

The Renaming of Arlington Streets

By C. L. KINNIER *

On January 1, 1932, a new form of County government came into being in Arlington County known as County Board-County Manager Government. The members of the County Board who had been elected at the previous November's elections were: Harry A. Fellows, Elizabeth B. Magruder, John C. Gall, Fred A. Gosnell, and Lyman M. Kelly. Upon taking office the Board had elected Harry A. Fellows as Chairman and had appointed Roy S. Braden as County Manager.

At the Board's meeting the following February 6 the County Manager presented a recommendation to the Board requesting it to authorize the appointment of a committee to study and report on the duplication of street names throughout the County. This recommendation, worded as follows, was approved by the County Board at its meeting on February 8:

It has come to our attention that the streets and highways of Arlington County are improperly named in many instances and because of the fact it causes great inconvenience to citizens of the County. We therefore recommend that the County Board rename certain of these streets and highways in a comprehensive manner, and we are suggesting the following method of procedure to obtain the best results.

We suggest that the Board appoint a committee, consisting of one person from each of the various sections of the County, to meet with the County Manager and to make a study of existing conditions and offer a schedule of new names for the said highways, covering the entire County. We make the request that this matter be attended to at once.

For some time before this, there had been considerable agitation for corrective measures to eliminate this duplication of street names in the County. It had become necessary to add your subdivision name to your street address in order to get your mail, parcel-post delivery, or delivery of packages from the stores of the County, Alexandria, or Washington. Some of the stores in Washington had discontinued Arlington delivery because of the confusion of street names and locations. This condition had grown up over the years when there had been little or no control over the names selected for streets by the subdividers of the lands of the County. This failure to control the street names was due principally to lack of County personnel to study the problem and determine a proper system of names. It must be remembered also that at this time—1930 to 1932—about half of the subdivisions presented for record were "out in the country" and not adjacent to any other development. Our population in the 1930 census was only 26,615 in an area of ap-

* Mr. Kinnier served as Directing Engineer of Arlington County for four years during the last term of the Board of Supervisors. At the time of the renaming of Arlington streets he was in charge of the Engineering Department. He was later County Engineer and then Planning Engineer until reaching retirement age in 1954.—EDITOR.

proximately 25 square miles. A considerable growth had occurred, however, since 1920 when the population was only 16,040.

During its last term of office the Board of Supervisors, which was the governing body of the County previous to 1932, had passed several ordinances controlling certain features of subdivision development, such as the continuity of streets and their connection to those existing in adjacent developments. The difficulties of the street names at that time were due not only to the fact that there was no system but also to the fact that the streets had many names with neither significance as to location nor continuity even within a neighborhood or subdivision. A series of names of consecutive streets with "tree names" would be followed by a series of streets named for friends, and then family names, possibly local or perhaps historical. In all this mixture of names and systems there were found to be eleven Washington Streets or Avenues, nine Virginia Streets or Avenues, ten Arlington Streets or Avenues, five Lee Streets or Avenues and one Lee Terrace, and four Fairfax Streets or Avenues and one Fairfax Terrace.

Now that the County was growing more rapidly, subdivisions were being developed adjacent to others, and so the names of streets had become a problem to the County officials and confusing to the several post offices, stores, and the public trying to find a certain address. Another and very natural problem was the delivery of mail to homes and stores. There were at that time several small rented post offices such as Arlington (on Columbia Pike), Ballston, Cherrydale, Clarendon, Rosslyn, South Washington, and Glencarlynn, several of which provided home delivery of mail to an area of the County adjacent to them. At about this time the post offices at Clarendon, Arlington, and Cherrydale were made branches of the Washington, D.C., post office. The others remained independent until December 13, 1937, when the Central Post Office, Arlington, began to serve the entire County.

So from these conditions strong requests were made by the Chamber of Commerce and the Arlington County Civic Federation, civic associations, and the many citizens for a central post office, which was possible only with a revision of or changing of many street names throughout the County.

The correction and clearing up of the situation came about through the concern of an alert citizenry, both from a civic and commercial standpoint. The objectives sought were:

1. Better mail delivery service;
2. More efficient and less costly delivery of purchases from stores;
3. A desire on the part of the County residents to have an "Arlington mail address" rather than in some cases an Alexandria R.F.D., Falls Church R.F.D., or other non-Arlington address.

This last objective was most important, for Arlington citizens wanted to feel that they were living "in Arlington County" rather than in a subdivision such as Radnor Heights, Clarendon, Ballston, or Country Club Hills.

At the time of the appointment of the committee (March 1, 1932) it was thought that the correction of the duplications of street names was all that would be necessary in order to untangle the confusion of local addresses and to correct the mail and store parcel delivery difficulties.

In my search of the minutes of the Board of Supervisors meetings, I find no record that the street-name problem had been formally discussed by it at any meeting. However, it had been considered an urgent need in meetings of the citizens and had been discussed with the Engineering Department at that time, and I know from memory and experience that the situation was being considered and worked on in the Engineering Department prior to the action of the County Board. Sheets of a large-scale map had been assembled, and work was being done in an effort to determine the possible continuity of streets in the various subdivisions and the connection of other streets across undeveloped land preliminary to the developing of a street-name system.

So when the County Manager recommended to the County Board that it proceed to appoint a committee, considerable groundwork had already been done on the project.

The members of the Board had acquired a general knowledge of the situation, and the County Manager was able to present the problem clearly to them and secure their approval. Immediately after the recommendation was adopted the County Manager requested the Arlington County Civic Federation to select the committee from its membership, having in mind representation from each section of the County. The following citizens were recommended on March 1 by it and appointed by the County Manager:

Monroe Stockett, 219 Rucker Avenue, Clarendon
Mrs. A. F. Williams, Jr., Livingstone Heights, Cherrydale
Grover E. Payne, 1 School Street, Ballston
William C. Hull, East Falls Church
Fred O. Lake, Park Lane, Rosslyn
Hugh McGrath, 349 Marion Avenue, Clarendon
Maynard Saunders, 500 Ingram Avenue, Clarendon
Jos. C. McClellan, 201 Dulancy Avenue, Virginia Highlands
W. F. Sunderman, 116 Strickler Avenue, Clarendon
Mrs. Ruby Simpson, 10 Military Road, Cherrydale
J. Vernon Smith, Glebe Road, Arlington
H. G. Freiwald, Barcroft

The committee immediately got down to work. At its first meeting it selected the late Monroe Stockett as chairman. The late Mrs. Elizabeth Agnew, then secretary to the County Manager, acted as secretary to the committee. The only business conducted at this lengthy meeting other than organization was a general discussion of the problem. Each member of the committee was requested to bring to the next meeting a list of names appropriate as street names to be used in place of duplications. At this time the committee members generally felt that its job was relatively simple and that it would only be necessary to select an appropriate name for each of

those streets which duplicated other names, leaving one street in each case with the original name. However, very early in its consideration of suitable street names it was found that this was a very narrow approach to the problem and that consideration should be given to a broader program. This was brought forcibly to the committee's attention when it began to consider the changing of this Washington Avenue or that Arlington Avenue, rather than another street of similar name. Many objected; each thought it was better to change the name of the other man's street rather than his and brought very strong arguments as to why his street should be left with its original name, either because of some local history or of some family name, or for various other reasons. After the members really began to get more knowledge of the problem and the background and information available from the Engineering Department's map and from citizens who appeared before it, it faced up to the fact that the only solution was to develop and present to the County Board a complete system of all new street names or possibly names and numbers.

The committee made its first preliminary report to the County Board on February 18, 1933. During the time of the study, the committee and the County Board received from single citizens, local groups, civic associations, and even nonresidents many petitions and letters ranging all the way from suggestions of a name for a single street to a complete system of names. In addition to these two extremes, recommendations were made by several groups that inasmuch as the County was a part of the metropolitan area and so close to Washington, D.C., the committee should extend the District of Columbia system of letters, names, and numbers into Arlington County. Another local group thought that the citizens on a particular street should by some means be allowed to select the name of the street found necessary to be changed.

The committee carefully considered each of these letters, petitions, and recommendations; it tried each out on the large map of the County which had been developed and was being used for the study. This map was of large scale and hung from the ceiling, so that each member could sit at his place and view the particular area or the County as a whole. It was finally decided that a complete new system of names was needed and that all street names should be changed—to either names or numbers—with the exception of certain prominent streets and highways, the names of which for various reasons should not or could not be changed. The committee then considered the kind of system that would best serve the County.

During this period the committee consulted the national offices of the American Municipal League and the County Managers' Association. Considerable assistance was received from these organizations of cities and other communities over the nation which had had experience in street renaming. The committee also received propositions from several engineering firms

over the country that had developed new systems of street names for various cities. The committee considered these proposals but decided to do the work with local assistance and without employing professional advice.

It first considered the possibility of a complete new system of names beginning at the south and east areas of the County and supplying new names or numbers throughout the county. It decided that the area of the County—25 square miles—was too large for a system of this type, because the names in the north and west parts of the County would probably have to be unusual or possibly too long. The members were possibly influenced unconsciously by Washington, D.C.'s alphabetical and syllable system. Certain members of the committee were beginning to realize that some type of subdivision of the County would be necessary.

It then considered dividing the County into quadrants, as in the city of Washington, but concluded that this was more complex and more confusing than the situation demanded. So it next considered the division of the County into two sections, either east and west or north and south. Finally it decided that on account of the way the existing streets had been developed, both radially from the bridges and locally in subdivisions, it would be better to divide the County into north and south areas.

The problem then was to select a street as a dividing line which would separate the County as nearly as possible into two equal areas. It first considered Columbia Pike as the dividing line, but this was thought to be too far south, leaving too much area to the north of it. It then considered a road which has now passed out of existence but which at that time was known as Military Road and which ran from Highway Bridge (Fourteenth Street Bridge) through the old Washington-Hoover Airfield, across military property around the south wall of Arlington Cemetery, through Fort Myer to Hatfield (where the present grade separation of Arlington Boulevard and Washington Boulevard is located), and from there along Washington Avenue parallel to the Washington-Alexandria Railroad to Clarendon, thence over Garrison Road, Memorial Drive, and Brown Avenue to Falls Church. This last described route, following several named streets and roads, was where now a part of Washington Boulevard is located. This route was abandoned as the dividing line, as it was thought to be too far to the north, leaving too much area south of it.

It was fortunate that this location was not selected, for later the part of the road from the southeast corner of Arlington Cemetery to Highway Bridge, which was originally constructed by the Federal Government as an alternate access road from Fort Myer to Washington for the city's protection, was closed altogether by an Act of Congress. This Act was passed with the definite agreement between the owners and operators of the Washington-Hoover Airport and Arlington County that the County would either be provided a substitute road or paid an amount as part of the cost of constructing

such a road to Highway Bridge. After several conferences and considerable negotiation, the Airport owners paid the County \$15,000. Actually this airport should have been closed from a safety standpoint, for by this time planes were larger than they had been before the two airports were consolidated, and it was necessary if the joint airport was to be used that a runway cross the highway. For some time previous to the time of the contemplated construction of the runway, chains had been placed across the runway area when planes were coming in or going out. This controversy was finally closed by the monetary payment, although the County never carried out its plan, for before a suitable route could be selected the larger development of the Pentagon and its network of highways came into the plans of the area and made the highway unnecessary.

It was finally decided that the use of Lee Boulevard as it was then known, now called Arlington Boulevard, as a dividing line would provide the most nearly equal areas between the north and south for the street-name system. At this time Arlington Boulevard had been constructed from the west toward Fort Myer to a point about half a mile west of it known as Station 106. It was decided that from this point a straight line would be drawn through Fort Myer and Arlington Cemetery to Memorial Bridge, then being constructed. All the streets in the area north of this line would be considered as north streets and those south of it as south streets.

Incidentally, the drawing of this line across the Government reservation is the explanation why the streets in Radnor Heights and the south part of Fort Myer Heights are north streets, even though the areas lie south of what is now Arlington Boulevard. Later, in 1937-38, Arlington Boulevard was completed from Station 106 around the north side of the Government reservation.

As already mentioned, there were certain prominent streets or highways within the County that the committee had decided for various reasons should retain their names. It then enumerated and placed these streets on the map, retaining the names they then had. These streets were in some cases state highways which had been named by the State Legislature and naturally could not be changed, even if desired by the committee. These state highways were:

Jefferson Davis Highway, which runs from Highway Bridge to and beyond Alexandria
Columbia Pike, which then ran from Jefferson Davis Highway and into Fairfax
County

Lee Boulevard, which runs from Memorial Bridge to Fairfax Circle, now Arlington
Boulevard

Lee Highway, which runs from Key Bridge through the City of Falls Church and
entire State

Glebe Road, which runs across the County from Alexandria to Chain Bridge

Old Dominion Drive, which runs from Lee Highway in Cherrydale to Fairfax County

Other streets and roads in this group were under County control and had names that, it was felt, were sufficiently prominent or historical to justify their retention. These streets and roads were:

<i>Name</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>
Wilson Boulevard	Key Bridge	Fairfax County Line
Lorcom Lane	Spout Run	Lee Highway
Dittmar Road	Glebe Road	Glebe Road
Little Falls Road	Glebe Road	Falls Church
Military Road	Cherrydale	Glebe Road
Kirkwood Road	Lee Highway	Fairfax Drive
Carlyn Springs Road	Wilson Boulevard	Columbia Pike
Vacation Lane	Military Road	Lorcom Lane
Henderson Road	Glebe Road	"Henderson Castle" (Third Street)
Pershing Drive	Arlington Boulevard	Arlington Boulevard

The committee was still seeking appropriate names of historical significance. It got in touch with the Virginia Historical Society and with individual officers, but with no success in developing a list of Virginia names of historical importance. When the committee's decision about the names of the above streets, roads, and highways had been made, it proceeded to develop a system of names and/or numbers for the other streets of the County.

It considered several alternate systems:

1. The streets running north and south at right angles to Arlington Boulevard to be given names and called avenues. Streets running crosswise to these streets to be given names and called roads.

2. Streets running parallel to Arlington Boulevard to be numbered and called avenues and those at right angles to Arlington Boulevard to be named and called roads.

3. Streets running at right angles to Arlington Boulevard to be given names and called avenues and those parallel to Arlington Boulevard to be given numbers and called avenues.

4. Finally it was concluded to give those streets running at right angles to Arlington Boulevard names and call them streets or roads and those parallel to Arlington Boulevard to be numbered and called streets and roads.

This final decision was influenced or really directed by the County Board. A conference was held with the County Board on November 26, 1932, when certain decisions were reached. The perpendicular streets were to be given names and called avenues and parallel streets were to be given numbers and called avenues, but the County Board did not like the idea of calling them all avenues, and so this was changed to streets, and to roads where there was a second street in the same letter or number. If anyone examines the County map showing the highways of the County, he will find that Twenty-first Avenue extending from a point east of North Kenmore Street to North Nelson Street is designated as an avenue. This came about a year or so after the ordinance was adopted. A group of citizens appeared before the County

Board and insisted that their street be called avenue. In this case, the County Board acquiesced.

After it had been decided that the streets were to be named and numbered and divided north and south at Arlington Boulevard, using Virginia historical names as far as possible, it was determined that a series of names would be selected that would have single syllables beginning at the eastern or Potomac River side of the County and running through the alphabet with single-syllable names with the exception that there would be no X, Y, or Z names. This series would be followed by a list of names with two syllables and then a third alphabet of names with three syllables. Even with this breakdown of names and with the County divided into north and south areas, there are today streets near East Falls Church with four-syllable names.

It was also decided that in case of the named streets the North or South would be a prefix to the name and in the case of the numbered streets the North or South would be a suffix to the number.

On February 18, 1933, the chairman of the committee appeared before the County Board and for the first time asked that a hearing be held to give the public an opportunity to express itself on the work of the committee up to that time. This public hearing was set for March 22, 1933, but for some reason was not held. The chairman again appeared before the County Board on March 31 and advised it of many changes in names that had been discussed in the conference held some time before. During all these months from March 1932 to February 1933 the committee had been meeting one or more times each month. The meetings had been open. While many citizens had appeared, most of the reports, favorable and unfavorable, had been addressed to the County Board and had come to the committee from it.

The chairman of the street-naming committee came before the County Board on March 31, 1933, and presented a resolution on the part of the committee which in a few words stated that the committee had been working for a year, had completed a system of names for the entire County, and wished to have a public hearing as soon as possible. The public hearing was set for the following June 21.

At that hearing many petitions were presented, some favorable and some unfavorable. One widely supported petition presented from the north area of the County asked that the County Board, while recognizing the work of the committee over the past year, do nothing about the changing of all the street names. Briefly, it stated that a gridiron system of street names and numbers was not suitable for Arlington County on account of the terrain, that since Arlington County was primarily a suburb of Washington the streets should be tied in to the Washington streets with the main thoroughfares fanning out from the bridges. From other groups petitions were presented which were favorable to the plan for an entire new system of street names.

Resolutions favoring street renaming were received from the Arlington

County Civic Federation, Arlington County Chamber of Commerce, Organized Women Voters, Arlington-Fairfax Firemen's Association, and many other civic associations. There was a petition which objected to the use of the word "place" in the system, which was being recommended for one- and two-block streets. The petition objected to the word "place" for the reason that to some people it implied a low grade street or alley. At this same meeting citizens representing people on what is now known as Arlington Ridge Road requested that that name, which was then in the system as Washington Avenue, be changed to Arlington Ridge Road. All these petitions and oral statements were listed, turned over by the County Board to the committee, and later considered by it.

On November 29, 1933, the late Walter Varney and Louis Carl appeared before the Board and requested that it take some action on the renaming of the streets since nothing could be done toward securing for the County a central post office until there was a considerable revision of the names of the streets in the County. On January 5, 1934, the chairman of the committee called a special meeting in order to consider changes in many of the names selected, as the County Board was not satisfied that sufficient thought and effort had been given to developing names of historical importance in Virginia. He stated that there were in this system 62 names with Virginia historical significance and presented a list of many others that might be used. Many of the names were changed to these names.

On January 12, 1934, a letter was addressed and presented to the County Board by the Arlington County Civic Federation reviewing the facts that it had been requested to name a committee for the study of street names of the County in March 1932, that it had done so, and that this committee had been working continuously since that time. It asked the Board to take action on the work of the committee.

The committee had regularly met all during 1933 and was continuing to meet in 1934, and at a regular meeting held July 18, 1934, several changes were suggested and approved. The name of Washington Avenue, which was then designated Arlington Ridge-Cemetery-Oil Plant Road, was changed to Arlington Ridge Road. The combination of what were formerly Military Road, South Road around the Cemetery from Fort Myer, Washington Avenue, Garrison Road, Memorial Drive, and Brown Avenue leading from Highway Bridge to Falls Church was designated Washington Boulevard. The street in Lyon Village leading from the present Highland Street to Wilson Boulevard, then known as Courthouse Road, was changed to Franklin Road. A street extending northward from Columbia Pike, under the plan to be called Ute Avenue and then known as Sherman and Arlington Avenues, was changed to Courthouse Road. Another street, Rock Spring Road and Drive, whose new name, Thirty-first Avenue, was objected to by the people in the area through which it passed, was changed back to its original name of Rock Spring Road.

I have given these illustrations of the workings of the committee to show the responsiveness of this committee to the citizens' requests insofar as they could be met without breaking up the over-all plan.

After other meetings with the County Board and meetings at which the public discussed various names, the County Board finally approved the street-naming recommendations of the committee and authorized it to be advertised as an ordinance and sent to the Judge of the Circuit Court for its approval. This action was taken on August 30, 1934, thirty months after the committee started to work on the project.

The next step was to assign new house numbers to every residential, commercial, and industrial building in the County. This was not a small job. It required careful planning and detailed supervision. The planning and execution of the renumbering of all properties were done by the Engineering Department under the County Manager's direction.

It was decided that a number would be assigned to each 25-foot frontage in residential areas and a number to each 12½-foot frontage in commercial and industrial areas. It might seem at first thought that someone was anticipating row house or some other small lot type of development in residential areas. However, this was not the case; it was simply an effort to avoid any possibility in the future of having to use fractional numbers.

It was also decided before any house numbering was started in the field that the major and generally the first instance of each letter or number would determine the house numbers of each block; that where necessary, to make the number system really indicate its location, the numbering series might have to change in the middle of a block as, for example 1554 next to 1600. Also it was determined that throughout the County the houses on the south and west sides of the streets would have even numbers and those opposite would have odd numbers.

With these few simple decisions made, a 3" x 8" form was made, providing space for the name of owner, name of occupant—which might or might not be the same—the old house number and street name, the new house number and street name, and other information. While there was fairly accurate information in the Court House as to the existence, location, type of structure, and use of every building in the County, this renumbering of buildings was thought to be a good opportunity for a thorough check of this information, and so it was decided to get these data placed on the forms in the field, one copy being left with the occupant and one returned to the Court House. These forms are filed in the office of the Building Inspection Division, where house numbers are assigned to the present time.

Crews of two men each were organized, instructed, and then turned loose with strict supervision from the Engineering Department. In due time the work was completed, and the new street names and numbers and new house numbers became effective on July 1, 1935, as ordered by the County Board.

At a much later date the Planning Commission approved and presented to the County Board a "Plan and Report of Major Thoroughfares and Collector Streets—1941," developed by the planning and highway sections of the Engineering Department. In this a number of thoroughfares were located that have since to a very large extent materialized. The object of the plan was to develop wider and more adequate streets and provide more direct connections between the various parts of the County. Some of these drives, as they were designated, are radial routes, in that they carry traffic from the Potomac River bridges out into the Country, such as Williamsburg Boulevard, Yorktown Boulevard, Spout Run Parkway, Nellie Custis Drive, Walter Reed Drive, Army-Navy Drive, and Arlington Ridge Road. Others are cross-County Highways, such as Sycamore Street, John Marshall Drive, George Mason Drive, Patrick Henry Drive, and Old Dominion Drive.

When making up its budget for 1932-1933 the County Board had provided \$7,500 to cover the cost of purchasing and placing the street markers. This work was let to contract and cost actually \$2,030.80 for the placing of 1,101 standards with two markers each. This number of signs indicates the small number of intersections in the County at that time. There are now well over 3,000 such intersections.

Before the County Board finally passed the ordinance, because of a great many citizens' objections to some particular street names that had been agreed upon, it adopted the policy that if any majority of the citizens of one street did not like the name selected, and wished to change it to some other name would fit the ordinance, it could have the change made provided they would pay for the signs. But no change was ever made after this policy was adopted.

During the period that the new system was being developed and before the ordinance became effective, the County Board published a small brochure, which was given free to anyone who wished it, giving the old names of the streets against the new ones and, in reverse, the new names against the old. Also, in the first Franklin Survey Company plat book of the County, which was published in 1935 and now is available in the Zoning Office of the County, the names are shown against the old names and can be seen by anyone interested.

This story of the work of Arlington's "Street Names Committee" cannot be closed without high praise for the very excellent work it did not only in providing names for the then existing streets but also in providing a system that could and has been expanded to meet the requirements of a growing community. The individual members and the many who assisted them should have felt that they had rendered a most worthwhile service to their County.