrated and today Hoes Heights is home to a diverse population and cultures. Today we are a melting pot consisting of African American, Asian, Caucasian, Chinese, Hindu, and Philippine Cultures. Along with the diverse cultures, Hoes Heights has seen a resurgence of young families with children emerge into the community. It should be noted that descendants of Grandson Hoes still live in the community. Hoes Heights remains a community of neighbors where we share stories of happy childhood memories, and old-fashioned values. Our history remains strong through generations of families that return to visit, or come back to regain the tradition with their children and families.

The Hoes Heights community continues to work with neighboring communities – Roland Park, Rolden, Hampden, Heathbrook, and Medfield on issues that affect the communities at large.

June 2014