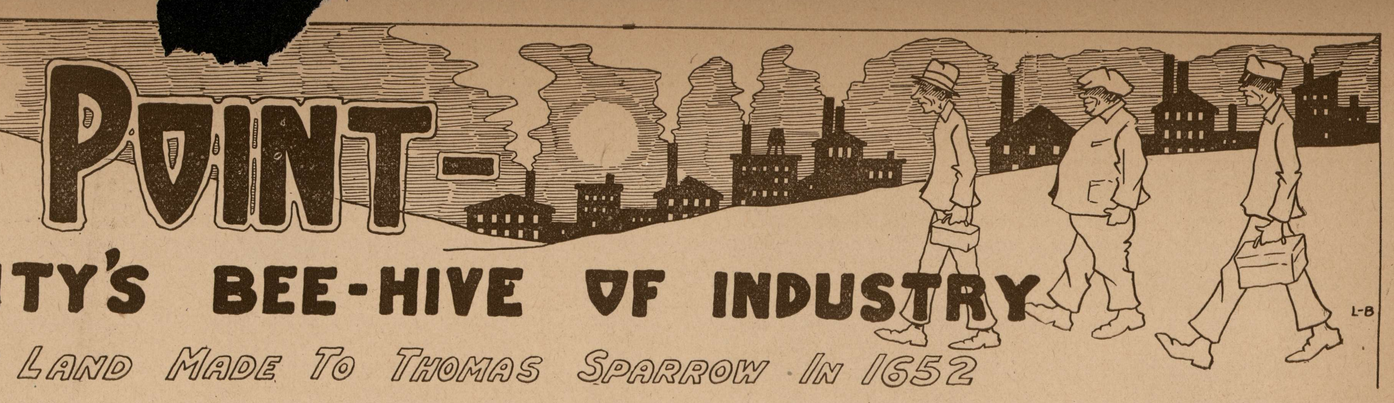
# SPARROWS POINT—



## BALTIMORE COUNTY'S BEE-HIVE OF INDUSTRY

### PART OF GRANT OF LAND MADE TO THOMAS SPARROW IN 1652

DRYDOCK DEPARTMENT NOW ON SITE OF GIGANTIC PEACH ORCHARD—IN MAY 1887 FIRST ACTUAL STEP WAS TAKEN TOWARD BUILDING

The neck of land on which stands Sparrows Point, where the gigantic steel mills of the Bethlehem Steel Company are located is a part of a grant of land made bby Lord Proprietory to Thomas Sparrow in November, 1652.

Over 80 years before Baltimore City was laid out, Sparrows Point was on the map.

Solomon Sparrow, son of Thos. Sparrow, built a house on the point which was known as Sparrows Nest; the site of this structure is now marked by a brick building of modern construction which until lately was used as a public school kindergarten. This brick dwelling was built by William J. Albert in 1840, who was Congressman from 1873 to 1875.

Where Baltimore County's beehive of industry now stands years ago there was a mammoth peach orchard.

About 1896 the Bethlehem Steel Company, whose main plant is located at Steelton, Pa., desired a plant on tidewater, so that ore might be received from Cuba and other foreign countries without the cost of inland freight. Such a plant would give the Company a decided advantage when competing for foreign business, since the products could be loaded directly into steamships. Sparrows Point was found to be a suitable site and through Jacob Taylor, a prominent business man of Baltimore City, negotiations were started to secure 1000 acres of land in that vicinity.

Visiting the owner of the property, Taylor led up to the question of purchasing the farm, but the farmer only shook his head. Increased offers made no impression, until finally he reluctantly agreed to talk the matter over with his wife. The wife, however, was as equally determined as her husband not to sell. Dinner time came without an agreement being reached. The would-be purchaser was invited to dine, and while the host and hostess went about their several tasks Taylor sat leisurely in the parlor and pondered. Noticing an old cabinet organ in the corner, he observed upon it a book of Moody and Sankey hymns, and he opened it at a hymn "Almost Persuaded," which he considered a favorable omen. Being a good musician and possessing a fine baritone voice, he was soon whiling away the time singing the old Methodist verse. The housewife, herself a staunch Methodist and a lover of music, was lured from her duties and, standing behind the performer soon added her voice to his. The music, no doubt, had a pleasant, persuasive effect, for when Taylor returned to his home later he carried an option on the property, which from year to year has grown into one of the most widely known steel plants in the world.

After all formalities had been concluded in the purchase, The Bethlehem Steel Company, then known as The Pennsylvania Steel Company, began to build its Maryland extension, as it was known until 1891, when a charter was taken out in the name of the Maryland Steel Company.

In March, 1887, the first surveyors came from the main plant, laying out the town. The first shovel full of dirt to be turned for the new enterprise came out of a test hole on the site of the blast furnaces. It was sunk to determine the nature of the subsoil, which proved to be clay. These holes were dug by a negro named David Jackson, who until a few years ago was living and a resident of "the Point."

In May, 1887, the first actual step toward building a plant was taken byb the establishment of a brick yard. Soon after the marsh was drained, portions being dammed and the water pumped out by a windmill.

In August, 1887, foundations for the blast furnaces were started, but in the meantime the town was not being neglected, for streets had been laid out and residences were being erected.

In October, 1889, the first pig iron was drawn from the blast furnaces. With the beginning of the manufacture of iron the days of the marsh were numbered, for the molten slag was dumped into its midst, killing the rank vegetation, replacing the mud and slime with a hard, lava-like substance. The organization of transportation to and from Sparrows Point makes one of the most interesting chapters in the town's history. In March, 1887, when trips began to be of any frequeency a bugeye was used, the landing being made in Humphrey's Creek. Following the bugeye the Company bought a steam launch which carried from 20 to

(Continued on Back Page)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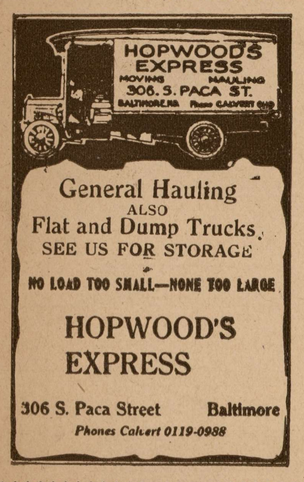


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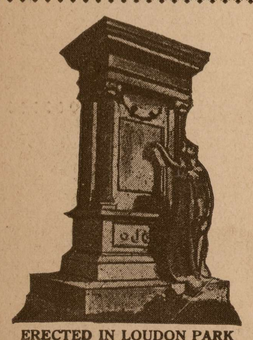

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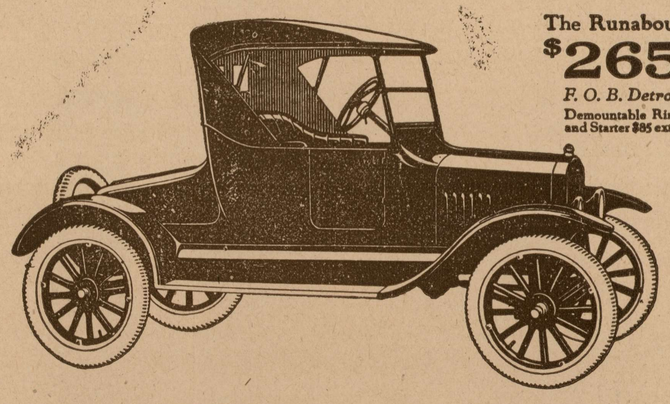

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