

## COLUMBIA PIKE — SOME HISTORY

By

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### Early Years

“The first travelways in this area were those pounded out by big game: mammoths, buffalo, and the like. The Indians used these trails and developed others of their own. In general, these were on high ground so that travelers — animal and human — could overlook the surrounding territory and watch for enemies . . . Only gradually was a system of public roads developed.”<sup>1</sup>

Columbia Pike had its beginnings in 1808 as Columbia Turnpike Road. Stimulated by the building of the Long Bridge across the Potomac (in the area of 14th Street Bridge), The Columbia Turnpike Company was chartered to build a road to join the already constructed Little River Turnpike in Fairfax County. Since Arlington County was then Alexandria County of the District of Columbia, the company was chartered by Congress. Virginia chartered a Fairfax Turnpike Company to continue the road beyond the District line.

A turnpike was a major road constructed by a private company that was authorized to charge tolls for its use. These were collected at toll houses where the road was barred by a long pole or pike, which was turned to allow passage once the toll was paid.

“That these early turnpikes were not the superhighways of today may be inferred from the stipulations the Virginia General Assembly found it necessary to lay down in 1817. Every turnpike was to be:

60 feet wide at least, eighteen feet of which shall be well covered with gravel or stone where necessary and at all times be kept firm and smooth, free from all mudholes, ruts and other obstructions and in all respects fit for the use of heavy laden wagons and of other carriages; and on each side of the parts so to be made and preserved, they shall clear a summer road eighteen feet wide and keep the same always in good repair, free from stumps, roots, rocks, stones, mudholes, ruts and other obstructions fit for the use of wagons and other carriages in dry weather between the first day of May and thirty-first day of October, and fit for the use of horses and foot travellers at all times.”<sup>2</sup>

This early turnpike joined one built at the same time, the Washington and Alexandria Turnpike, essentially U.S. Route #1 (Jefferson Davis Highway) today. In the following year, it had still another connection when a road,

sometimes referred to as John Mason's Alexandria Turnpike and later as Georgetown and Alexandria Turnpike, was converted to a turnpike which ran from Mason's ferry landing across the Analostan (or Mason's) Island, through George Washington Parke Custis's Arlington Estate to the Alexandria-Washington Road. This turnpike is now basically Arlington Ridge Road on the east side of the cemetery and was closed by the Department of the Army in 1971.<sup>3</sup>

In this period, ownership of land along the Pike was probably speculative and continued to change through the years. The first land in the area of the road was acquired as early as 1669 when Robert Howson acquired 6000 acres which he soon sold to the Alexander family. Originally tracts were acquired along the Pike's future route until 1744. George Washington later purchased land in Arlington County in the western portions of the Pike's eventual route.<sup>4</sup>

During the first half-century of the Pike's life, the few scattered farmers along the route may have lived quietly except for occasional passing wagons and carriages. Certainly, there must have been toll booths and way stations along the Pike. George Washington Parke Custis of Arlington House continued as the largest landowner along the Pike and a leading citizen of the county. At mid-century, the Hunter family owned land at the Glebe Road crossing, and had as neighbors the Jenks, Munson, Corbett and Young families.

Some of the Pike's early history is reflected by churches memorialized by current structures and/or historical markers. Trinity Church on Columbia Pike at S. Wayne St. traces its origin to the Chapel of Ease of Arlington Plantation, erected by Mr. Custis on his estate in the early 1800s. Early worshippers were members of the Custis and Lee families. A marker (#42 in the county series) at the northwest corner of Columbia Pike and South Orme Street memorializing the Arlington Chapel states that it was built about 1825 and that "Services were conducted by students from the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Alexandria. Union soldiers burned the building at the beginning of the Civil War. The congregation was re-established after the war when it met in abandoned federal barracks in this vicinity."<sup>5</sup> After continuing in several locations and buildings along the Pike, the present site was purchased and the church building dedicated on May 12, 1957.<sup>6</sup>

The historical marker on the northeast corner of Columbia Pike and Glebe Road (#41 in the county series), at the Westmont Shopping Center indicates the site of another church, Hunter's Chapel. This marker reads, in part:

“. . . In the late 1850's, Louisa Hunter gave land on the northeast corner of the Crossroads to a Methodist Church known as Hunter's Chapel. During the Civil War, federal troops dismantled the church for its building materials after using the structure as a picket post, block house, commissary,

and stable. Following the Civil War the congregation used other buildings in this area. Today's successor, Arlington Methodist Church, stands two blocks to the north on Glebe Road.<sup>7</sup>

Around mid-century, northern farmers began buying land in the Northern Virginia area. The Corbett family arrived from New York state in 1849 and bought 282 acres on the south side of the Pike and later 162 acres on the north side from Orlando and Reginald Fairfax. The Corbetts continued to add to their holdings along the Pike and up Glebe Road toward Ball's Crossroads. One of the Corbett family homes was later referred to as Bradbury House (Bradbury being a son-in-law) and was located at the northeast corner of Columbia Pike and Walter Reed Drive. Col. Mosby lived there a few years before his death.<sup>8</sup> Many county residents, some of whom lived there, remember the home; it and another on that tract were demolished in the late 1940s for the building of Fillmore Gardens. The Corbett name was given to a village further west on the Pike that was later renamed Barcroft.

Washington wheelwright and carriage maker, John M. Young, also bought land in 1850 from Orlando Fairfax and later added tracts to form a farm known as Springhill Farm. One part of that property at 3435 8th St. South is a mid-19th century farmhouse identified by a historical marker and named Alcova, a contraction of Alexandria County, Virginia. The site earlier had a lane leading to Columbia Pike on what is now Lincoln Street. After purchasing the home in 1915, former State Senator Joseph Cloyd Byars of Bristol, Virginia, made extensive changes including the addition of pillars and a wrought-iron balcony, and providing entry from Glebe Road. Sen. Byars subdivided the farm into building sites and developed Alcova Heights. Once owned by Mr. and Mrs. Douglass Wallop III, he the author of *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant (Damn Yankee)* and she author of *Sorry, Wrong Number*, the house is currently owned by Dan and Alice Nicolson and is a county historic district.<sup>9</sup>

Some other families in the area during the period include Travers, Dyer, Whitehead, Jenks, Bailey, Munson, and Chapman. The Whitehead family had a blacksmith shop on the corner of Glebe Road and Columbia Pike. William Jenks, an inventor from Massachusetts, had a berry and fruit farm. The Jenks-Bailey home, built 1854-55, was located at 3219 7th St. South. The remnants of an old cemetery in the 1300 block of South Monroe Street is a reminder of early families of the neighborhood. It is reported that the bakers at Fort Berry raised bread on the tombstones there.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the homes along or near Columbia Pike from this period were standing and were described or pictured by Mrs. Templeman when she published *Arlington Heritage* in 1959. Although most have vanished, one indicated by her as pre-Civil War is still standing at the corner of 13th and

South Irving Streets (1212 South Irving) and was operated until 1987 by Cheshire Homes of Arlington, Inc. as a residence for physically disabled individuals. It was the home of Miles C. Munson whose daughter, Virginia, later married Dr. Henry Clay Corbett.<sup>11</sup> There are many interesting older homes in the neighborhoods bordering the Pike which require further study to determine their origins and family associations.

Industries in the early days of the Pike were limited, in addition to the farms, to fisheries on the river, a few mills, timbering, and brick making. James Roach had established a brick plant about 1837 that operated until the 1940s on land bordering on Columbia Pike near where it joined the Alexandria and Washington Turnpike.<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Ellis Lee states that this eastern end of Columbia Pike had once had clay forts built in 1812 to defend Washington when the British sailed up the Potomac, and that this clay was later used in making bricks.<sup>13</sup> Later, this area along the Potomac hosted about thirteen such brickmaking firms. The Alexandria Canal, which connected to the C & O Canal via Aqueduct Bridge at Rosslyn, carried coal to the brickworks as well as other products to the port of Alexandria City. The canal must have generated employment in the county during its operations 1843-1886.

## Civil War

Life along Columbia Pike changed traumatically at the onset of the Civil War. As part of the defenses of Washington, federal troops immediately crossed the river, occupied Arlington House as their headquarters, and began fortifications throughout the county. These forts are identified by a series of county historical markers in its Defenses of Washington Series.<sup>14</sup> Work began the morning after arrival on Fort Runyon to guard the strategic junction of the Columbia and Washington-Alexandria turnpikes and the Long Bridge. The fort which became the largest of the twenty in Arlington is identified by a marker near the site of the former 14th Street Bridge Marriott Hotel (Twin Bridges Marriott). Fort Albany was built to protect Fort Runyon. The marker on Arlington Ridge Road has disappeared, but had stated:

Immediately to the northwest stood Fort Albany, a bastioned earthwork built in May, 1861, to command the approach to the Long Bridge by way of the Columbia Pike. . . . The ground on which the Fort stood was cut away during the construction of the Henry G. Shirley Memorial Highway, in 1942.

The historical marker for Fort Richardson, built on the Fraser estate, now the grounds of the Army-Navy Country Club, reads in part:

Here is what is left of Fort Richardson, a detached redoubt

constructed in September 1861 to cover the left flank of the newly built Arlington defense line. It was named for General Israel B. Richardson, whose division was then deployed to defend against attack by way of Columbia Pike. . . .

A convalescent camp was also established at the Fraser estate, where a plantation home, Green Valley Manor, had been built in 1821.<sup>15</sup> Fort Barnard's marker at South Pollard Street and Walter Reed Drive is not far from the Pike. Another marker at South Glebe Road and 17th Street, reads in part:

Immediately to the west stood Fort Berry, a redoubt constructed in 1863 at the north flank of the defenses of Alexandria, but also flanking the Columbia Pike and the Arlington Line constructed in 1861. . . .

Obviously, Columbia Pike was an important route worth much protection. The Pike which must have borne Custis to his Arlington Mill, built in 1836 at Four Mile Run, now conveyed innumerable feet, horses' hooves and wagon wheels as soldiers marched westward to occupy Munson's Hill. Armies of both sides were camped at various times along or near the Pike. It was the line of communication with McDowell who at the heights four miles west of headquarters was preparing for the move on Manassas.<sup>16</sup> In the fall of 1861, military reviews were held by General McClelland's troops at Bailey's Crossroads, with President Lincoln attending. Early in the war, Union soldiers at Arlington Mill were attacked by Confederate scouts who departed the area on a handcar on the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire Railroad.<sup>17</sup> The mill itself was greatly damaged during the war.

Mention has been made earlier of the loss of churches. Mrs. Hunter who had donated land for the chapel at Hunter's Crossroads fled to Richmond with her daughter during the war and suffered the loss of their home. The Corbett family had lived in a Berry family homestead which, like many other homes, was destroyed by troops for construction of forts, ovens, and barracks and for firewood.<sup>18</sup>

The extent of damage residents experienced from federal troops is reflected in the accounts of the Southern Claims Commission in the National Archives, some of which are described in an article by Ruth Ward.<sup>19</sup> According to those accounts, John M. Young, mentioned earlier, "was ordered to leave his farm and go to Washington so the property could be possessed by federal authorities. He was allowed until twelve o'clock at night to make preparations to depart, but was not permitted to take his household goods and personal property. He left, the troops took entire possession of the farm, buildings, crops, lumber, and personal property, and very shortly thereafter the dwelling house and ten outbuildings were taken down and the materials used for Government purposes." A neighbor, Sewell Corbett, testified, "I live on the farm opposite Young's. The Columbia Turnpike separates our land. I

knew the farm before Young purchased it fifteen years ago. He bought it from the Fairfax estate, and built the house in 1852 or '53. The farm is three miles from the Long Bridge. It has a blacksmith shop, carriage house, barn, stable, cornhouse and other buildings. Forts Woodbury, Tillinghast, Whipple, Craig, Albany, Richardson, Berry, Barnard and Blenker are within one-half to one mile from our farms. A large number of troops were stationed on these lands — from 10,000 to 100,000 men. It was Blenker's officers and men that came in October 1861 and took over. We [Corbett and Young] were ordered to leave in 1862. We did so. Our farms were badly damaged, our buildings destroyed, and the crops gone." Other testimony describes the use by Union forces of bricks from the yards near the river for chimneys, foundations, and well lining.

Another activity of this period with major impact on the county and the Pike, was the establishment of Freedman's Village in 1863 to house newly freed slaves and contraband. It served as a community for over 30 years, providing education, job training, housing, employment, medical care, clothing and food for former slaves.<sup>20</sup> The village was located on the Arlington Plantation near Columbia Pike next to the seventeen acres which had been given in 1826 by G.W.P. Custis to Maria Syphax, and which is now the location of Henderson Hall, a Marine Post. Most of the area of the village is now the southern part of Arlington National Cemetery.

As residents left the village, many settled in nearby areas of the county, including Nauck, Johnston's Hill (now Arlington View), and the Butler-Holmes subdivision (now Central Arlington). Others settled in East Arlington, Queen City and South Washington. The first two were located alongside Columbia Pike east of the old Georgetown-Alexandria Turnpike and have disappeared in the roads leading to the Pentagon. The third area was in the brickyard area near U.S. Route #1. Many villagers assumed positions and offices of leadership in county life and descendants and their institutions exist actively today. Two churches that served the village survive as Mt. Zion in Nauck and Mt. Olive in Arlington View.<sup>21</sup>

### Postwar

With the end of the war and eventual withdrawal of federal troops, rural life along the Pike as in all Arlington was in ruins and it would be many years before the devastation and altered, treeless landscape could return to a more normal condition.

The displaced congregation of Hunter's Chapel began holding services in the little one-room Columbia School House until Fred Bradbury donated ground for a new building in 1893. Another resident, Sarah Elizabeth Jenks Bailey, raised funds for construction of the chapel, later Columbia Pike

Methodist Church (now Arlington United Methodist Church), and through her efforts the congregation received federal payment of \$3,000 in 1900 as settlement for its claim for war damage.<sup>22</sup> It took until the turn of the century for many of the wounds of war to heal, ravages to be obliterated, and economic recovery enjoyed.

State legislation in 1870 provided for the establishment of public schools, and a privately operated Columbia School House became a public school in 1871 with financial assistance from the county. Columbia School was established in 1871 on 1/2 acre of land on Columbia Pike at what is now South Wayne St. in a building rented by the county and then purchased in 1892. A fascinating account of the contentious planning, locating, and building of the new Columbia School during the years 1899-1904 appears in an article by C.B. Rose, Jr.<sup>23</sup> Designed by the same architect as the 1898 Court House (A.O. Von Herbulis), the school was built farther west on the Pike to accommodate what was becoming more a center of population, on the "Brown" lot just west of the present Walter Reed Drive. It was a two story brick building with slate roof and tower.

Arlington School House was established in the Union League Hall at Freedman's Village the same year (1871), and operated until 1889. What became known as Kemper School was opened in 1875 for students in the Green Valley area in rented quarters in the A.M.E. Zion Church at Convalescent Camp. In 1885, three-fourths acres of land was bought from J.D. Nauck and a one-story frame structure was built. This was replaced by a two-story brick building in 1893. Teachers at Kemper represent prominent families in Arlington's history. Sumner Holmes, son of the Commissioner of the Revenue, H.L. Holmes, taught at Kemper early in this century while attending medical school. He was a well-known physician in Arlington until his death in 1930. His successor as teacher was Miss Ella M. Boston after whom the Hoffman-Boston School in Arlington View was partly named.

Schools in this section of the county, Arlington District, were administered by a Board of School Trustees. Distinguished Columbia Pike area residents serving that Board include Harvey Bailey (who was also a director of Arlington Turnpike Company), Benjamin Austin, William Barcroft, Dr. Charles B. Munson, and William C. Shelley.

In these years, following the war, a larger concentration of homes developed on Columbia Pike than elsewhere in the county. A cluster evolved around the toll-gate where Georgetown-Alexandria Pike (later South Arlington Ridge Road) crossed the Pike, with a few homes, two stores, and a blacksmith shop. Around Trinity Church and Columbia School were more homes, while the area further west remained thinly populated.<sup>24</sup> There was a post office on the Pike near the present Walter Reed Drive, and one of the areas considered for a county Court House at the end of the century was a site

“within a radius of one-half mile of Hunter’s Chapel (Glebe Road and Columbia Pike).”<sup>25</sup>

One of the county’s historic districts is a structure erected along the Pike in this period. The Harry W. Gray House, now at 1005 South Quinn St., but originally fronting on Columbia Pike, is a red brick townhouse built by Mr. Gray on a ten-acre site bought at Johnston’s Hill. The builder was the son of Thornton and Salina Gray, slaves of the Custis family at Arlington House who were later bequeathed to their daughter, Mrs. Robert E. Lee. Salina was the personal maid of Mrs. Lee. Harry was born into slavery in quarters behind Arlington House. Skilled in masonry on the estate, Harry dreamed of building his own brick home for his family and realized his dream on his own property with a townhouse modeled after those in Foggy Bottom. The date May 1, 1881 appears on a brick by the back door along with his name. The house is the first red brick townhouse built in Arlington County, has been beautifully restored and maintained, and is an important landmark of Gray’s subdivision, of the Arlington View Community, and of the county. Members of the family include Henry Gray Gillem, an initiator of the Arlington View Neighborhood Conservation Program and currently, at the time of this writing, Chairman, Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board.<sup>26</sup>

Transportation in this post-war period was still difficult. The nearest stop on the Alexandria and Washington Railroad was Jackson City; and on the Washington and Ohio Railroad at Arlington Station, where Four Mile Run crosses the Pike. An article in the *Alexandria Gazette* on March 17, 1875 reflects the condition of the roads: “The Arlington Turnpike Co., owing to the terrible condition of its road or perhaps to the ominous muttering of those who are so unfortunate as to have to travel it, have thrown its gate [toll gate] open until the road and the aforesaid mutters dry up.” In 1890, R.A. Phillips stated that there was “not a public road in the County fit to travel upon.”<sup>27</sup>

By 1900, there were small settlements throughout the county. Johnston’s Hill, Queen City, Nauck and Butler-Holmes have been mentioned as areas settled by former residents of Freedman’s Village. Corbett (now Barcroft) began as a subdivision in 1903 near the mill. The mill was now referred to as Barcroft Mill and had been rebuilt after the war. Barcroft was near a stop on the railroad at its crossing of Four Mile Run. As transportation improved, further settlement occurred along the Pike as elsewhere in the county.

Mildred Ritchie, in her history of the Barcroft area, describes the Pike at the time of the village’s beginnings: “A large abattoir had been erected on the lower end of the Pike, and to this cattle were brought for processing from all parts of Northern Virginia. Farms along the railroad shipped cattle to Barcroft where they were held at the pens until they could be driven in





The Harry Gray House on South Quinn Street, which originally faced Columbia Pike. It was the first red brick townhouse in Arlington County, built about 1881. (Arlington Historical Society.)

herds down the Pike to the plant. This practice was discontinued about 1905 when a new spur route was available near the river.” She describes the condition of the road as “a narrow two-lane dirt road — rocky rough, and dusty, and in rainy weather, a quagmire of mud with deep ruts. It was travelled by draymen, drovers, buggies and walkers. The road wound through the sleepy countryside with many twists and turns and over many hills.”<sup>28</sup>

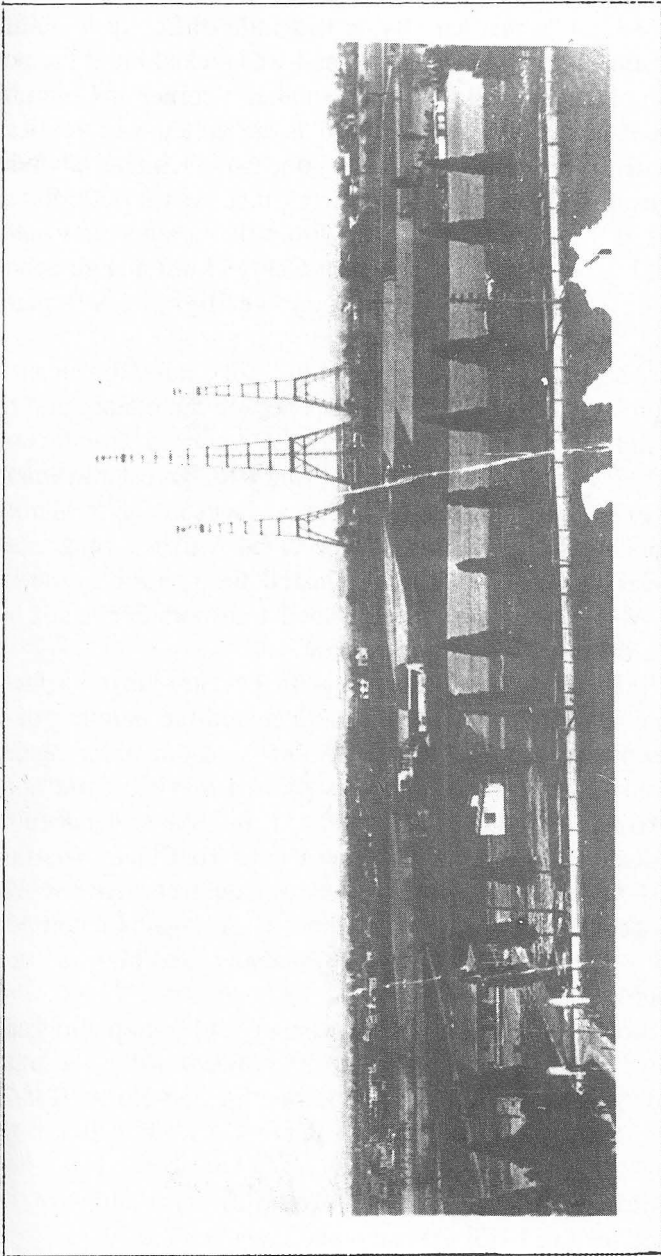
In the early 1900s, electric railroad service arrived for the residents of the Pike on a branch that ran from Rosslyn, through Fort Myer and then south to Nauck. Part of the right-of-way for this line is now South Walter Reed Drive. With a stop at Columbia Station on Columbia Pike, this line must have made commuting from the “Columbia” or “Arlington” area of the county much more convenient and spurred further development. Elizabeth Cannon Kimball recounts her moving with her parents in 1920 when they



View of Columbia Pike from South Barton Street, taken in March 1939. (Community Archives, Arlington County Public Library.)



Columbia School on Columbia Pike just west of Walter Reed Drive was replaced by Patrick Henry School. (Community Archives, Arlington County Public Library.)



Radio Towers on South Courthouse Road. The first trans-Atlantic message was received here in 1913. The towers were taken down in 1941. (Arlington Historical Society)

sought a site in the new subdivision of Alcovia Heights as a summer home in the country. The location off two surfaced roads (Glebe Road and Columbia Pike) and the accessibility to trolley service at Arlington made this an attractive location. She adds that Mr. Byars had little difficulty in selling lots at five cents a square foot. At that time mail was picked up at the post office, located in an old frame building at the southeast corner of Columbia Pike and Walter Reed Drive, which also served as the trolley waiting room. At the southwest corner of the same intersection, Mrs. Kimball attended Columbia School from 1923 to 1925. The fifth grade was in an adjacent frame building heated by a pot-bellied stove. From there, students went to high school in Washington, or to Mt. Vernon or George Mason High School in the lower end of the county until Washington-Lee High School opened in 1924.<sup>29</sup>

Along with the electric lines and elimination of bridge tolls, the clean-up of outlaw areas along Arlington's riverfront opened up the county and the Columbia Pike areas for residential development. A racetrack near Jackson City (now north parking area of the Pentagon) and Rosslyn establishments had been particularly notorious. Hell's Bottom near Jackson City was noted for frequent murders. However, actions of the Good Citizens League and raids led by Crandal Mackey in 1904 eliminated the control by outlaw elements and the "Wild West" reputation. Good transportation and good government opened the county for development.

The vista along the Pike continued to change with the regrowth of business. Other developments at the turn of the century included the building of an agricultural experiment station that became a memorable feature of Arlington's landscape. Arlington Experimental Farm was formed in 1900 from about 400 acres of the Arlington estate and was located in the area between the old Georgetown-Alexandria Turnpike and the Alexandria Canal. The farm operated until 1941 when the area was needed for defense activity. This area at the South Post of Fort Myer eventually hosted the Arlington Cantonment, WAVE and WAC barracks, roadways to the Pentagon, and highways and bridges to Washington.<sup>30</sup>

Other additions along the Pike and visible in many old farm photographs before the growth of buildings and trees were the towers of the Arlington Naval Radio Station. This historical marker on South Court House Road at the entrance of the Naval Communications Station (#30 in the county's series) reads:

Three radio towers similar to the Eiffel Tower in construction were erected here in 1913. One stood 600 feet and the other two 450 feet above the 200-foot elevation of the site. The word "radio" was first used, instead of "wireless," in the name of this Naval communications facility. The first trans-

Atlantic voice communication was made between this station and the Eiffel Tower in 1915. The nation set its clocks by the Arlington Radio time signal and listened for its broadcast weather reports. The towers were dismantled in 1941, as a menace to aircraft approaching the new Washington National Airport.

Residents along Columbia Pike remember the towers as a landmark. John Sommers Hull recalled coming home from law school before there were street lights and using the tower lights as a beacon to help find his way home over 14th Street Bridge.<sup>31</sup>

Again, churches reflect the history of the period. St. John's Baptist Church at 1905 Columbia Pike was founded in October 1903 and met for the first five years in the Odd Fellows Hall, now the site of the Sheraton National Hotel. Active in this congregation were people whose family names are remembered and who are active in the leadership in the county today — H.L. Holmes, J. Willis Wormley, Dallas Jones, Abraham Pinn, Robert E. and Park C. Syphax and Hattie Jones. The congregation bought land at the present site and the new church was opened October 25, 1908. St. John's may be the oldest standing church building in Arlington.<sup>32</sup>

Mildred Ritchie, in her article on Barcroft, related incidents about Arlington Presbyterian Church at what is now 3711 Columbia Pike. Many from Barcroft attended the church and a Barcroft carpenter, Frank Hale, was given a contract in 1903 to build the church "near Whitehead's Blacksmith shop." She also described the horrors of a fire that consumed the church in 1925. Her father, Walter Handy, was elder in the church and the Sunday School Superintendent for over thirty years. Mr. Handy was one of a committee to consider the name change for the county and had suggested "Arlington."<sup>33</sup>

Roads were now graveled in the county, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture maintaining parts of Columbia Pike and other roads for experimental purposes. The Pike was paved with concrete westward to Palmer's Hill in Barcroft in 1928 as part of its testing program. A bus line to Washington along the Pike was inaugurated in 1919 by Robert L. May, using two trucks driven by himself and his wife. This eventually evolved into the AB&W Bus Line. Mrs. Kimball reported that the bus left the May home in Barcroft every hour and if you needed information you phoned Mrs. May at home. She recalled the bus once leaving the accustomed route on the Pike to drive up a steep hill to the Cannon home to deliver her father at his front door because it was his birthday. Passengers were serenading with "Happy Birthday."

Clifford Lyle described growing up along the Pike in the very old, pre-Civil War Hull House. It was on a 23-acre fruit and orchard farm on what is now Adams Street behind the shopping center. The Hull House had stone foun-

dations and hand-hewn beams. He recalled ball games with boys at St. John's Orphanage, a summer residence for orphans operated by St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington; swims in the 20s at Arlington Beach on the Potomac and in creeks not far from the Pike until his classes moved to Patrick Henry School.<sup>36</sup>

Everett E. Norton recalled that when he was growing up in the 20s and 30s along Columbia Pike there were about three stores in the "Arlington" area — Sher's and Sam Eller's grocery stores and Johansen's candy store. The Sher family store was a meat market, feed store and grocery. Johansen's was a candy store and also a social center. Mr. Sher, Mr. Norton and others gathered there to exchange stories around a pot-bellied stove.

Everett's father opened a restaurant in 1924 at Columbia Pike and Edgewood (2704) where the Ski Chalet is located, at first called Columbia Quick Lunch and later called Norton's Cafe. Operated after the war by Everett and a brother-in-law, the restaurant was a local gathering place for almost fifty years, with Tom Jackson's chili a popular fare. Across the street was the Pickle Palace, a Giant Food Store, and a stationery store. Doc Snoot had a farm where Westmont is now located. He is remembered for bringing from Baltimore the Model-T fire truck that would pump water, back when the fire station was in the 3200 block of the Pike on land that had been donated by B.M. Smith. Mr. Smith and Dr. Munson owned and developed much of the area.

As other interviewees have expressed, Mr. Norton remembers Ft. Myer with affection for the entertainment it offered — movies for 10¢, a swimming pool, basketball courts, great baseball competitions between the soldiers at Ft. Myer and the sailors at the Radio Towers, and spectacular horse shows performed by the cavalry. He recalled the only problem with crime was when gypsies were camped in the area where the Pentagon is now located. A prince of one tribe and princess of another were to be married, but the bride was killed the evening before the ceremony. He also recalled a community at Queen City, with Wormsley's store and Segal's where movies were shown, and a blacksmith shop at Ft. Myer Drive and Columbia Pike. He thought perhaps the first traffic light on the Pike was at that corner.<sup>37</sup>

Another venerable institution, the Columbia Pike Library, was begun in 1930 by the Arlington Community Library Club "to organize a library service to provide good reading for the children of the South Arlington Section of the County." Its first quarters were in a double garage rented and refurbished by the club on Bingham Road next to Patrick Henry School. The library moved to the abandoned Columbia School near the corner of Columbia Pike and Walter Reed Drive, then called the "Community Hall." This building was torn down in 1941 and the library moved in 1942 to a new store building at 911 South Glebe Road with increased hours, a part-time librarian, and

many volunteers. The library expanded to an adjoining store in 1952, and then in 1959 to new quarters at 3239 Columbia Pike. When a county Department of Libraries had been established in 1938, the Columbia Pike Library became a branch of the library system.<sup>38</sup> The branch moved in 1975 from the Westmont Shopping Center to share a building with the Arlington Career Center at 816 South Walter Reed Drive, the former site of Patrick Henry Elementary School and Thomas Jefferson Junior High School. This library of 20,000 square feet on two floors has career oriented and technical collections along with a general branch collection.<sup>39</sup> The Columbia Pike Branch recently celebrated ten years in this location and fifty-five years as a library.

Vestiges of the Pike's transformation in the 30s, 40s, and 50s are visible today or are remembered by residents who had lived there. The Arlington Hardware on Columbia Pike near Walter Reed Drive is another institution that dates from the 30s and is patronized and appreciated by residents along the Pike and farther away. Launched in 1931 by David Eisen, it continues in the same ownership and location as a family business with unique, individual service to its clientele. The building once housed an A & P grocery and a drugstore and is today noted by travellers on the Pike for eye-catching displays in the windows of the hardware store.<sup>40</sup>

The Navy Annex (Federal Office Building No. 2, the Post Office being No. 1 in Arlington) was built on land known as Round Top near the southern boundary of the Arlington Reservation in the late 1930s. In September 1941, ground was broken for the controversial construction of the mammoth Pentagon to house War Department offices. This structure, the world's largest office building, was completed in a record sixteen months. The building itself encompasses 34 acres, is surrounded by 320 acres of grounds, requires 30 miles of approach roads and cloverleaves, and 21 overpasses and bridges.<sup>41</sup> The Pentagon had an enormous and dramatic impact on the county and the lower Columbia Pike neighborhoods in particular. One frequently hears the phrase "lost in the maze of Pentagon roads" in reference to a historic site or former neighborhood.

War activity also brought other buildings along the Pike including barracks and headquarters for the Marine Corps on the former Syphax property on the edge of the Arlington Reservation. Barracks were built near the Navy Annex and on the former experimental farm. The old Pickett Homes were built on the site of St. John's Orphanage on the south side of Columbia Pike between South Scott Street and Court House Road. Built on concrete slabs, this was emergency housing during and subsequent to World War II primarily for military personnel and their families. The Dorchester and Executive Apartments now occupy that site.

Significant residential and business development began in areas adjacent to Columbia Pike in the 1940s. Garden apartment complexes such as Arlington

Village, Walter Reed and Fillmore Gardens provided rental housing for new residents. Some have been converted to condominiums. Shopping areas also developed to meet the needs of the increasing population. Anne H. Reed and her husband rented a shop for a floral business at the new Westmont Shopping Center in 1941 just before the Pearl Harbor attack. The center also had a drugstore, delicatessen, beauty shop, Ben Franklin variety store, post office, grocery store and dress shop. During the war years, materials for her business were in short supply, particularly wire and baskets, and at that time, with gas shortages, there was almost no traffic on the two-lane Pike. Her shop was advertised in the *Columbia Pike News*, a weekly, and later moved to 3126 in quarters rented from Dr. Nicholson who had his practice downstairs. She later relocated farther west on the Pike.<sup>42</sup>

In more recent years, the road has been straightened in its course and the hills flattened. The large, comfortable homes on the Pike are gone. It takes great imagination to picture the rural atmosphere, then the days of a “sleepy, tree lined village,” and the more recent small town milieu remembered by Mrs. Reed: a “lovely residential street, with lovely big homes, trees and flowers, a sleepy town with a policeman walking the beat and no crime.” Our history has touched upon some of the highlights of life along the Pike and has gathered together bits and pieces of the written and oral history of what may be one of the most historically interesting areas of our county. It is hoped that energetic researchers will pick up the threads and initiate some original research so that we shall someday know even more about the people, farms, neighborhoods, customs, homes, businesses, industries, and folklore of those who preceded us in our community.

### Notes and References

\*This article was prepared in 1986 for CPRO (Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization).

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<sup>1</sup>Cornelia B. Rose, Jr., *Arlington County, Virginia; a History*. (Arlington Historical Society, 1976) p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 76-77.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 76

<sup>4</sup>Donald A. Wise, *Arlington County, Virginia: Land Ownership Map: 1669-1776*. (Arlington Historical Society, 1976); and “Early Land Grants in Arlington County, Virginia,” *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1973, pp. 23-33.

<sup>5</sup>Arlington County Bicentennial Commission, *Historic Arlington*. Rev. Ed. (Arlington County Historical Commission, 1976). Note: All references to wording of historical markers are taken from this pamphlet.

<sup>6</sup>Trinity Episcopal Church, *Parish Profile*, (Arlington, Va., 1985) pp. 2-3.



- <sup>7</sup>*Historic Arlington*, p. 28.
- <sup>8</sup>Eleanor Lee Templeman, *Arlington Heritage; Vignettes of a Virginia County*. (Arlington, Va.: The Author, 1959) p. 82.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*; and files, Arlington County Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB).
- <sup>10</sup>*Arlington Heritage*, p. 82.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup>Rose, *Arlington County, Virginia*, p. 88.
- <sup>13</sup>Dorothy Ellis Lee, *A History of Arlington County, Virginia*. (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1946) p. 47.
- <sup>14</sup>*Historic Arlington*.
- <sup>15</sup>Lee, *A History of Arlington County*, p. 23.
- <sup>16</sup>C. B. Rose, Jr., "Civil War Forts in Arlington," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1960, p. 17.
- <sup>17</sup>William H. Price, "Civil War Military Operations in Northern Virginia in May-June 1861," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1961, p. 45.
- <sup>18</sup>*Arlington Heritage*, p. 180.
- <sup>19</sup>Ruth Ward, "Life in Alexandria County During the Civil War," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1984, pp. 3-10
- <sup>20</sup>Roberta Schildt, "Freedman's Village; Arlington, Virginia 1863-1900," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1984, pp. 11-21.
- <sup>21</sup>Rose, *Arlington County, Virginia*, p. 124.
- <sup>22</sup>*Arlington Heritage*, p. 180.
- <sup>23</sup>C. B. Rose, Jr., "Public Schools in Arlington District of Alexandria County, Virginia, 1870-1905," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1965, pp. 25-28. All information on schools in this period is from this source.
- <sup>24</sup>"The Map of Alexandria County 1878" from *G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, 1879*; and, C. B. Rose, Jr., "The Map of Arlington in 1878 — Places and People," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1962, pp. 17-35. This reveals much about Pikers at the time the map was issued, including Wilbert, Austin, Smith, Crocker, Graham, Buckley, Nauck and Corbett families.
- <sup>25</sup>Rose, *Arlington County, Virginia*, p. 124.
- <sup>26</sup>Files, HALRB.
- <sup>27</sup>Rose, *Arlington County, Virginia*, pp. 140-41.
- <sup>28</sup>Mildred Handy Ritchie, "Barcroft, Arlington County, Virginia; A Village Metamorphosis," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1980, p. 24.
- <sup>29</sup>Elizabeth Cannon Kimball, "An Early History of Alcovia Heights," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1975, pp. 29-30.
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- <sup>31</sup>John Sommers Hull, interviewed by Virginia L. Smith, Library-Zonta Oral History Project, Arlington County Library, July 7, 1974.
- <sup>32</sup>History, St. John's Baptist Church, 1905 Columbia Pike.
- <sup>33</sup>Ritchie, "Barcroft, Arlington County," pp. 34-36.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 36-37.
- <sup>35</sup>Kimball, "Alcovia Heights," pp. 32-33.
- <sup>36</sup>Clifford Lyle, interviewed by Virginia L. Smith, Library-Zonta Oral History Project, December 2, 1975.
- <sup>37</sup>Everett E. Norton, interviewed by Virginia L. Smith, Library-Zonta Oral History Project, April 25, 1975.
- <sup>38</sup>Jeanne Rose, "A Brief History of the Arlington County Libraries," *Arlington Historical*

*Magazine*, 1960, pp. 33-35.

<sup>39</sup>Jeanne Rose, "Twenty Years After: The Arlington County Public Libraries, 1960-1980," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1980, p. 60.

<sup>40</sup>"Service, One Nail at a Time" [article about the Eisens and Arlington Hardware] *The Arlington Journal*, October 15, 1985, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Willard J. Webb, "Building the Pentagon in Arlington," *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 1984, p. 36.

<sup>42</sup>Anne H. Reed, interviewed by Virginia L. Smith, Library-Zonta Oral History Project, May 9, 1975.



## DEUTERMAN CEMETERY

This small family burial ground was located just west of South Randolph and Nineteenth Streets. The following graves were moved in 1966 to Columbia Gardens Cemetery:

John Laleger — Stepfather of Emma Deuterman

Robert Bahr — 6 months old

Edward Deuterman

Ida or Irene Deuterman

Three unknown infants



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