

# He Invented the Suburbs

*BENNARD B. PERLMAN*

In 1891 the northern boundary of Baltimore extended only past Hampden and Woodberry. Beyond the city line were imposing country estates, one of which was once owned by the brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, another by the daughter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton. Further west, the region's first garden suburb had just been built, but Sudbrook, south of Pikesville, was intended only for summer occupancy.

Edward H. Bouton, a 31-year-old Kansan, former cowboy, law student and dabbler in real estate, was destined to change all that. He chanced to move here and become the first resident manager of the newly formed Roland Park Company. During the next four decades, Bouton was responsible for fashioning the face of the suburbs. His innovations were copied in many hundreds of cities and towns across the country.

Bouton's greatest achievement was the development of Roland Park, which is celebrating its 100th birthday next week. Roland Park was named for Lake Roland, created in 1861, which in turn had been named for Roland Thornberry, a 17th-century Englishman who owned large tracts of land in the lake area. The initial development involved land east of Roland Avenue, and was entrusted to a young landscape architect, George E. Kessler, who had worked for Frederick Law Olmsted in the design of Central Park. (Olmsted also designed Sudbrook.)

The first Roland Park lot was sold in June 1892, but Baltimoreans were slow to accept the notion of living year-round that far from the city. Bouton sought to promote the new development by transporting prospective buyers from the Masonic Temple, in the 200 block of North Charles Street, to Roland Park in a four-in-hand coach. The trip took 25 minutes. Still the heavily wooded area of what was then Baltimore County seemed to be too isolated.

Further to encourage sales, Bouton had houses built on some of the land, and in September 1892 several newspapers announced that the first three "cottages" were nearing completion, with prices ranging from \$3,000 to \$7,000. The initial buyer, Mme. E. Marie Jeanneret, the city's leading couturiere, paid \$8,500 for the home at 4711 Roland Avenue.

Bouton established the Baltimore-Roland Park Street Railway Company, which built the Guilford Avenue viaduct so that streetcars could travel from downtown to the new suburb. By the turn of the century, scheduled runs were every four minutes, 24 hours a day. The line eventually became part of United Railways, the predecessor of Baltimore Transit and the MTA.

The trolley line ended at the 4800 block of Roland Avenue, a street that was initially a narrow dirt road before being transformed into an imposing, tree-lined thoroughfare. Later the route was extended to the shores of Lake Roland, where there was an amusement park complete with a merry-go-round and dance hall.

At the trolley loop on Roland Avenue, Bouton had built, in 1896, the Roland Park Shopping Center, heralded as the pioneer of the shopping-center concept in America. The structure was designed by J.B. Noel Wyatt and William G. Nolting, Baltimore natives who moved into Roland Park homes of their own design. With no previous examples of shopping-center plans to guide them, Wyatt and Nolting created a half-timbered, Tudor-style edifice that resembled one of their earlier commissions, a summer hotel in Windsor Hills named the Mount Holly Inn. A fire house was built

directly behind the shopping center, and stables to house the fire company's horses and those belonging to residents.

Another tie between downtown Baltimore and Roland Park was the Home Telephone Company, a private phone service Bouton organized that was later purchased by C&P.;

In 1897, Bouton proceeded with the second stage of construction to the west of Roland Avenue, enlisting the aid of the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. The two men joined forces to save the oak, ash, beech and maple trees that still pepper the hilly terrain as it cascades down to the Jones Falls valley below. Serpentine streets were designed with an eye toward lessening the destruction.

Edward Bouton initiated a series of rules and regulations which became part of the covenant for each homeowner, an innovation that gave Roland Park the first such zoning laws anywhere in suburban America. As early as 1893 he advertised in order to "correct the erroneous impression as to restrictions on Roland Park lots." The limitations meant no business establishments except for those initiated by the company, no saloons, no more than one dwelling on a single lot, 30-foot setbacks from the street, a minimum cost for each house, and agreement that the owner would pay his share of lighting, street maintenance and water supply costs.

Bouton organized the Roland Park Civic League in 1895 and the Roland Park Golf Club (later the Baltimore Country Club) in 1896. He was responsible for creating the area's first 18-hole golf course where, in 1899, the United States Golf Association held its Fifth U.S. Open. That same year the Roland Park Company agreed to sponsor the Roland Park Country School in its new location on Roland Avenue.

In 1911, the company, now with Bouton as president, purchased the Arunah S. Abell estate known as Guilford, and Bouton oversaw the development of the suburb bearing that name. In subsequent years he also played a major role in planning the neighborhoods of Homeland and Northwood.

Bouton's accomplishments here quickly elicited praise elsewhere. He was asked to be an adviser for Forest Hills on Long Island, Shaker Heights in Cleveland, River Oaks in Houston, and a section of Chicago.

Fourteen years after his death in 1941, a memorial was dedicated to him and placed on University Parkway at the entrance to Guilford, but it was largely destroyed by vandals in 1974. Today Edward H. Bouton's true monument is the existence of Roland Park and the other garden communities he produced -- and in a block-long street in the Village of Cross Keys, site of the Baltimore Country Club's former golf course. That cul-de-sac is appropriately named Bouton Green.

As Lewis Mumford wrote in "The City in History": "None of the planning done within the 19th century, not even that done under Haussmann, compared in freshness of form and boldness of design with the best of the suburbs, from Olmsted's Riverside, near Chicago, to his Roland Park near Baltimore."

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