

Fifty-eight years ago the present limits of the city were established by Act of Assembly. Since that time the population of Baltimore has increased in number considerably over a quarter of a million—from 50,000 to upwards of 300,000—a gain of more than six hundred per cent.

During the seventy years prior to the passage of the Act of 1816, the limits of the town and city had been nine times extended; the enlargement in every instance while furnishing large additional contributions to the revenue of the State, being absolutely required by the gradually increasing population of the city, whose material interests, at each extension of its boundaries, were also greatly advanced.

The area of Baltimore to-day is but a trifle over eleven square miles—less than that of any other great city in the Union. Ranked twenty years ago as the third, and even now as the sixth, city on the Continent, its boundaries are more contracted, by far, than those of a score of American cities which it exceeds in population, in influence, and in commercial importance. Philadelphia now includes, within its corporate limits, the entire county which formerly surrounded it; New York is enlarging its already immense area; Brooklyn has absorbed vast tracts of land in King's county; Boston, continually annexing its suburban towns, has recently taken in three more; while Chicago, an unsettled wild long after the present limits of our city were fixed, now stretches from north to south, along the line of its lake shore, thirteen miles.

The extension of our city boundaries—too long deferred—is now a matter of National, State and city importance. The need is greater than it ever has been before. The suburbs of Baltimore, on every side, are thickly settled. Many flourishing towns and villages are closely adjacent to its limits. The benefits which these would derive from annexation are unquestionably great—including all the advantages of modern and symmetrical highways and bridges, gas and water supplies, fire department, police force, school system, etc. The State of Maryland owes it to its principal city, that its limits should be proportionate, not only to its present needs, but also to its future promise; that its suburbs should be equal to those of some of the cities named, and to those of St. Louis, Cincinnati, San Francisco and New Orleans. Must we stand still, while all others are advancing, and hold a false position in the world's estimation? As it is, many younger rivals bid fair to distance us, as some already have done. At this rate of progress, Baltimore would make but an indifferent showing in the proposed Centennial Census of 1875, recording and presenting in statistical tables the comparative growth of population and relative advancement of cities at the close of the first century of our National life, and thus fixing their position for years afterwards.