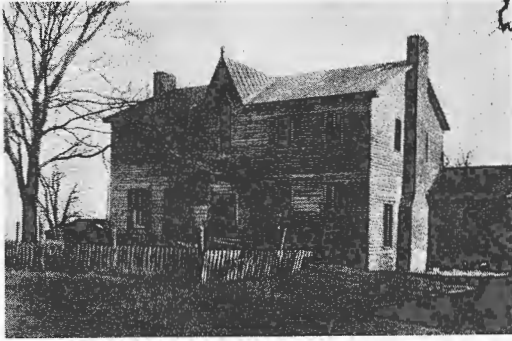


ARLINGTON—THEN AND NOW VI

By

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Then: Abingdon House, probably built by Gerard Alexander in 1741.

(Photograph from the National Archives)

Only a small plaque near National Airport marks Abingdon, birthplace of George Washington's adopted daughter Nelly Custis. A modest plantation home, Abingdon may have been built as early as 1741, when its owner Gerard Alexander moved there from his other holdings. The land had been patented in 1669 by his grandfather.

In 1778, Martha Washington's son, John Parke Custis, bought the Abingdon tract, a two-mile-wide strip overlooking the Potomac from Hunting Creek in Alexandria to the plantation house. Custis made the purchase despite the fact that his stepfather, George Washington, disapproved of a compound interest clause in the contract.

Nelly Custis was born at Abingdon on March 21, 1779. Custis himself died in 1781, and the house later reverted to Gerard Alexander's heirs. It was confiscated during the Civil War when Bushrod Alexander joined the Confederate Army.

Destroyed by fire on March 5, 1930, Abingdon had been targeted for a complete restoration. Tramps occupying the then-abandoned house may have been responsible for the blaze, which leveled everything except two chimney wells.



Now: The Abingdon site, with a plaque from the Washington Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.



Then: The Mary Carlin House, c. 1900.

(Photograph from Arlington Historical Society Archives)



Then: Schoolteacher Mary Carlin on her front porch, c. 1909.

(Photograph from Arlington Historical Society Archives)

In 1772, George Washington's tailor, William Carlin of Alexandria, bought part of the John Ball tract of land along Four Mile Run. After moving his family into the old Ball cabin (now known as the Ball-Sellers House), Carlin in 1800 built a second home atop a hill and deeded it to his granddaughters. One of the girls, Mary Alexander Carlin, was born in the new cabin and lived there until her death on New Year's Eve in 1905. She was the school teacher in Glencarlyn. The Mary Carlin House, at 5512 North Carlin Springs Road, has subsequently been renovated and enlarged.



Now: The Mary Carlin House, restored and enlarged by subsequent owners.



Then: "Barcroft Death Trap," hairpin curve on Columbia Pike, 1931.

(Photograph from Arlington Historical Society Archives)

Many modern roads in Arlington follow the paths of colonial routes which permitted old-time farmers to roll hogsheads of tobacco or drive cattle into Washington. Columbia Pike is one thoroughfare which generally follows its old-time course. But in Barcroft, the road has been straightened a bit to overcome what one citizen, H. G. Freiwald, nicknamed the "Barcroft Death Trap."

The "death trap" was a sharp turn near the old ice house. Freiwald blamed an unusually high accident rate on the turn, which confused drivers of Models T and A. Freiwald mounted a campaign to smooth out the road, which ran next to his home on the Pike.

The County eventually agreed to Freiwald's suggestion and moved the main path of traffic a few yards north of the ice house. This arrangement required a new bridge to replace the one shown in the photo, but the changes apparently succeeded in reducing the number of accidents.



Now: The site. Traffic has been re-routed to the left of the old ice house.