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THE SILVER SPRING AREA by Mildred Getty

Part II

From the 47th annual report of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, dated Sept. 30, 1873, comes the statement that the "Metropolitan Branch Road, from Point of Rocks to Washington, forty-two and three-quarters miles in length, was opened for traffic on 25th May last." This seems to indicate that the railroad began serving Silver Spring in 1873, but in Edward Hungerford's book "The Story of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad 1827 - 1927, Vol. 2, Chapter IV," the date is given as 1868. Whatever date is correct it marked the beginnings of suburban development in the area. The tracks of the B and O through Silver Spring owe their present location to the influence of Francis Preston Blair. The tracks of the original survey came practically to the front door of the Blair residence. Mr. Blair arranged to have the right of way at its present location.

LINDEN

As rapid transportation became a reality, small subdivisions sprang up. The little community of Linden was started by a group of northern office holders in the District of Columbia shortly after the Civil War. A few frame houses were erected and streets laid out. On the map of 1878³ Warren Street and Montgomery Street are marked. They were of dirt but boasted wooden sidewalks. However, feeling was still high among the Southern sympathizers living on nearby farms, and all refused to drive through Linden when the northerners moved in.

WOODSIDE

The part of Silver Spring originally called Woodside was started by Judge Benjamin T. Leighton. A survey of his subdivision dated April 8, 1890, shows the streets planned. Those running north and south were named 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Avenues. The ones going east and west starting a block from Fenwick Lane, were lettered beginning with A and going as far as H. 1st and 2nd Avenues have retained their original appellations, but the lettered streets have been renamed.

The Railroad Station for Woodside was called Fenwick. It was located on the west side of the tracks at the end of Fenwick Lane. The lane and the station were named for the Fenwick family whose home was nearby.

Judge Leighton's business office was located at 482 Louisiana Avenue, N.W., Washington. He advertised houses to be built and sold on small cash payments, balance monthly. Government office workers wishing to escape life in a city came to live in Woodside bringing their families with them. For the most part they were people of considerable education if not too affluent.

FOREST GLEN

Another development was that of Forest Glen. The Forest Glen Improvement Co. was formed, lots and streets were surveyed and people were urged to buy. It was thought that a summer hotel would be successful where people could come to escape the humid heat of Washington. Accordingly one was built in a lovely wooded area. It was named "Forest Inn." But it wasn't successful, and so the project died. Another building called "The Glen Manor Hotel" was more prosperous. That was located on what is now Holman Street. It cared for summer residents as late as the nineteen teens.

SCHOOLS

On the map of the Silver Spring area of 1865¹ there is no school marked, but one can be found on the one of 1878.² The school was located on the south side of the Ashton-Colesville Turnpike about where the Hecht store is today. It had two rooms with two teachers. The grades through the fourth were taught by one teacher on the first floor; the larger pupils were cared for on the upper floor.

To educate elementary pupils of the Linden-Forest Glen communities, the little Presbyterian Church at Linden was used. The teacher was Miss Agnes Fenwick. Later a one-room school was built on the Forest Glen Road across from the Catholic Cemetery. That school was closed for some reason, and another school building was erected at what is now Gardner Avenue and Kimball Streets. It took care of about twenty children through seven grades with one teacher. Both of these school houses are still standing but have been turned into dwellings.

In Linden, a Mrs. Garrett had a small private school in her home for pupils up to the fourth grade. The children sat around her dining-room table and learned their A, B, C's.

In Littensville there was a public school of one room. About thirty children attended here. There was no water in any school. The pupils were sent to the neighboring homes with a bucket when drinking water was needed. The bucket stood on a desk with a dipper nearby. All drank from the same container. Outdoor toilets

were provided, which created a hardship in inclement weather. At a later date the Littensville School was turned over to the colored people. It had a dedicated teacher, Mrs. Charles Bullock, a negress, who did her best to educate her small charges. There were no high schools in any of the communities.

In 1894 the Forest Inn at Forest Glen was sold to Mr. and Mrs. John Irving Cassidy. This couple had been managing a school in Norfolk, Virginia. They wanted an educational institution of their own and so National Park Seminary was started. It was an exclusive school for girls, catering to the daughters of prosperous families throughout the nation. At first, some day-schoolers were taken, but it became predominantly a boarding school. The girls were given a splendid cultural education through two years of college, together with training in social graces. Teas, concerts, dances, dinners, and sports were an important part of the school life. Due to the business acumen of Mr. Cassidy and the charm of Mrs. Cassidy their enterprise prospered. One of the many factors of the success of N.P.S. was its system of sororities. No girl was excluded from club life. There were eight sorority houses, the architecture of each one different. One represented a Swiss chalet, another a Dutch windmill, one a Japanese pagoda, while two were typical American bungalows. There was also a colonial home, an English castle with drawbridge and moat, and a Spanish mission.

In 1916, Mrs. Cassidy having died, Mr. Cassidy sold the school and retired. It was managed then by Dr. James E. Ament. He bought many statues abroad and had them placed around the grounds. Dr. Ament was followed by Roy Tasco Davis as headmaster. In 1942 the buildings of National Park Seminary, then called National Park College, were bought by the U.S. Government to be used as an annex to Walter Reed Hospital.

In 1897, a woman's club, The Home Interest Club, was organized, its object being "Mutual helpfulness, and to promote sociability in the neighborhood." These women also took a lively interest in civic affairs, especially the need for better schooling for their children. Many families sent their youngsters into Washington for lack of educational facilities in the county. The ladies of the H.I.C. decided to do something to improve the situation. Accordingly, in 1906, an educational committee consisting of Mr. Wm. D. Little, Mrs. Joseph U. Burket and Mrs. George G. Getty was appointed. The ladies petitioned the Montgomery County Board of Education to build a consolidated school which would care for the elementary grades at a central place in the neighborhood. The Board answered that it would be glad to oblige but it lacked funds. The women were told that such a building as they wanted would cost \$8,000. The county would give half of the amount if the club would supply the ground plus \$4,000. Not daunted by this amount, the thirty members, whose annual dues were twenty five cents, put their shoulders to the wheel to further their project. The committee called on Judge Leighton and asked him if he would donate a lot for a school in Woodside. To their great joy he said he would not only donate one lot, he would give two.

With this beginning the women then canvassed the neighborhood for donations. Mr. Cassidy of National Park Seminary gave \$2,000 for the school, much to the delight of the Home Interest Club. Entertainments, amateur theatricals produced in the Odeon (the theater built by Mr. Cassidy for National Park), dances, lawn fetes, dinners, etc. were held. Finally the rest of the \$4,000 was raised. In the spring of 1909 the consolidated school, known as the Woodside School, was ready for occupancy. There were four rooms completed. The two teachers from the Sligo School, Miss Josephine Wellmore and Miss Amanda Griffith, brought their scholars up to the new building. Miss Grace Birgfeld, later Mrs. Robert Murphy, who was the teacher

at the Forest Glen School, had all of her twenty pupils, who comprised seven grades, gather their belongings together and walk down the 7th Street Pike to begin their scholastic work in the new building. Miss Griffith taught the first and second grades, Miss Birgfeld the third and fourth, while Miss Edna Hauke, a new teacher, had charge of the fifth and sixth. Miss Wellmore was the principal and had the seventh grade. The next year Mr. Ira C. Whitacre was brought down from West Virginia to be its principal.

For children in the Forest Glen schools, the whole Forest Glen area had been their playground, the children often going so far afield that the school bell, telling them that recess was over, was not heard. No teacher at the old buildings had ever had to supervise a playground; the older children took care of the little ones and organized the games. So when these children from the one-room Forest Glen School came to the new building, great was their disappointment to find that some of their favorite games could never be played again.

These favorite games included Sheep, Sheep Run, Arrow Hunt and Ickie-Ackie. In Ickie-Ackie the twenty pupils divided into two groups, one stationing itself on the east side of the building, the other on the west. The starter called out Ickie-Ackie, over. An older child threw the ball over the top of the school house. If it were caught by the other side all would run around the building and catch as many of the enemy as possible. If the ball were not caught, the cry would come Ickie-Ackie, over, from the ones who missed, and they would have a turn to throw the ball. When all the players on one side were caught the game ended. There was never any cheating in this sport. Fair play was always the rule.

In the Annals of Silver Spring, written by Gist Blair, he stated that in 1897 Silver Spring was merely a crossroads, with no inhabitants. He circulated a petition that a Post Office be established there. This was done and on May 5, 1899, he was made postmaster. The building was erected near the B and O station. In 1900 the postmaster of Sligo succeeded in having the Silver Spring office discontinued, but Gist Blair had that order rescinded. He remained postmaster until February 21, 1906. While serving in this capacity he put the money order system and Rural Free Delivery with three carriers into operation at the Silver Spring Post Office. Frank L. Hewitt succeeded Blair and held the position until removed by a Democratic administration.

Though the communities of Woodside, Linden and Forest Glen had been established, and boasted named streets (though only dirt, and very muddy in winter) with some wooden sidewalks, the actual area of Silver Spring hadn't grown. There were still fields around the railroad station. There was one feed store owned by Wilkins and Jordan, later sold to J.H. Cissel. He in turn sold to Griffith and Perry. It stood where Griffin's Ice Cream Parlor is located. There was no underpass under the railroad. The trolley tracks crossed it on the surface going up on the east side of Georgia Avenue, past the feed store, open fields, and then the estates of Wm. Thompson and Wm. P. Wilson, grandson of Thomas Noble Wilson. Where the post office building stands today was the home of Gist Blair, a beautiful residence with extensive grounds. Later it was occupied by Frank L. Hewitt and his large family. A member of the Hewitt family has a photograph of the older Frank, standing in front of his real estate office in 1903. It was a small frame building located at what is now 8126 Georgia Avenue.

Sligo didn't grow either. Mr. Frank Fidler's blacksmith shop still cared for the feet of the many horses owned by the neighboring farmers. The country store

where Jubal Early's troops found the supply of liquor was still very much in evidence. The toll gate continued to operate. The Ashton-Colesville Turnpike stopped at the 7th Street Pike, there was no East West Highway, and Montgomery Blair's son, with his seven children, occupied the estate of Falkland.

Change didn't come to the Silver Spring area until the nineteen teens. Though the children of the community attended the Woodside School instead of the one at Sligo, the flint-stone road remained bumpy and rough, and life moved on much as it had since the 1890's. Farmers continued to use the turnpike to bring their produce into Washington, driving home in the evening with a pocket full of cash.

There was no bank along the way for these would-be customers to use. Accordingly, a group of community-minded men met at the home of Frank L. Hewitt on March 4, 1910, to discuss plans for starting a bank to be built at Silver Spring. It was given the name of The Silver Spring National Bank, and opened its doors Nov. 1, 1910. James H. Cissel was chosen the first president of the new bank, Somerset R. Waters, Vice-President, J. Floyd Cissel, Cashier, and Mark Stearman, attorney. The small red-brick building was at the corner of the 7th Street Pike and Blair Road (now Sligo Avenue). The ground was purchased from the Blair family. When finished the cost had been \$4,984. It had no water and no toilet facilities. November 1, 1910, was a big day for the bank; it approved its first loans, \$297 to B.R. Gannon and \$1,201.92 to J.H. Cissel. On March 24, 1910, the recording of stock was \$25,000.

Going was slow. In 1914 Ira C. Whitacre was employed as the teller. He remained with the bank until his retirement in 1950. He died the same year. He did much to put it on its feet. In 1923 Fred L. Lutes came to the bank. He was employed April 6, 1923, as Assistant Cashier.

In 1924 the underpass beneath the B and O was under construction. The bank's location became untenable. Accordingly a new site was purchased at what is now 8252 Georgia Avenue and a new, large building constructed. On Sept. 1, 1925, the new quarters were occupied.

By that date the 7th Street Pike had been changed from the old flint-stone bed to a smooth macadam thoroughfare. The state had taken it over, and the toll gates were discarded. Before 1913 a few frame houses had been built along the main street; B.R. Gannon operated a grocery store about where the fire house stands, while across the street Hunter Brothers were doing business in farm supplies.

In 1916, Blair Lee's son, E. Brooke Lee, and Frank L. Hewitt organized a National Guard Company of seventy-five men. It was Co. K of the 115 Infantry of the American Expeditionary Force. Brooke Lee was the captain, while Frank Hewitt was lieutenant. The company was sent immediately to the Mexican border to help quell the disturbance created by Villa and his band. They were at Eagle Pass, near the Rio Grande, for six months. Upon returning, the outfit was shipped overseas and fought in the First World War until the end.

After the war, by 1918, the automobile made suburban living practical, and Silver Spring began to grow. More houses were built, and a few stores made their appearance. The early shaky days of the Silver Spring bank seemed to have passed until the depression of 1932. There were times when the personnel of the bank despaired that their ship would stay afloat during the storm, but it did by a narrow margin, and no depositors lost their money.

In 1938 the Silver Spring National Bank merged with the Prince Georges Bank and Trust Co. and the Takoma Park Bank. It then became known as the Suburban National Bank. Fred Lutes was elected President on January 10, 1945. In 1951 the Suburban National Bank merged with the Prince Georges Bank and Trust Company. The name was once more changed. It became The Suburban Trust Co. Today it is the sixth largest bank in the Washington area with assets of nearly sixty-two million.

The second bank in Silver Spring, known as the Bank of Silver Spring, opened its doors in November 1946 in a small building on the west side of Georgia Avenue near Fidler's Lane. The President was George Day, a former employee of the Suburban Trust; the Vice President was William D. Blair, grandson of Montgomery Blair. Its name was changed later to the American National Bank of Maryland. It now occupies a large building at 8701 Georgia Avenue.

On October 12, 1913, a woman's club named "Ladies Cooperative Improvement Society" was organized. There were thirty-eight charter members. The dues were ten cents per member per month. The first meeting was held in the barn back of Mr. Bernard Gannon's grocery store. The ladies' conversation was interrupted at intervals by the kicking of the horses in their stalls, while the odors of the stable permeated the room where they met. This organization was to be an historic one for Silver Spring. The women's purpose was indeed what the Club's name implied, the improvement of Silver Spring. At that date there was no lighting in the community, no water system, no sewage, and no sidewalks. The few houses and stores which had been erected depended upon wells and septic tanks. The ladies began their work of changing conditions for the better in Silver Spring, whose growth was taking a faster pace than formerly. The money for their various projects was raised in the usual manner of women's organizations, bake sales, amateur theatricals, dinners, bazaars, rummage sales, carnivals, and even door-to-door canvassing for funds from property owners.

The first large project the women had a hand in was in 1915 when they assisted the men to form a volunteer fire department. The efforts of all concerned were successful and a company was formed. Mr. J. Herbert Cissel aided the undertaking by donating the use of a shed in the alley back of the present fire house.

The next major improvement of the women in 1916 was to contract with the Potomac Electric Power Co. to install seventeen incandescent lamps to light the existing streets in Silver Spring. With the aid of some property owners, the club agreed to pay the company \$255 per annum for the illumination. In order to save money, the lights were turned off at midnight. On February 12, 1916, electric lights were placed on Sligo Avenue.

With the increase of population the wells and septic tanks were not able to care for the sanitation needs of the community. The ladies initiated a campaign to urge that relief from these woes be given. They contacted the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and other agencies that could help. They called on Congressman F.N. Zihlman for his aid. Due to their efforts, by July 4, 1922, a sewage system was in operation.

The children of the community weren't neglected. Through the endeavors of this club, which in 1924 had changed its name to "The Woman's Improvement Club, Inc. of Silver Spring, Md.", a dental clinic for school children in the East Silver Spring School was established in 1930. Also, in that same year, an audimeter for testing the hearing of children was installed by the Club. It was the first time such a device was used in the State of Maryland.

Up to the year 1930, if a resident of Silver Spring wanted a library book, the only place to obtain it was to go into Washington, D.C. Persons living in Maryland weren't allowed to have a card from the Public Library unless he or she worked for the government. The Improvement Club decided to start a library. Mrs. Chas. Zeller headed the committee. On Oct. 10, 1931, the Silver Spring Library was launched. It was granted a room in the East Silver Spring Elementary School. Much of the furniture was made by the boys of the Takoma-Silver Spring High School under the instruction of the manual training teacher, Mr. Allen Federman. Other women's organizations of the community helped, giving books, draperies, furniture, etc., for the room. They also donated services for the operation of the library.

In September of 1934 the Jessup Blair Recreation Center had been willed to the State of Maryland by Mrs. Violet Blair Janin, a descendant of Francis Preston Blair. It had been her home. The house was set in a beautiful grove of oak trees on the east side of Georgia Avenue with Blair Road running to the south of the property. In Mrs. Janin's will she stipulated that no tree was to be cut down unless it died. If any had to be removed, another was to be planted in its place. The house was put in order, and a large room given over to the use of the rapidly expanding library in the Silver Spring School, which by that date had outgrown its quarters. The community used this library until 1957 when on January 26 the Silver Spring Library was opened on Colesville Road and Spring Street. This is a beautiful new, large building, under the auspices of the Department of Public Libraries.

The ladies of the Silver Spring Improvement Club can be credited with having the first concrete sidewalks laid in the main part of Silver Spring. On some of the side streets cinder paths were laid to help pedestrians.

As automobiles became more numerous, it was apparent that the lives of the children who had to walk down the 7th Street Pike to the Woodside School were in danger. Due to the efforts of The Home Interest Club, and with the help of the community residents, money was raised to lay a sidewalk which extended from Grace Church Road to Ballard Street on the west side of the highway. This walk was used until 1950 when Georgia Avenue was turned into a six lane street, and sidewalks were built on either side.³

The first newspaper in Silver Spring was started by Col. E. Brooke Lee in 1927. It was the Maryland News, which is still being published. In that same year Col. Lee and T. Howard Duckett formed the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The beautiful building which houses this Commission is now standing at 8787 Georgia Avenue on land which for many decades was the vegetable garden of the Thomas Noble Wilson estate. The Wilson house was directly north of it.

The second newspaper to be published in Silver Spring was the Suburban Record. It was an outgrowth of the Bethesda Record. It was started about twenty-five years ago, approximately in 1943. It is published once a week, as is the Maryland News.

The development known as Woodside Park was begun in 1922 when Mr. Chas. Hopkins, a real estate developer who had done business in New Orleans and Virginia, created the Woodside Park Development Corporation. His first real estate venture in the area, however, was a little piece of property which he purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Janin. This subdivision, known as Blair, lay on the east side of Georgia Avenue along the B and O railroad tracks. The land of Woodside Park was purchased from the Noyes estate.

Mr. Crosby S. Noyes, owner of the Evening Star newspaper of Washington, D.C. had purchased the land in 1882. He built a house, which he used as a summer residence, on a site near what is now called Mansion Drive. He had quite an extensive acreage which he farmed, giving it the name of Alton Farm. Often he would entertain the employees of the newspaper at picnics at his summer home. Mr. Hopkins made a beautiful development of Woodside Park. One street, Highland Drive, is well worth driving through when the dogwood and azaleas are in bloom. Without a doubt, no more lovely sight can be found in all the world than on this street in the height of the blooming season. Because Mr. Hopkins had a regard for family names and history, he named the streets Blair, Gist Avenue, Woodbury Drive, etc. In Woodside Park can be found Crosby and Noyes Drives.

The subdivisions of North Woodside and Montgomery Hills were started in the middle 1920's. The original property belonged to the McCeney and Childs families. Mr. Joseph Childs and his sister, Anna, were the last owners of the original grant.

On the northeast corner of Georgia Avenue and the Forest Glen Road, where a new medical building has just been completed and occupied, there stood for many decades a small frame house owned and lived in by negroes named Wallace. They were Catholics. The dwelling stood on an acre and a half of land. This bit of property took a corner of Gen. Getty's two hundred acre farm. When the General moved to Montgomery County in 1882 he tried to buy the plot, as had other white residents before him, but the colored people wouldn't sell. Down through the years others tried unsuccessfully to obtain the property, but were always met with the same response. One day the authoress of this history asked Katharine Wallace how her family came to own the home. Kathy replied, "My father was a slave of the Carroll family. He was their coachman. The Carrolls thought so much of him that they set him free, and gave him this place. My mother was their cook, but they wouldn't free her." (She must have been a good cook, and perhaps good cooks were as hard to come by then as they are now.) "My father continued to work for the Carrolls for wages. He saved his money, and as each of us children were born he bought us and gave us our freedom."

One night in the early 1930's the little house caught fire. Those who came to watch the catastrophe were amazed at how long it burned. The next morning it was still burning. With the light of day the phenomenon was explained. The original house had been a log cabin. Sometime later it had been covered with clapboards.

SOCIAL LIFE

The social life of the Woodside, Linden, and Forest Glen section of Silver Spring from 1890 to the 1930's was a gay and wholesome one. It was dominated by the women's clubs and the churches. When bicycles first came into use there was a bicycle club participated in by the young people. There were also horseback riding parties. The first club of any importance was called the Irving Literary Society. It had musical evenings and debates upon issues of the day. Then followed the Home Interest Club and the Fortnightly. All of these organizations met at the members' homes.

The Fortnightly Club had as its membership married couples, and was merely for pleasure. It met every other Thursday night. For entertainment card games were played, the first being euchre. This was followed at a later date by five hundred, and still later by auction bridge. When cards weren't indulged in, there were other

activities, including dancing, the dances being the Lancers, the quadrille, the Virginia reel, two step and the waltz. In the nineteen teens came the one step, the fox trot, and the bunny hug. Other entertainments were guessing games, charades, amateur theatricals and costume balls. The big events such as the costume ball were usually held in the large dining room of Dr. G.H. Wright's sanitarium. Dr. Wright had bought the Carroll home. He and his family lived in the old house. He had built a sanitarium for his patients which joined the residence.

There was never any liquor served at these parties. The people who made up the social life depended upon their own initiative for their entertainment. The parties usually began at eight o'clock and ended at midnight. They were gay and full of fun. Witty conversation added to the merriment.

No one in the neighborhood had to lock his doors for fear of unwanted guests, thugs or criminals. Silver Spring was a secure and happy area.

Notes:

1. Martenet and Bond's Map of Montgomery County, Maryland (Balto. 1865)
2. Atlas of 15 miles around Washington
by G. H. Hopkins, C.E. (Phila. 1879)
3. The Women's Improvement Club of Silver Spring, Md. A History
by Mary Burch Deffinbaugh