

Herndon: A Summertime Destination

By Chuck Mauro

In the early 1900s the W&OD Railroad promoted “the progressive town of Herndon” as a summer destination.

One hundred years ago, the town of Herndon had 750 inhabitants. Six trains carried passengers and freight each day along the railroad line from Washington to Herndon, which boasted 2 guesthouses, a hotel, and a bank. There also were 4 land agents, 7 builders and carpenters, 19 milk shippers, 21 farmers, 6 poultry producers, 3 blacksmiths and wheelwrights, 3 physicians, a dentist, and a newspaper.

In 1916, The Washington and Old Dominion Railway printed a booklet entitled *Resorts from the Capital to the Blue Ridge on the Washington And Old Dominion Railway*. The booklet, which counted Herndon as one of 16 featured destinations, said:

Inevitably there comes a time when the longing for the open, sun-lit country, gently undulating valleys, fresh, green meadows, mountains which softly blend into the azure of the sky, and the cool, healthful breezes, cannot be further unheeded. Then comes the time of deciding where the days of pleasure, rest and recreation shall be spent. There is no better place suited for such purposes than Northern Virginia—from the nation’s Capital to the picturesque Blue Ridge Mountains—reached via the Bluemont Division of the Washington and Old Dominion Railway.

Herndon was described as follows:

The progressive town of Herndon has long been a favorite place for suburban and summer residence, where hundreds of people spend the summer months each year. Located only 21.1 miles from Washington, and 23.2 miles from Alexandria, with pure water and all the healthful surroundings contributory to the enjoyment of summer and suburban residence, this attractive town awaits in a welcoming spirit the oncoming of city residents, who must needs seek in a place like this the joys and comforts which are commanded by neither wealth nor station in the thickly populated cities.

It is thoroughly up-to-date, and possesses many advantages not to be found elsewhere. On account of its proximity to Washington, and excellent transportation facilities accorded, this town is steadily growing in favor, not only as a desirable place to spend the months of summer but also as a permanent residence, where the pleasures and freedom of the country is combined with the conveniences of the city.

Many of the streets are laid out in graceful curves, bordered by lovely shade trees and verdant lawns, fronting modest and pretty and stately homes, set well back, which present a pleasing scene of quiet beauty.

The attractive rural scenery of the immediate surroundings of Herndon impresses itself upon the minds of those in search of a charmingly pretty and restful place to spend the summer or the year round. It has a delightfully pleasing social atmosphere.

It has excellent commercial and banking facilities. Numerous boarding houses and a hotel amply provide for visitors and summer boarders at moderate rates. Fresh, rich milk, which is produced in large quantities, and fruits and vegetables are supplied daily.

Illustrating that glowing description were photographs of several of the town's premier buildings along with a pasture populated with contented-looking dairy cattle. The booklet also listed the rates for Herndon House, the town's 20-room "principal hotel," at \$1 per day, \$7 per week, and \$30 per month.

Several of the summer residences built during that time remain today as year-round homes. We'll talk about them in another column.

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