

## "New Windsor Laid Out 200 Years Ago"

Carroll County Times Article for 9 March 1997

By Jay A. Graybeal

200 years ago Isaac Richardson Atlee began selling lots in the newly formed town of New Windsor. He recorded "The Plan of New Windsor" in the Frederick County Land Records of February 22, 1797 and the plan was "examined and delivered" on March 11th. The founding of New Windsor by was described by Frank J. Devilbiss in an 1895 Carroll Record newspaper series:

"The ground upon which New Windsor is located, was shifted frequently from county to county, and from district to district, before it became circumscribed and stamped with its present topography. As early as 1658, this soil was embraced in Charles County, and so continued until in 1694. Then Prince George's County was created, into whose bounds our territory was shifted, where it remained until an act of the General Assembly passed June 11th., 1748, established the bounds of Frederick County. Into this county our rights and titles were now "gerrymandered." You will note that our heritage of land, water and wood has already existed within the confines of Charles, Prince George's and Frederick counties; and finally in 1837 Carroll County was created, and in it were launched our present proportions, "for better or for worse." The sequel shows "for the better."

In about the year 1788 after the close of the Revolutionary War, Mr. Isaac Richardson Atlee, visited this section in view of locating. He noted considerable travel on both the Monacacy and Buffalo roads, which crossed here, and, being of a business turn of mind, concluded that a tavern at this juncture would be a profitable investment. The Monocacy road was opened only by usage and not by state authorities, and passed here from Baltimore and the settlements of Baltimore county, to the settlements on the Monocacy.

This was the main thoroughfare, and trains of wagons passed over it daily. It antedates the national turnpike more than a half century, and is the identical road which now passes through the farms of Lincoln W. Rinehart and Amos Wampler. The Buffalo road laid out by duly commissioned officers, starts at Annapolis, and leads to Buffalo, N. Y. At the intersection of these thoroughfares here, Mr. Atlee located and built a small tavern, and rudely constructed stables. The genial disposition of Mr. Atlee, and the unstinted courtesy shown his guests, made his hostelry very favorably known to travellers, who patronized him liberally, of times making excuses, by predicting unfavorable weather, to tarry longer with him. It is needless to say that ill-starred fanatics, pseudo-moralists and battered politicians (?) had not at that time developed into either "Prohibitionist" or "Local Optionist," and all this was favorable to the business interests of Mr. Atlee.

He built up a lucrative business and in the meantime, settlers hearing of a sulphur spring, now on the Maynard estate, and of its high medicinal qualities, came from far and near, purchased lots, erected houses and spent money. The place then became known far and wide as "Sulphur Springs," and afterwards as "The Springs." Throngs of people visited the place simply to partake of its health-giving water. In fact, The Springs, as a health resort, became as famous as any of the modern watering-places in Virginia. An old gentleman had located near the spring and purchased nearly all the land which was afterward comprised in the Atlee estate. He imbibed sulphur water generously, by finally this exquisite pleasure was wholly consumed by the insatiate thirst for rum. He became a daily denizen at the Atlee bar, and his downfall which was rapid and disastrous, soon followed.

Besides borrowing money from Mr. Atlee to assist him in his gambling propensities, he would have his liquor bills charged from time to time, until at intervals Mr. Atlee in a patronizing manner, would request settlement. The old man would invariably give his note. These notes accumulated until they amounted to more than the estimated value of his possessions. At the final settlement however, his entire property passed into the hands of Mr. Atlee at a price agreed upon, which did not liquidate his indebtedness. At this juncture permit me to interject a short sketch of the Atlee's who were the founders of our town, and of this settlement. A history of this family would be an early history of New Windsor. Their thoughts, their actions and their lives, are yet incorporated within our town.

After Mr. Atlee had acquired large land possessions, he proceeded at once to improvement, with the ultimate prospect of founding a town. Sulphur Springs, as the small settlement was called, continued to grow rapidly in reputation and favor as the virtue of the water became known. Besides the influx of sojourners, from every section, many persons from the city were attracted here in the summer, and received such great benefit, that Mr. Atlee was besieged constantly to enlarge his hotel and take city boarders. This he refused to do, on account of the ill health of his wife. Many of his friends then purchased lots from him, and built temporary summer quarters, where they spent the season in rural quietude, inhaling the woodland's balsamic air, and imbibing Nature's curative waters. If the notoriety of the place could have had the stimulus of to-day's "catchy" advertisement scattered broadcast in every courting room and fireside, imagine the rapid upbuilding and achievement.

Mr. Atlee now realizing the necessity of providing for a town, finally consented to lay his land out into lots, which was consummated in 1796, nearly one century ago. Early one bright, crisp March morning he bounded upon his well-fed steed, and proceeded to Taneytown to engage the services of a surveyor. He soon returned, with the object of his ride, and forthwith Sulphur Springs assumed her bounds, lines and courses, at the dictation of the trembling point of a magnetic needle.

The town grew apace. Building lots were sold at a fair value, Mr. Atlee retaining an annual ground rent of \$3. for those left unimproved, or \$2. if built upon. The greater portion of these rents remain on lots today. Lands were cleared of dense forests, magnificent water courses were utilized for mills and factories and inhabitants increased and multiplied. Yet the inconvenience the settlers were subjected to, can scarcely be realized now. Being in Frederick county, the voting place was Frederick. Their mail was carried from Baltimore here on horseback once a week. Later on, it was brought to Westminster by hack, and from there to this place by carrier. Postage stamps cost six cents."

Frank Devilbiss' articles on the history of New Windsor, along with others about Northwest Carroll towns, were published by the Historical Society in the Carroll Record Histories of Northwestern Carroll County Communities. The articles contain a wealth of information about the people, institutions and history of this part of the county.

Photo caption: Isaac R. Atlee's "Plan of New Windsor" was recorded in the Land Records of Frederick County on February 22, 1797. The new town contained twenty-eight 60" x 150" lots on Bath Street; High Street divided the town in its center. Atlee's "Bath House" was located at the west end of town.