

Lake Roland Site, Proposed As Leakin Park, Is Wilderness

Two Of Tracts Suggested Now Are Owned By Relatives Of Lawyer Who Bequeathed Fund

A casual survey yesterday of the portion of the Lake Roland shore, which perennially is suggested as a site for the J. Wilson Leakin Memorial Park, disclosed a wilderness of tangled underbrush decorated with several old houses, the ruins of several others and one of the finest views in the vicinity of Baltimore.

In 1922, J. Wilson Leakin, lawyer and man of considerable wealth, died and bequeathed to the city two valuable downtown properties.

In Mr. Leakin's will it was stipulated that five years after the donor died the properties should be sold and the proceeds used to build the city a public park.

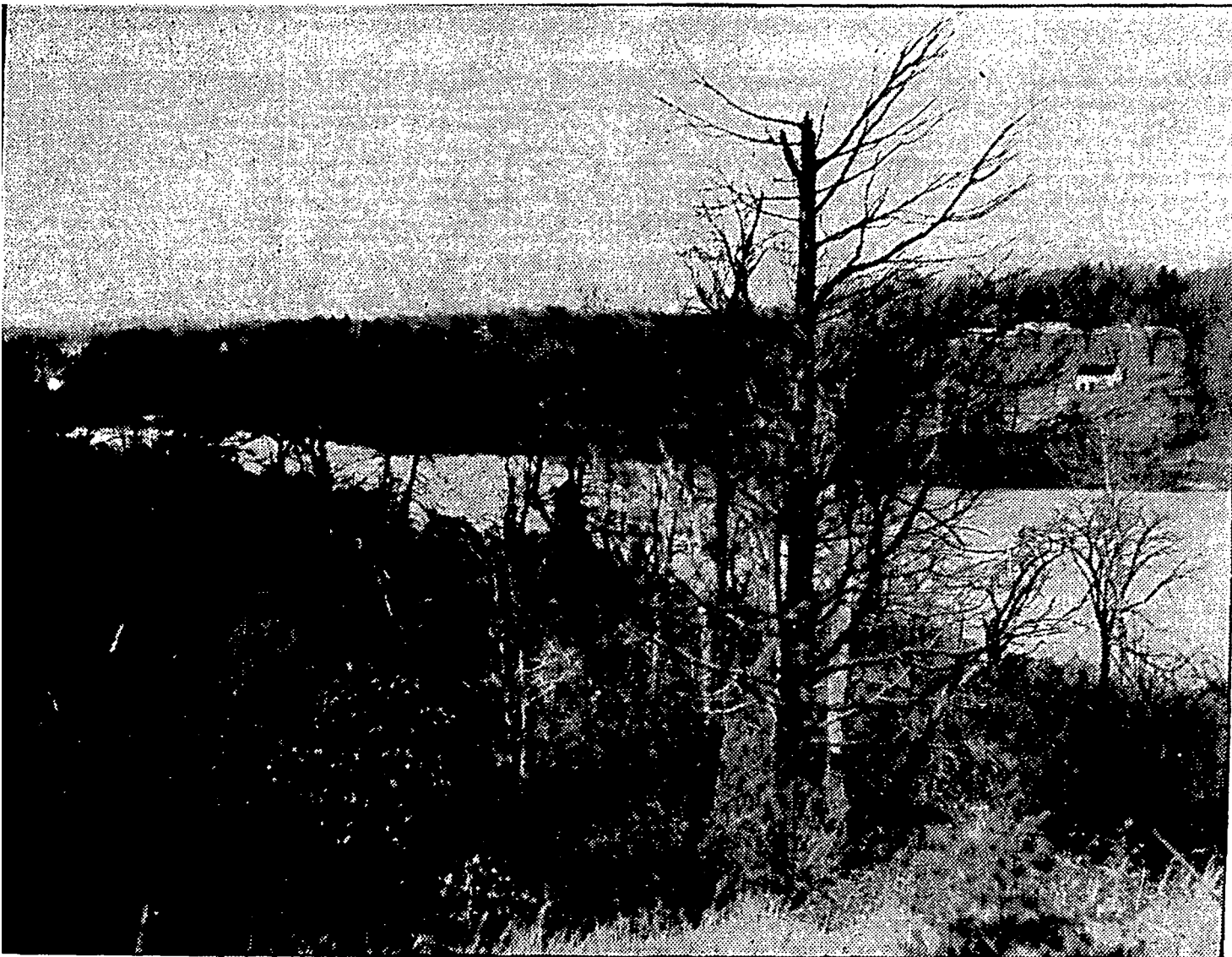
There immediately arose dissension as to where the park should be lo-

ated. The first proposal seriously to be considered was that the park be located along the Lake Roland shore. Much property there already belonged to the city, and it was held the approximately \$200,000 to be realized from the Leakin bequest could be used to buy bordering property and to develop the entire tract for park purposes.

Other sites also were proposed during succeeding years. Some suggested Irvington, some—notably John Philip Hill, former Representative from the Third Maryland district—suggested a Jones' Falls area, some suggested Roland Park, and lately the Mayor announced he would like to see the fund

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Lake Roland To Fore Again As Leakin Memorial Park



The view was taken from the west shore of Lake Roland looking toward Ruxton.

used to build playgrounds in many sections of the city.

\$360,000 Is Available

For one reason or another nothing was done about the park, and today—fifteen years since the death of Mr. Leakin—the city has about \$360,000 of accumulated Leakin bequest in real estate and cash and no park. Yesterday an owner of property in the vicinity of Lake Roland once more brought up the question of Lake Roland as a site for the park.

Roughly, the area suggested is bounded by Lake Roland on the east, Falls road on the west and south (the road curves) and the boundaries of the old Leakin country properties on the north.

Not all the land included in the rough boundaries would be available or desirable. There is considerable property that presumably would be unobtainable.

Two Tracts In Family

But in the area are two tracts which still belong in the Leakin family, and this fact is advanced as a sentimental reason for locating the park at Lake Roland. One tract belongs to Miss Margaret Leakin, a cousin of J. Wilson Leakin, and another belongs to Mrs. Albert Sioussat, another cousin.

The two tracts, both on high hills overlooking Lake Roland and the right of way of the Northern Central Railroad that skirts both shores of the lake, form a rough horseshoe about the holdings of L. Wethered Barroll, Baltimore attorney.

If the two Leakin tracts, with the Barroll tract, could be obtained and added to present city holdings on the opposite, or eastern, shore of the lake, a park would be obtainable, it is argued.

Balance Inherited

The two Leakin tracts came into the Leakin family through J. Wilson Leakin and his uncle, the late Rev. George Leakin. The land was acquired mostly through foreclosures of mortgages the Leakins held on the land, it was understood. The Barroll tract also once belonged to the Leakins.

In time, what was left of the original estates passed on to the present Leakin survivors. Neither of them occupy the land now, and there is some doubt as to whether J. Wilson Leakin actually lived for any length of time on his Lake Roland holdings.

Three Old Houses

On the Leakin properties now are three old houses and the ruins of one more. One large yellow frame structure, the oldest of the three houses, is occupied although badly run down. Another, an ancient frame building, also is occupied by another set of tenants and also is run down.

The remaining house, the most recent—it was built about 1870—is unoccupied and stands forlornly on a high hill that commands a view of Lake Roland and its eastern shore. The ruined house burned down in 1922, shortly before Mr. Leakin's death.

There were two houses on the Barroll holdings. One burned several years ago and the other now is occupied by the Barroll family.

Now Attracts Visitors

Those who have been urging Lake Roland as the park site claim the present city property now attracts Sunday visitors in fine weather and that thousands of others would be benefited if the city property could be expanded and made into a large park.

They claim the old Leakin properties should be made the center of Leakin Memorial Park—those favoring the Jones Falls park have the same argument, for a Leakin ancestor, a former Mayor of Baltimore, lived near the Flag House—and that

the site bears out the interpretation of the Leakin will that the park should be on a water front.

Sister Expresses View

A sister of Mr. Leakin, shortly after his will was published, said she was convinced her brother meant to leave the city a waterfront park. This was when Fort Howard was being considered by the city as the site.

Mr. Leakin's sister also said specifically she did not believe her brother meant either to leave his money for repairs to existing parks, or for the building of numerous scattered playgrounds.

Yesterday's survey disclosed that much work would have to be done before a park could be made out of the area. There is much thick underbrush that would have to be cleared. Some provision for the safety of park-goers who wandered along the railroad right of way would have to be made.

Trees To Be Felled

Ghosts of trees that stand as reminders of forest fires would have to be felled, and the houses on the tract would need a great deal of renovating, both within and without.

Roads would have to be built. The few now entering the area proved hazardous after the recent light snowfall, and mired at least one automobile for a considerable period.

There is no doubt but that those who would picnic along the high banks would be well repaid for their trip out from the city, either by trolley or railroad. The hills along the lake shore are several hundred feet higher than the surrounding countryside, and even now the view repays those who climb them.