

The Original Developers of Barcroft

By ELIZABETH WALTER

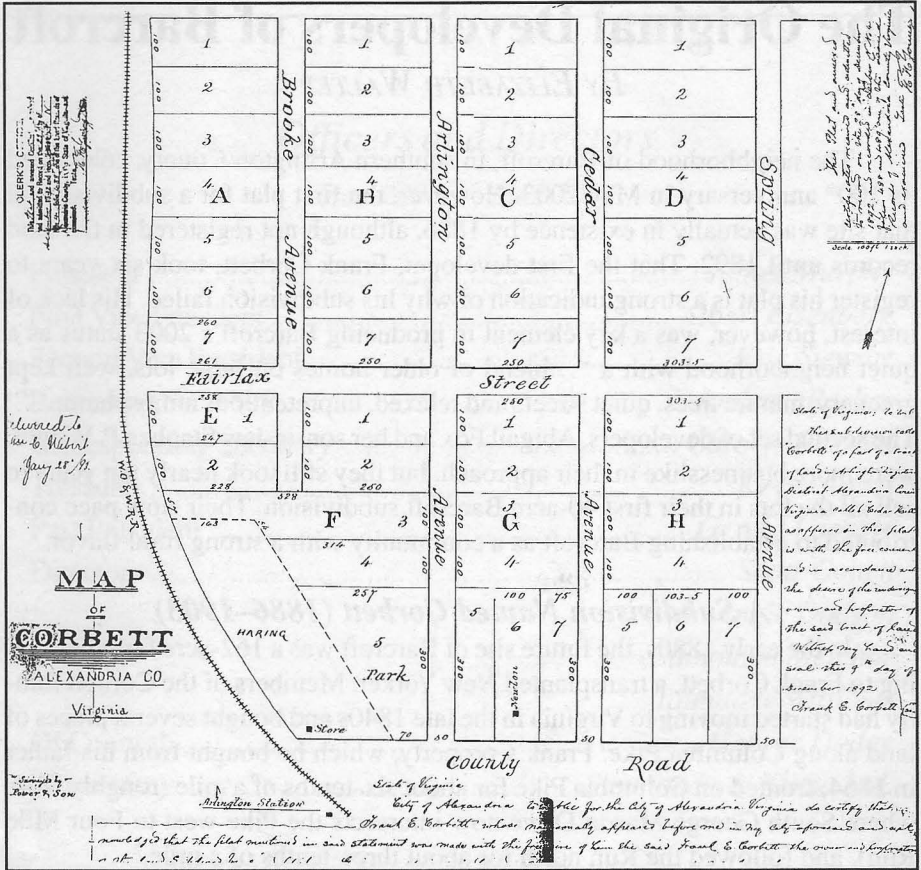
The neighborhood of Barcroft, in southern Arlington County, celebrated its 100th anniversary in May 2003. However, the first plat for a subdivision at that site was actually in existence by 1886, although not registered in the land records until 1892. That the first developer, Frank Corbett, took six years to register his plat is a strong indication of why his subdivision failed. His lack of interest, however, was a key element in producing Barcroft's 2003 status as a quiet neighborhood with a "...blend of older homes on large lots, well kept greenery, mature trees, quiet streets and relaxed, unpretentious atmosphere...."¹ The second set of developers, Abigail Fox and her son-in-law Stephen P. Wright, were more businesslike in their approach, but they still took nearly ten years to sell all the lots in their first 40-acre Barcroft subdivision. Their slow pace contributed to establishing Barcroft as a community with a strong rural flavor.

A Subdivision Named Corbett (1886–1903)

In the early 1880s, the future site of Barcroft was a 162-acre farm belonging to Frank Corbett, a transplanted New Yorker. Members of the Corbett family had started moving to Virginia in the late 1840s and bought several pieces of land along Columbia Pike. Frank's property, which he bought from his father in 1864, fronted on Columbia Pike for about six-tenths of a mile (roughly from where South George Mason Drive now intersects the Pike west to Four Mile Run), and followed the Run north for about three-tenths of a mile.²

At that time, the area was still overwhelmingly rural, but the string of houses along Columbia Pike petered out only a mile or so further east, and there were stirrings of commercial activity. The Washington and Ohio Railroad, which followed the Four Mile Run valley out of Alexandria on its way to Leesburg, had a station at Columbia Pike, and Dr. John Wolverton Barcroft had recently rebuilt the old Arlington Mill on Four Mile Run near the station.³ A steady stream of farmers and drovers from Fairfax County traveled down Columbia Pike to markets in Alexandria or Washington, or the abattoir at the lower end of the Pike.⁴ Oscar Haring, of Georgetown, decided the area had enough promise to warrant opening a store near the mill and the railroad station. He approached Corbett and bought two acres across from the station in 1885.⁵

Corbett had worked in Alexandria since at least 1870, and moved there by 1876.⁶ Presumably, he took Haring's purchase as a sign that his farmland was ready for development and hired surveyors to lay out a forty-acre subdivision.⁷ However, the venture was not a success. He sold only three lots before he died



Map of Corbett, from Arlington County Deed Book N4, pp. 448-489.

in 1897, and his executors sold only two more before selling the balance of the property to a new developer in 1903.

Corbett apparently assumed buyers would appear who could afford large lots of at least half an acre. The suburb he envisaged had seven blocks with seven lots each laid out on a slightly irregular grid. Four streets would be set perpendicular to Columbia Pike, one parallel to it. The lots ranged from 100 by 225 to 100 by 305 square feet.

The grid pattern was common to all economic levels of real estate development, but Corbett's lot sizes were not. They mirror not only the deep lots seen in the English "parks" of the 1820s and 1830s that became the prototypes of exclusive residential development,⁸ but aspects of Andrew Jackson Downing's ideal suburb. Downing, an influential proponent of year-round country living, argued that suburbs should contain "single-family cottages on lots with street

frontages of at least 100 feet.”⁹ When his protégé, America’s best-known postbellum landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, designed his most influential suburb, Riverside, outside of Chicago in the 1860s, he made the lots about 100 by 225 feet.¹⁰

The buyers Corbett did get were middle-class according to the early nineteenth definition: they ran their own businesses or inherited money. John Newlon had been the head miller for Herr & Cissel of Georgetown, but in 1885 he rented the Barcroft Mill and set up on his own.¹¹ He bought one of the lots fronting on Columbia Pike.¹² The woman who bought his lot in 1891, Florence Taluradge Johnston, had at least an independence. Several years later she bought the lots on either side of her original purchase, which gave her almost two acres.¹³ Annie Doremus was a dressmaker in the District, but she inherited \$2,500 from her grandfather and used some of the money to invest in a Corbett lot.¹⁴ A similar inheritance to her sister, Ida Haring, may have provided the funds for the Harings’ 1892 purchase of the adjoining lot¹⁵ (an investment for the Harings, as they continued to live above their store). Edgar Halsted Klemroth had been a draftsman, then an architect, in the District for nearly twenty years. He was in his sixties when he and his wife bought two lots in 1899.¹⁶

Their houses support the picture of Corbett as a middle class suburb: all were single-family, two-story frame residences set well back from the street. According to Johnston’s will (she died in 1907), she had “a two story frame residence and stable and outhouses.”¹⁷ When Klemroth died in 1934, the Clerk of the Court recorded that he had “a mansion house”¹⁸ which the Probate Office appraised at \$6,000. The Doremus house, at what is now 902 South Buchanan Street, was originally smaller than the others, but the family added on to it over the years.

The significance of the lot sizes becomes clearer when comparing Corbett’s subdivision with the nearby development of Carlin Springs (renamed Glencarly in 1896 in response to a Postal Service request for a one-word name).

The 132-acre Carlin property was located about a mile northwest of Corbett’s property, on the west side of the railroad tracks. John Carlin sold the land in 1887 to the partnership of Samuel Burdett and William Curtis, who promptly had it surveyed for a subdivision. The subdivision map shows streets arranged in the familiar grid pattern, but with much smaller lots than in Corbett: almost all are 50 by 120 feet, or 6,000 square feet.¹⁹

Burdett and Curtis opened a real estate office at 924 F Street, N.W., near the Treasury Department. Their sales brochure targeted “all men and women of moderate means, or who receive stated salaries”²⁰—essentially, white collar employees. The growing number of salaried workers in bureaucracies was transforming middle class employment, and the federal government was at the fore-

front of this movement. In 1880, there were 7,866 employees in the Executive Departments in Washington, D.C.; in 1893, 17,304; and, in 1903, 25,675. These people had given up, at least temporarily, the professional independence (for men) or leisure (for women) that was part of the original nineteenth century definition of “middle class,” but they retained the strong middle-class ambition for their own homes.²¹

Burdett and Curtis priced Carlin Springs lots at \$100: “First payment \$10.00 and thereafter nine monthly payments of \$10.00 each.”²² A year after they formed the Carlin Springs Syndicate, 230 of the original 360 lots had been sold, the syndicate was retired, and the Carlin Springs Cooperative Association was formed. The Association began laying out the streets and offering home loans. In 1892, when Corbett was selling his second and third lots, the people of Carlin Springs were already building a community hall (which still stands today).

The \$100 price works out to approximately 1.7 cents per square foot, so Corbett’s prices—per square foot—were actually less, but his lot sizes put the total price out of the range of people of moderate means. In 1886, Corbett sold Newlon a 100- by 300-foot lot for \$50 cash down, \$50 in six months, and \$50 in twelve months, at six percent interest per annum. (However, Corbett also stipulated that Newlon had to build a house worth at least \$500 on the property.)²³ The two 25,000-square foot lots Corbett sold in 1892 went for \$300 each, and the two lots the executors sold in 1899, a total of 50,000 square feet, cost \$400.

Corbett might have found more buyers if he had marketed his subdivision, but there is no evidence that he did so. Instead, he remained engrossed in his Alexandria activities. Over the years, he was a deputy collector for the U.S. Custom House (in at least 1870 and 1876), ran a Chinese Tea Store (early 1870s), and was partner in a brick manufactory (circa 1874–1890s) and a cigar manufactory (late 1880s until his death). In addition, he was a Common Councilman for Alexandria’s second ward (1883–1889), president of the Mount Vernon Fire Insurance Company of Alexandria (in at least 1887), and president of a building association, the Mount Vernon Co-Operative No. 2 (in at least 1888).²⁴ When he died, the *Alexandria Gazette* discussed these types of activities, covering his Arlington holdings with one sentence: “He owned a farm in Alexandria county said to be worth about \$20,000.”²⁵

Thus Corbett, while he established a subdivision, continued to explore and maintain other business and civic interests. With his death, his subdivision essentially died, too.

Fox, Wright, and the Subdivision of Barcroft (1903–1914)

Abbie Galt Fox, who bought the balance of Cedar Hill farm, was the widow of a Patent Office examiner. She had spent most of her married life in

Maryland but had recently moved to the District of Columbia. It was her son-in-law, Stephen Prescott Wright, who took the active role in developing the subdivision.

Wright was born in Ohio, but his Massachusetts-born father still had many ties with New England, and the family moved back there for a time. Wright was “the wild one.”²⁶ As a teenager, he ran away from home and surfaced several months later as a ranch hand out West. His father brought him back from that adventure, but Wright found it difficult to settle down. While his brothers chose professions—George became a doctor and William a lawyer—Prescott had a more varied career. According to the city directories for Washington, between 1881 and 1903, he was a clerk, junior partner in a wholesale and retail grocers (Walker & Wright), junior partner in a butcher’s (Rogerson F & Co.), teller at a bank, then treasurer at Northwest Bank, and finally a real estate agent.²⁷

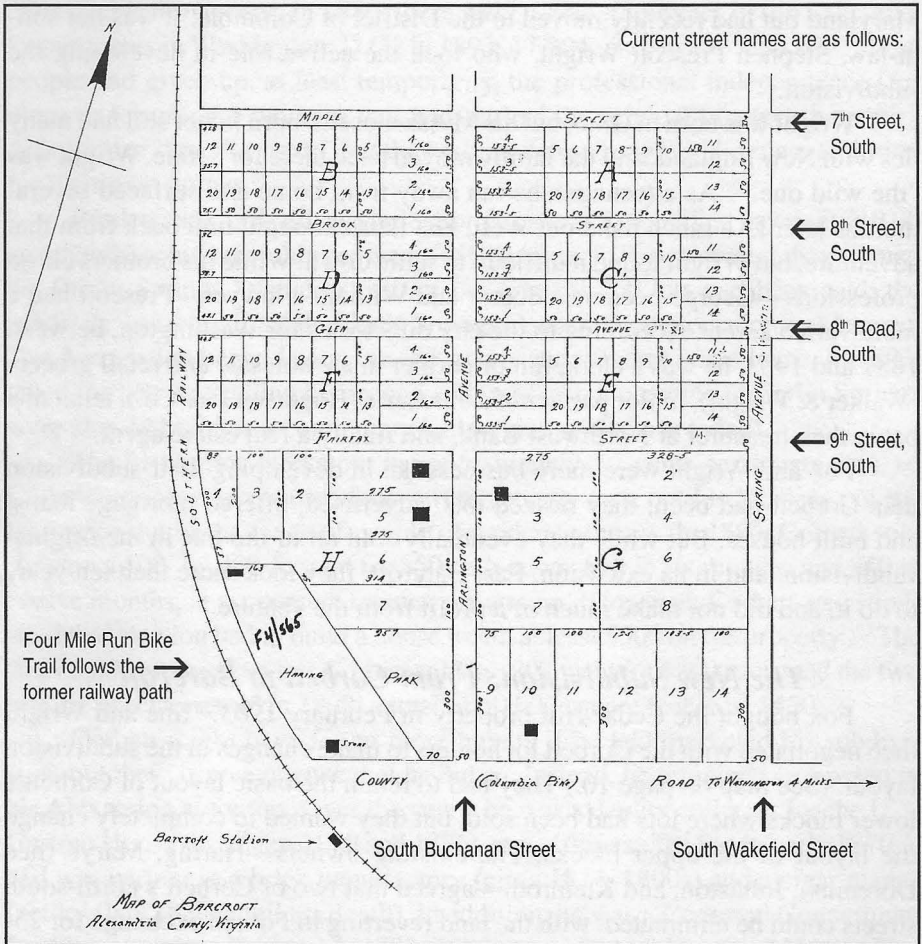
Fox and Wright were more businesslike in developing their subdivision than Corbett had been: they resized lots, advertised, offered mortgage loans, and built houses. But while they eventually sold all of the lots in the original subdivision, and in its extension, East Barcroft, they took more than ten years to do it, and did not make much of a profit from the venture.

The New Subdivision: From Corbett to Barcroft

Fox bought the Cedar Hill property in February 1903.²⁸ She and Wright then negotiated with the Corbett lot holders to make changes in the subdivision layout. (See map on page 10.) They had to retain the basic layout of Corbett’s lower blocks where lots had been sold, but they wanted to completely change the layout of the upper blocks. The existing owners—Haring, Marye (née Doremus), Johnston, and Klemroth—agreed that two of Corbett’s north-south streets could be eliminated, with the land reverting to Fox, in exchange for 25-foot strips (half the width of the streets) being added to their properties.²⁹

Fox and Wright established three new east-west streets (now 7th and 8th Streets, South, and 8th Road, South), reconfiguring four of Corbett’s long blocks of 7 lots each into six wide blocks with 20 lots each. Thus, where Corbett had divided the 40 acres into 49 lots, Fox and Wright divided it into 142. They registered the new plat for the subdivision of Barcroft in April 1904.³⁰ (The original subdivision will henceforth be referred to as “West” Barcroft’ so that “Barcroft” can be used to refer to the community as a whole.)

The new lots were roughly 100 to 160 feet by 50 feet, which was more in line with lot sizes in other Arlington subdivisions. (However, developers did not necessarily want anyone to buy a single lot. Lots in Lyon Park, a 1920s real estate development in central Arlington, had 50-foot frontages, but customers were expected to buy at least two.³¹) By resizing the lots, Fox and Wright opened



Map of "West" Barcroft from Arlington County Deed Book 110, p. 55.

"West" Barcroft to a wider market since buyers could negotiate the size of their purchase to fit their budget. In fact, Fox and Wright went a step further, allowing buyers to purchase portions of lots adjoining their full lots. For example, in 1909, A. Gertrude Clarvoe bought two lots plus 13.5-foot strips of two adjoining lots, for a total purchase of 11,350 square feet.³²

Fox and Wright were responsive in other ways, too. For example, Fox was apparently willing to repurchase Barcroft lots from buyers who wanted or needed to sell. Of the 35 "West" Barcroft sales where Fox has been identified as the seller, she re-acquired the purchase—or a portion of it—from ten of her buyers, as well as at least one person who had not originally bought from her. However, in at least one case, the "repurchase" appears to have been part of an exchange: in

1906, when she repurchased Lot 5 in Block H from Haring and his wife, she sold them Lots 5 and 7 in Block G.³³ Since Fox and Wright bought and sold property in other Northern Virginia localities, some of the other repurchases may have been part of exchanges for property outside of Barcroft. More research would be needed to establish that, but there was a case in 1910 where Wright sold property in Block C to Isabella Fawcett and bought two Glencarlyn lots from her.³⁴

Wright also arranged to have houses built. In 1904, he advertised that cottages to be built in Barcroft would be “two-story houses of, basically, three designs, with two or three bedrooms.”³⁵ His builder, Benjamin F. Perrow, of Remington, Virginia, eventually constructed around thirty houses in Barcroft.³⁶ Wright housed the workmen and equipment in a long, one-story building on Columbia Pike.³⁷

The Barcroft houses were similar to the Corbett houses. One of those still standing is at 4712 8th Road, South. Built by at least 1908, the original house was a “two-over-two” (i.e., two rooms on each of two stories) with a side stair and a kitchen attached to the back with a shed roof. It was wood frame with plaster and lath construction on the inside. The rooms were about eleven feet by eleven feet, creating a house of around 600 square feet. Larger houses were also built. The house at 819 South Wakefield Street, built around 1910 on property owned at that time by Perrow himself, is a two-story bungalow of about 2,100 square feet, four-over-four with a central hallway and stairway. It has a dirt cellar, wood lath construction, and a wood clapboard exterior (now covered in stucco). Another of the original houses, at 831 South Buchanan Street, is of similar size.

There was one real estate practice, however, that Fox and Wright did not follow: they did not write stipulations into their deeds of sale. This was fairly common at the time, especially to prevent sales to Blacks. For example, a 1916 deed issued by the Alcova Improvement Company for a lot just east of Barcroft stipulated: “It is covenanted and agreed between the parties hereto that no portion of said land shall be sold or leased to anyone of African descent, that the buildings on said property shall cost not less than \$3,000 and shall not be located in front of the building line 25 feet from the front of said lots.”³⁸

Arlington developer Frank Lyon included more stringent conditions in at least some of his deeds. He had led a crusade against saloons in Rosslyn and did not want them reappearing elsewhere. Thus, he included the following stipulations in a 1911 deed for two lots in Lyon’s Addition to Clarendon:

These lots are sold upon these conditions, that liquor shall never be sold or dispensed on the property or from any building erected thereon, nor shall said property be used for the conducting of any business that constitutes a nuisance to other lot owners in the subdivision, such as a soap factory or like industry, and that all buildings shall be erected at least 15 feet from the front line of the

lots and neither said property nor any part thereof nor any interest therein shall be sold or leased to anyone not of the Caucasian race.³⁹

Another important aspect of Wright's handling of the Barcroft development was financing mortgages. Before discussing that, however, it may be helpful to first describe the options available at that time.

Mortgage financing in the early 1900s has been summarized as follows:

Most down payments were substantial by present standards; one-half or more of the purchase price. But many were less, and some only 10 percent. Rates ranged from 4 to 10 percent, and length of term from a few months to ten years. Nationwide, the typical arrangement for home financing was a mortgage for 69 percent of the sales price, obtained from individual savers with money to lend, savings banks, or building and loan associations, at 5–6 percent interest, for five years.⁴⁰

Note that private investors were a common source of funds for the mortgage market. Until 1916, laws prohibited national banks from participating in the home mortgage loan market, and custom discouraged commercial banks from doing so: when short-term 30- and 60-day notes were considered sound investments, mortgages tied up money for too long a time.⁴¹ Besides, small investors could acquire an expertise about local conditions that made involvement in real estate, whether through building, rentals, or mortgage lending, a relatively safe investment. In effect, the mortgage market allowed private investors to risk relatively small amounts of money for periods as short as six months.⁴² (At least three Barcroft residents besides Wright—Frederick C. Handy, Walter O'Hara, and William Wright—loaned money for mortgages.)

One of the most common types of loan available at this time used the method of the single-maturity note, where the borrower paid interest on the entire loan semi-annually for however many years the loan ran, and repaid the entire principal at the end of the period. Thus, in 1910, when John and Norma Lewis borrowed \$2,500 from C. S. Taylor Burke to buy their Barcroft lot, the terms of their loan state that their property is in trust

to secure the payment of eleven certain negotiable promissory notes, dated even date herewith, the first of said notes being for the sum of \$2500, payable five years after date, and the other ten of said notes being for the sum of \$75.00 each, payable successively, 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36, 42, 48, 54, and 60 months after date.⁴³

In this type of loan, as in the loans described below, the borrowers were also responsible for promptly paying all taxes and assessments, and for insuring "improvements" on their property against loss by fire.

Building and loan associations offered another important, if complicated, method of financing. Essentially, people would invest their savings in shares of an

association and then borrow against those shares. The loan was repaid gradually as borrowers paid monthly dues on their shares and interest on the loan. So, unlike with the single-maturity note, interest and principal were paid off together. Klemroth, who bought two lots in Corbett in 1901, had this type of loan. His repayment schedule for the redemption of sixteen shares of full rate stock reads like this:

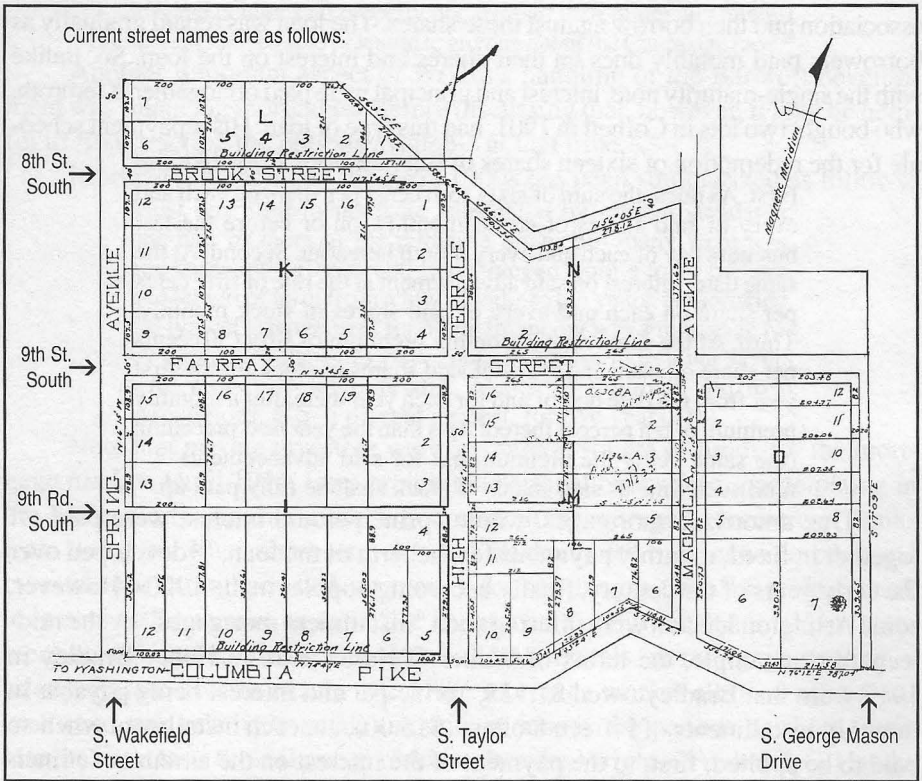
First. As dues, the sum of sixty (60) cents per share on each and every of said shares of stock, monthly, on or before the last business day of each and every month hereafter. Second. At the same date, interest on said advancement at the rate of fifty cents per share on each and every of said shares of stock monthly. Third. At the same date a monthly premium of fifty (50) cents per share on each and every of said shares of stock for the first year from the date hereof and for each year thereafter a monthly premium of ten percent thereof, less than the year next preceding (the same being the premium bid for said advancement) . . . until such time as said shares of stock shall be fully paid up.⁴⁴

True amortized mortgages, where “principal and interest were paid off together in fixed, monthly payments for the term of the loan,”⁴⁵ developed over the early years of the century, finally becoming popular in the 1920s. However, some Arlington lenders were offering such “installment mortgages” by the mid-teens. For example, the terms of Walter O’Hara’s loan to Henry Bradley in 1917 were that Bradley owed \$1,125, “principal and interest being payable in monthly installments of Fifteen Dollars (\$15.00), . . . each installment when so paid to be applied, first, to the payment of the interest on the amount of principal remaining unpaid, and the balance thereof credited to the principal.”⁴⁶

And Wright? Of the eighteen “West” Barcroft sales Fox made for which initial deeds of trust have been identified, Wright provided mortgage financing for fifteen and was a partner with Crandal Mackey in the other three. The size of the down payments on these lots is not known: Barcroft deeds of sale tend to include a variation of the line “for the sum of ten dollars [i.e., the filing fee] and other valuable considerations not herein expressed”⁴⁷ However, the deeds of trust are naturally more specific. Wright generally lent amounts of \$1,800 to \$2,500, with the principal to be repaid in monthly installments of \$18 to \$25 for periods ranging from seven to sixteen years. He charged the going rate of interest (six percent per annum), and required borrowers to keep any buildings insured, usually for at least \$1,000.

From “West” Barcroft to East Barcroft and Beyond

Sales in “West” Barcroft were relatively slow, but by the end of 1909, only 2 or so of the 40 acres remained unsold. Wright had already begun preparations for opening a second subdivision: he had the 48 acres that would become East Barcroft platted in June 1909. He bought the land from Fox, sold significant acreage to



Map of East Barcroft from Arlington County Deed Book 123, p. 215.

Dorothy Bush and Clarence Brown, and (with Bush and Brown) dedicated the new subdivision of East Barcroft in February 1910.⁴⁸

Interestingly, most of the lot sizes in East Barcroft were more than 21,000 square feet, more like the original Corbett lot sizes than the resurveyed “West” Barcroft lots. It may be that Corbett failed at selling his subdivision but succeeded in establishing the character of the neighborhood that grew in its place. Fox had made 26 sales in “West” Barcroft by the end of 1909; they ranged in size from 10,000 to 151,250 square feet, and 18—nearly seventy percent—were for more than 20,000 square feet. Some of the sales may have been to investors rather than prospective residents, but no one was building row houses or even duplexes on Barcroft lots. The 1936 fire insurance map for Arlington County produced by the Sanborn Map Company shows single family dwellings on Barcroft properties, and the placement of houses suggests that most people were still living on the lot combinations originally sold by Fox. Throughout this period, few people sold off portions of their purchases, and most “West” Barcroft buyers

lived in the neighborhood for at least a short while.⁴⁹ “West” Barcroft had been established as a neighborhood of families living on large lots in a rural environment, and East Barcroft followed suit.

Wright had sold all of his East Barcroft lots by 1914. Many of the sales, even with the large lot sizes, were for multiple lots. Some of those buyers were undoubtedly investors. Besides Bush and Brown, for example, there was Andrew Shannon, of the District of Columbia. In one 1913 purchase, Shannon bought Lots 1 and 19 of Block I; Lots 3, 4, and 13 of Block K; Lots 1 through 4 of Block L; Lots 5, 12, 15, and 16, as well as parts of Lots 1 and 2 of Block M; and Lots 1, 5 through 8, and 12 of Block O.⁵⁰

Some large purchases were for the buyer’s personal use, however. In 1912, William W. Houseknecht bought Lot 1 of Block N from Wright and nearly two acres outside of the subdivision east of Block N from Fox. Later, he bought Lot 2 of Block N and Lots 1 and 12 in Block O from earlier purchasers, giving himself approximately six acres, on which he and his family had the sole house through his death in 1941.⁵¹

While Fox was minimally involved in East Barcroft, and necessarily did not sell many lots in “West” Barcroft after 1910, she did sell lots in the property outside of the subdivisions. In 1910, only a year after East Barcroft was platted, the surveyor returned to stake out lots and streets on several more acres. What is now South Taylor Street was extended to the north, and a new east-west street (the present 6th Street, South) was laid out. By 1911, both had been “duly graded and . . . opened up as public highways.”⁵² Over the next few years, Fox sold four one-acre lots and one three-acre lot along these streets.⁵³ In 1914, she sold a large portion of the land remaining to her—some 22 acres—to the Reverend Patrick Murphy. The Franklin Survey Company map shows that Murphy still held all of this land—undeveloped—in 1938.⁵⁴ Fox’s last sale of a Barcroft lot was in 1917.

By that time, Fox and Wright had already left Barcroft, although they were still in the metropolitan area: Fox was in Washington, and Wright and his family were living in Clarendon. He had a real estate office in Clarendon by 1912, and his advertisement in that year’s *Alexandria County Directory* read: “Stephen P. Wright/Real Estate/City, Suburban & Farm Properties/For Exchange a Specialty.”⁵⁵

However, Wright had a drinking problem, and tended to wander off when he had had too much. In 1916, he wound up on a freight train to Springfield, Illinois. (His family initially thought he had drowned in the Potomac since some of his clothes were found by the bank.) Walking along a Springfield street, he passed a mission where people were singing a piece his mother used to sing, and went in. That led to his first job in Illinois: Assistant Supervisor at the mission. He

went on to become a Bailiff in the Court and, after passing a Civil Service examination for a welfare worker, spent the next 27 years placing boys in foster homes.⁵⁶

His wife and children joined him within a few months of his departure from Virginia, although Fox did not come till later. It was from Springfield, in 1919, that Fox sold the remaining 42 acres of Cedar Hill.⁵⁷ Their Barcroft venture was over.

Barcroft: Village to Neighborhood

Fox and Wright no doubt hoped to see a bustling subdivision grow up, but the people who came to live in Barcroft valued its quiet country air. They planted fruit and vegetable gardens, raised chickens, and even took up dairy farming, if only in a small way. That rural character, coupled with new transportation initiatives that channeled population growth into central Arlington, proved decisive. While the Barcrofters formed a strong and supportive neighborhood, the community grew too slowly to become something more.

This outcome was not apparent in the beginning. Barcroft was a recognized community in Arlington County for nearly twenty years, around 1900 to 1920. It had its small commercial center—the Barcroft mill, Haring’s store, which also housed the post office, a blacksmith shop, and the railroad station—its residential section (the subdivisions), and its farmlands. It even had its own newspaper—*The Barcroft News*—if only for six months in 1903.

After all, once the street railroads were built across the Aqueduct Bridge (Key Bridge) into Virginia in the late 1890s, the population of Arlington County began increasing dramatically: 51 percent between 1890 and 1900. Rosslyn, directly across the Aqueduct Bridge from the District of Columbia, was an obvious beneficiary, but other communities saw their population increase, too, and many new subdivisions were platted.

However, the prime area of development in Arlington was the Rosslyn/Clarendon/Ballston corridor. Clarendon had a horse car line from Rosslyn by 1896,⁵⁸ and that was soon replaced by an electric railroad. By 1900, a major selling point for Clarendon lots was that the Aqueduct Bridge was only eight minutes away by trolley, and one advertising campaign offered prospective homebuyers “free trolley rides for the first two years of their residence.”⁵⁹ In contrast, although Barcroft had had a train station for decades, the rail line went from Alexandria to the Blue Ridge Mountains. Commuters to the District had to change trains at Bluemont Junction (above Glencarly) to get to Georgetown or at Potomac Yard to get to Washington. The closest electric line traveled along what is now Walter Reed Drive—a mile and a half down Columbia Pike from Barcroft.⁶⁰

There were other signs that Barcroft was falling behind. Rosslyn had a 50-line telephone switchboard by 1900, and the lines had reached the Courthouse area by at least 1907,⁶¹ but they did not reach Barcroft until 1917. Elec-

tricity and gas lines had been extended as far as Clarendon by 1913.⁶² Barcroft did in fact get electricity the following year, but only because Barcrofter Walter Handy was an electrician with the Potomac Electric Power Company.⁶³

Barcroft did not get a school until 1907, and even then the Arlington School Board would have preferred the Barcroft children go to the Glencarlyn school or the former Columbia School (on Columbia Pike at what is now Walter Reed Drive). And while Barcrofters built a church in 1908, the community was not large enough to support a regular minister, so the trustees sold the property to the Barcroft School and Civic League in 1914. The loss of status became official when the Barcroft post office was closed. A Barcrofter's entry in the 1912 *Alexandria County Virginia Directory* read, for example, "Fairfax, Thomas U, clerk, Barcroft,"⁶⁴ but by the time the 1924 *Arlington County Directory and Yearbook* appeared, Barcrofters were simply part of rural route 5, while the *Directory* still distinguished residents of Ballston, Cherrydale, Clarendon, East Falls Church, and Rosslyn.

But if Barcrofters did not succeed in establishing a town, people from that time remember the rural character of Barcroft with great fondness. Today, of course, additional benefits can be seen. Barcroft is still an identifiable neighborhood while Rosslyn, Clarendon, and Ballston are part of a development corridor designed, in part, to preserve the outer neighborhoods.

Barcroft may, in fact, have become the type of neighborhood that Frank Corbett originally envisaged in the 1880s, although that is extrapolating from very few clues. On his part, all that is known are the original lot sizes, and the type of house its first buyer was required to build. Mostly there is the feeling that Barcroft fulfills many of the nineteenth century reformers' requirements for healthy family living: single-family dwellings in a variety of styles, yards, flower gardens, tall trees, clean water, etc.

Should this be true, however, Corbett's most valuable contribution was probably his lack of interest. If he had aggressively marketed his subdivision and sold more lots, the surrounding land could conceivably have risen enough in value to make it economical to build a trolley further down Columbia Pike than was built. However, Corbett was busy in Alexandria, and his buyers tied up the lots closest to the railroad station, making the rest of the property less valuable to the type of developers who were active in Clarendon and Ballston. Time and chance turned Barcroft into a backwater—fortunately.

Elizabeth Walter, an Arlington resident, became interested in the Barcroft neighborhood when her sister and brother-in-law bought a house there. She originally intended to write a history of their house, but gradually expanded her

scope into an exploration of how the neighborhood developed. She submitted *Barcroft: The Beginnings of a Suburban Neighborhood (1886 to 1920)*, on which this article is based, as her thesis for a Master of Arts degree in English from George Mason University.

Endnotes

¹ Arlington County, Virginia, Office of the County Board, *Barcroft Neighborhood Conservation Plan* (Arlington: 1990), p. 1.

² *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book U3-W3, p. 321.

³ This was Dr. Barcroft's second attempt to run a mill in Virginia. He originally came to Virginia in 1849, from New Jersey, and bought property on Columbia Pike where it crossed Holmes Run, in Fairfax County (where Lake Barcroft is now). The Barcroft mill he built and operated there was so badly damaged during the Civil War that he abandoned it. See Eleanor Lee Templeman, *Arlington Heritage: Vignettes of a Virginia County* (Arlington: The Author, 1959), p. 84.

⁴ Mildred Handy Ritchie, "Barcroft, Arlington County, Virginia, A Village Metamorphosis," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 6, No. 4, October 1980, p. 24.

⁵ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book F4, p. 565.

⁶ *Alexandria, VA., Directory 1870* (Publisher unknown; copy in Alexandria Library), p. 409; J. H. Chataigne, *Chataigne's Alexandria City Directory, 1876-77* (Geo. E. French, J.T. Cox, Booksellers, Stationers, and New Dealers, 1876), p. 59.

⁷ The map, or "plat," for the subdivision of Corbett was not received and admitted into the land records until 28 December 1892, but existed by at least 3 December 1886, when Corbett sold Lot 6 of Block G to John Newlon. Corbett's sale of two acres to Oscar Haring on 10 March 1885 had no such reference. (Newlon's deed actually reads "lot 6 of Block 'D'"; title to the lot was corrected in 1909.)

⁸ John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburbs, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 50.

⁹ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 65.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

¹¹ Templeman, *Arlington Heritage*, p. 84.

¹² *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book G4, p. 451.

¹³ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book N4, p. 109; Deed Book 111, p. 382.

¹⁴ Adaline Robertson, personal interview, 26 May 1999.

¹⁵ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book N4, p. 476.

¹⁶ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book Z4, p. 192.

¹⁷ *Arlington County Will Books*, Will Book 11, p. 206.

¹⁸ *Arlington County Will Books*, Will Book 15, p. 420.

¹⁹ Glencarlyn Citizens Association, *Glencarlyn Remembered: The First 100 Years* (Arlington: 1994) pp. 3-6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²¹ Cindy Sondik Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service: Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 4-5; Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 8.

²² Glencarlyn Citizens Association, *Glencarlyn*, p. 4.

²³ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book G4, p. 451.

²⁴ "Another Suicide," *Alexandria Gazette*, 19 May 1897, p. 2; *Alexandria, VA., Directory 1871*, p. 409; F.L. Brockett and Geo. W. Rock, *A Concise History of the City of Alexandria, VA. From 1669 to 1883, with a Directory of Reliable Business Houses in the City* (Alexandria, VA: Gazette Book & Job Office, 1883), pp. 66, 69, 76, 90; J.H. Chataigne, *Chataigne's Alexandria*, p. 59; J.H. Chataigne, compiler, *Chataigne's Directory of Alexandria and Fredericksburg* (J.E. McKenney, 1888), p. 183; J.H. Chataigne, compiler, *Chataigne's*

- Virginia Business Directory and Gazetteer, 1880–81* (Richmond, VA: Baughman Brothers, Publishers and Proprietors, 1880), pp. 88, 90; J.H. Chataigne, compiler, *Chataigne's Virginia Gazetteer and Classified Business Directory, 1893–94* (Richmond, VA: J.H. Chataigne, Pub., 1893), p. 168; Charles Emerson, compiler, *Chataigne's Alexandria City Directory, 1881–82* (probably Richmond: J.H. Chataigne, Publisher & Proprietor, 1881), p. 62; Michael T. Miller, *Alexandria (Virginia) City Officialdom, 1749–1992* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc. 1992), pp. 42, 44–47; Michael T. Miller, ed. *Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739–1900* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1987), pp. 303, 306; *Directory of Alexandria for 1895–96*, (probably Washington, DC: probably Richmond and Company, 1895), copy in Alexandria Library, p. 76.
- ²⁵ “Another Suicide,” p. 2. Corbett died from an overdose of chloral in 1897. The title “Another Suicide” reminds the newspaper audience that Corbett’s son had shot himself through the heart two years before. See “Suicide of a young man,” *Alexandria Gazette*, 26 March 1895, p. 2.
- ²⁶ Elizabeth Strother, telephone interview, November 18, 2002.
- ²⁷ *Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia* (Washington, DC: R. L. Polk & Co., selected years 1881–1903).
- ²⁸ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 107, p. 299.
- ²⁹ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 108, pp. 361 and 381; Deed Book 110, p. 415; and Deed Book 352, p. 437.
- ³⁰ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 110, pp. 53–55.
- ³¹ Ruth P. Rose, “The Role of Frank Lyon and His Associates in the Early Development of Arlington County,” *Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1976, p. 56.
- ³² *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 122, p. 349.
- ³³ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 113, pp. 282–283.
- ³⁴ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 124, pp. 566–568.
- ³⁵ Ritchie, “Barcroft,” p. 27.
- ³⁶ M. Louise Payne, “Reminiscences of Barcroft’s History,” *Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 3, October 1959, p. 58.
- ³⁷ Ritchie, “Barcroft,” p. 26.
- ³⁸ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 170, p. 353.
- ³⁹ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 132, p. 558.
- ⁴⁰ Lendol Calder, *Financing the American Dream: A Cultural History of Consumer Credit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 66.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- ⁴² Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, p. 119.
- ⁴³ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 126, p. 558.
- ⁴⁴ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 103, p. 360.
- ⁴⁵ Calder, *Financing*, p. 68.
- ⁴⁶ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 153, p. 529.
- ⁴⁷ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 113, p. 382.
- ⁴⁸ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 123, p. 213.
- ⁴⁹ Payne, “Reminiscences,” p. 58; Ritchie, “Barcroft,” pp. 27–28; United States Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census 1910, Census 1920*.
- ⁵⁰ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 139, p. 285.
- ⁵¹ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 132, pp. 398–399; Deed Book 141, p. 109; Deed Book 149, p. 447.
- ⁵² *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 131, p. 63.
- ⁵³ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 130, p. 206; Deed Book 131, p. 63; Deed Book 139, p. 338; Deed Book 139, p. 447.
- ⁵⁴ *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 145, p. 178. Corbett’s farmhouse was on this property, and Fox, Wright, and his family lived there for several years. Rev. Murphy turned the house into the Washington Emergency House for Children. The house burned down in the 1920s.
- ⁵⁵ William G. Collins, ed., *Alexandria County Virginia Directory 1912* (Washington, DC: Collins & Porter, 1912), p. 53.
- ⁵⁶ Strother, telephone interview; Abby Wright, *The Barcroft Story* unpublished essay, property of Elizabeth Strother.

⁵⁷ Fox sold the property to James McElvain, who sold it to the Peacock Coal & Mining Company, who sold it to S.A. Weissenborn & Son. When they defaulted on the payments in 1922, Wilson M. Farr bought the property, but sold it to Walter O'Hara that same day. O'Hara had it surveyed, and dedicated it as "North Barcroft" the following year. See *Arlington County Deed Books*, Deed Book 161, p. 380; Deed Book 167, p. 520; Deed Book 173, p. 173; Deed Book 187, pp. 487-490.

⁵⁸ Frank L. Ball, "Electric Railways of Arlington," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 2, October 1966, p. 32.

⁵⁹ Dorothea E. Abbot, "The Roots of Clarendon," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 8, No. 2, October 1986, p. 51.

⁶⁰ Ritchie, "Barcroft," p. 29.

⁶¹ C.B. Rose, *Arlington County, Virginia, A History* (Arlington: Arlington Historical Society, Inc., 1976), pp. 161-162.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁶³ Ritchie, "Barcroft," p. 35.

⁶⁴ William G. Collins, *Alexandria County 1912* (Washington, DC: Collins & Porter, 1912), p. 38.