



Small Town Baltimore: An Album of Memories

Gilbert Sandler

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Before Harborplace and the Convention Center, Oriole Park at Camden Yards and the Ravens, shopping malls and multiplex movie theaters, Baltimore was a very different city. Most Baltimoreans would agree that, until recently, living here was like living in a small town. For more than 25 years, Gilbert Sandler chronicled this bygone life of streetcars and cinema palaces in his *Evening Sun* (and later *Sun*) column, "Baltimore Glimpses." Now collected, edited, and expanded in *Small Town Baltimore*, Sandler's delightful sketches of life in Baltimore from the 1920s through the 1970s take readers back to a time when flagpole-sitting was all the rage, when guests at high society weddings and cotillions were fed by the prominent African American business Hughes Catering and chef David Bruce's famous chicken croquettes, and when the salt rubdown at Rowland's Turkish Bath could take all one's troubles away.

This "album of memories" introduces the reader to the people and places—neighborhoods, restaurants, department stores, parks, hotels, night clubs, racetracks, and theaters—that once put the charm in Charm City. Sandler recalls the events that shaped life here, from strikes and demonstrations to baseball games and parades. Through interviews and reminiscences, Sandler catches a double feature at the Valencia; visits Howard Street's Arabian Tent Club to listen to Cab Calloway; attends the funeral of Chick Webb—"the greatest jazz drummer in the world"—along with such jazz luminaries as Duke Ellington, Gene Krupa, and Ella Fitzgerald; listens in on Arthur Godfrey's audition in the studios of WFBR; eats knockwurst at Schellhase's, steamed crabs at Bankert's, and Cantonese cuisine at Jimmy Wu's; takes the Chesapeake Restaurant up on its offer to "Eat our steak with a fork, else tear up your check and walk out"; and rides the Charles Street double-decker bus with Ms. Reuben Ross Holloway, who fought to make "The Star-Spangled Banner" our national anthem. *Small Town Baltimore* shows us how far Baltimore has come and what's been lost in the process.

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