

A HISTORY OF ASHTON HEIGHTS

A Neighborhood History Prepared  
by the Students of Professor Richard Longstreth's Course  
"Historic Preservation--Principles and Methods"

## Introduction

This study was prepared by the students of George Washington University Professor Richard Longstreth's course "Historic Preservation--Principles and Methods" during spring semester 1994. This study was arranged with the participation of the Ashton Heights Civic Association (AHCA), and the Virginia Room of the Arlington Public Library. This study was presented to the AHCA, as well as the general public on May 4 in the auditorium of the Arlington Public Library. The study comprises: a summary report, supporting reports, survey forms, maps. This report contains selected copies of this material.

Persons interested in obtaining a copy of this report, or any of the other materials identified below, may contact Jim Terpstra AHCA Historian at (703) 908-9231, or Sarah Collins, Librarian of the Virginia Room at (703) 358-5966. The originals of all documents referenced below are available for public inspection in the Virginia Room. Jim Terpstra also has an AHCA copy of all of these materials, with the exception of the survey forms and the maps (which are too voluminous).

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Ashton Heights, a small residential neighborhood in Arlington, Virginia, grew up in the early 1920s as a suburb of Washington, D.C. Its proximity to the District of Columbia made it an ideal locale for suburban living. The character of Ashton Heights is defined primarily by modest single-family homes, of the type that made home ownership affordable for the first time to large numbers of the middle class. Its development is representative of the form of suburban growth that occurred across the United States during the interwar decades.

Until the late 19th century, Arlington County remained a sparsely settled region dominated by farmsteads and pastures. By the 1890s, however, a series of small, distinct local communities including Clarendon, Rosslyn, Ballston, Falls Church and Fairfax emerged. Yet, it was not until the introduction of the electric railroad and the trolley car that the development of Arlington County began in earnest. Aided by the commencement of rail services, these settlements began to flourish. In a short ten years, Arlington was transformed from a rural community to a suburban community with seventy new subdivisions accompanied by a population increase from 6,430 to 10,231.

The street railway was introduced to Arlington by the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Railway in 1892. Transporting commuters and tourists, the line crossed the 14th Street Bridge and traveled along Route One, through Alexandria to Mount Vernon. Covering a total distance of sixteen miles it was considered one of the first long-distance lines in the country. The two-car trains ran every twenty minutes to accommodate the passenger load.

The other early line, which also began service in 1892, was the Washington, Arlington and Falls Church Railroad, which ran west across the Aqueduct Bridge through Rosslyn to the Fairfax Courthouse. The line consisted of three single track lanes, one of which was built on the south side of Route 50 as a way for commuters from Clarendon and other western neighborhoods to bypass Rosslyn and go directly into Washington.

In 1910 these two lines, the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Railway and the Washington, Arlington and Falls Church Railway, merged to form the Virginia Railway. The merger resulted in an impressive amount of service carrying 20,000 passengers every weekday, over sixty-three mile of track and making stops at sixty-four locations within the county.

Rail service reached the northern section of the county somewhat later. In 1906 the Great Falls and Old Dominion

Railway extended from Rosslyn to Great Falls. Used by both commuters and excursion passengers, the line was electrified in 1912 and provided interurban electric railway service within Arlington County.

The other major railway line that had a large impact on the growth and development of the area surrounding Clarendon was the Arlington and Fairfax Railway. It began as a horse car line, but by 1896 had converted to electricity. Financed and organized by citizens in Arlington and Fairfax, the line opened up the center of the county by gradually expanding from Rosslyn to the Fairfax Courthouse. Eventually, the company operated twenty-seven miles of line, had 2,500,000 passengers and grossed \$250,000.

Extension of these rail lines made land beyond the District's limits accessible for residential development. Considered one of the "two greatest things that occurred in Arlington County prior to 1900," the electric railroads heyday continued until World War I.

Between 1910, the year that Ashton Heights began to develop, and 1930, there were few regulations governing the layout of subdivisions or the construction of buildings in Arlington County. The only county ordinance mandating subdivision control, from June 1914, required approval of subdivision plans by the County Engineer. This was to ensure the integration of the streets and sewer lines of the new subdivision into the existing county infrastructure.

The next county action concerning subdivision control was a zoning ordinance passed in April of 1930 that established basic categories for land use. By 1938, when the county passed additional regulations and established a planning department, the physical character of Ashton Heights had been essentially established. The county, therefore, had very little part in determining the form that Ashton Heights and other developments of the period would take. Real estate speculators and builders, on the other hand, had almost exclusive control, acting as planners for the community.

In 1919 most of the land that now comprises Ashton Heights was still empty. By 1930 much of the neighborhood east of what is now Monroe Street was dotted with structures and straddled by roads. Almost all of it had been subdivided and each deed of dedication filed with the county land records. The one exception was its southeasternmost corner between what is now First Street and Arlington Boulevard. In this corner, a landowner, E.B. Van Every, held out and, for a time, resisted the pressure for suburban development.

In 1919, a second wave of real estate activity was set in motion in Ashton Heights. Earlier activity beginning around 1908 had resulted in a proliferation of subdivisions, platted if not improved upon, in the eastern part of the neighborhood between Wilson Boulevard on the north and an imaginary continuation of the line of Seventh Street on the south. Much of the story of real estate development in Ashton Heights in its second phase centers on the efforts of Ashton Jones to acquire land, both unsold parts of previous subdivisions in the north and large chunks from the longtime landowners to the south. Ashton Jones, Ashton Height's namesake, was the key figure in the real estate dealings behind the residential development of the community.

In September of 1919, Jones purchased approximately sixty acres of land on the edge of the small town of Clarendon from Fannie B. Hunter, a descendant of Bushrod Washington Hunter who had bought land in the area in 1851. Jones subsequently subdivided this land in two parts, forming A.C. Jones' Addition to Clarendon and Moore's Fourth Addition to Clarendon. Two years later, in September of 1921, Jones rejoined these subdivisions, modifying street names as well as somewhat altering lot layout and calling the whole Ashton Heights. Previous subdivisions in the area now called Ashton Heights appeared on plat maps and deeds as additions to Clarendon, whereas subsequent subdivisions would join the neighborhood as additions to Ashton Heights.

In August 1922, Jones made another major purchase to augment his land holdings in the neighborhood. Jones purchased all fourteen acres of the Ellen Fuss subdivision just to the north of his own property. The Fuss subdivision, which had been dedicated two years previously, comprised the five blocks between Langhorne (Sixth) and Hunter (Fifth) and between Clarendon (Irving) and West (Monroe). Fuss had purchased the land for her subdivision from Clarence Alexander, another longtime landowner whose estate adjoined that of Fannie Hunter.

Jones, beside buying and subdividing large tracts of land and acquiring previously dedicated subdivisions whole, also had his hand in the northern part of the neighborhood, buying groups of lots from other subdivisions. In the Spring of 1919, Jones bought 43 whole lots and parts of several other lots from Edward A. Wilson. He purchased these lots from Wilson a few days previous to Wilson's official dedication of the subdivision in which most of them lay. Wilson was, perhaps, the first developer of what is now called Ashton Heights. On April 9, 1919, he dedicated Wilson's Second Addition to Clarendon. This land, previous to subdivision, had been a family garden that had wrapped around his First Addition to Clarendon, dedicated in 1910.

With the dedication of Wilson's Second Addition, the northern part of what is now called Ashton Heights, extending from Clarendon Avenue (Irving) in the east to a block past Milton (Lincoln) in the west, had all been subdivided.

Jones engaged in other real estate activity in his capacity as president of the George H. Rucker Company. Originally from Lunenburg County, Virginia, he moved to Arlington and became active in real estate upon the recommendation of his brother-in-law George H. Rucker in 1904. Rucker, who as the Clerk of the Court for Arlington County kept a watchful eye on real estate and transportation-related developments, felt confident of growth in Arlington because of its proximity to Washington D.C.

Changing transportation trends contributed to the rapid growth of the area. By the late 1920s and 1930s railroad ridership declined, and gradually ceased, under stiff competition from the automobile. Other factors that contributed to the railway system's demise in the 1930s included lack of public financing, competition from bus lines, and the stock market crash. The biggest factor -- the automobile -- offered something more alluring than anything the railway system could provide. It offered the open road.

In the 1920s, getting around Arlington on the "open road" was no small feat. Local travel consisted of dirt roads which were thick with dust in the summer and became muddy sink holes in rainy weather. Despite these poor conditions, autos began rolling through Arlington, tremendously impacting the settlement pattern of the suburb. Now, for the first time the potential homeowner no longer had to locate near a trolley or railroad line. Vacant land between transportation corridors could now be platted. With expansion came the demand for more roads. By 1909 Wilson Boulevard had become the first hard-surfaced county road, indicating how important automobile transportation had become to suburban Arlington.

In 1930 the county boasted 172 miles of streets (42 miles surfaced), 30 miles of state highway and 10 miles of federal roads. Within two years an impressive 65% of the county roads had been surfaced. Communities were often described in advertisements and publications in terms of their driving distance from downtown Washington. For example, the Polk Company's 1927-28 Ashton Heights Directory describes the location of the community as fifteen [sic] miles from Washington on Wilson Boulevard. By the 1930s automobiles were the means of mass transportation in Arlington. Real estate agents even used the county's "Broad New Paved Highways" and "Super-Highways" to entice buyers to "Nearby Virginia."

Other contemporary advertisements depicted the appealing characteristics of the region. Jones knew that his largest reservoir of potential customers resided in the City and so hired a Washington real estate agency, the Kay Alger Company, to handle his advertising. The Kay Alger Company operated out of the Bond Building in Washington from which "free autos" left every hour during the week for "inspection trips" to Ashton Heights. On Sundays these same cars were available for picking up prospective customers and transporting them to the neighborhood.

The Kay Alger Company developed a logo for Ashton Heights which pictured a log cabin-like structure isolated from other houses and perched atop a gentle rise. The caption read "Build Your Love Nest." The advertisements which included this logo were featured in the Evening Star. The Kay Alger advertisements played on the city dweller's perceived lack of a visually pleasing environment, emphasizing Ashton Height's "picturesque" qualities, "natural beauty", and "wonderful view". Only houses that were detached could be built in Ashton Heights, and this condition of being a haven for the single-family home contributed to the "beauty and desirability of the surroundings."

At the same time, the amenities that city dwellers had become accustomed to were just as available to the new residents, or so, at least, it was claimed in the advertising. Ashton Heights was the best of both worlds, rural and urban. The advertisements gave voice to individual as well as communitarian values. While the Ashton Heights logo depicted a house in isolation, the organization of a citizen's association was lauded as expressing the community's "progressive spirit".

The advertising for Ashton Heights mentioned only two restrictions, however, the property deeds included more than two. The two that were considered important enough to publish, so as to screen out unwanted applicants prior to their making the trip over, were the prohibitions against the builders of multi-family dwellings and against those "not of the Caucasian Race." Many, if not most, of the deeds in Ashton Heights from the 1920s included a clause restricting blacks from buying, renting, or otherwise occupying or coming into possession of property in the neighborhood. Reconstruction Alexandria (Arlington) County had a majority black population, many of whom were landowners. When real estate speculators, anticipating suburban growth, began buying up black land, they effectively displaced the black population by inserting restrictive clauses into the deeds for the new subdivisions.

While whites were moving out of Washington in the 1920s, Arlington County blacks were moving in.

In nine months, Jones sold fifty lots in his own subdivision. The Kay Alger Company, seeing opportunity for profit, bought land from Fannie Hunter and added a tract of its own to Ashton Heights. By 1928, 150 houses stood between Langhorne Avenue (Sixth) and First Road North and between Clarendon Avenue (Irving Street) and West Street (Monroe Street). In 1928, the population in this section, about one quarter the size of what is now called Ashton Heights, was around three hundred.

When his brother-in-law died sometime before 1920, Jones inherited a majority interest in his firm. As well as dealing in land, the George H. Rucker Company was a mortgage lender, an insurance company, and an agent. The Rucker Company may also have been a speculative builder in the sense that it might have commissioned houses to be built on its lots. A Rucker Company advertisement in the Star in September 1921 read, "Clarendon. Two 5-room houses and one 9-room. Terms, as we are owners." It seems fairly certain that the Rucker Company built those houses. They might have been sited on the lots that Jones (et. al.) purchased from Wilson's Second Addition to Clarendon. Although his daughter maintains that Jones only took part in two unsuccessful home building ventures, more evidence of this type of activity on Jones' part exists.

In June 1922, Kay Alger Company was selling its lots for twelve cents per square foot cash in hand, and fourteen cents with monthly payments. Walter England, the builder of the Tevyaw house at 541 Marion Avenue (N. Jackson Street) and original owner of the lot, would have paid about \$1,310 for the land, assuming that he bought the property outright from Kay Alger Company. England was a contractor residing in Ashton Heights who built several houses speculatively in the neighborhood. Typical of the speculative builder in the interwar years, he was working with small amounts of capital, and therefore, buying his building lots one at a time. Ashton Heights, for many, including builders like England and land developers like Wilson, was dual-faceted. On the one hand, it was a place of residence and family enclave, on the other, a speculative enterprise and source of income.

The exact cost of a particular house in Ashton Heights is difficult to determine from deeds of trust because the amount paid down is always an unknown. The cost of a lot and house in Ashton Heights in the 1920s ranged from about \$5,500 to about \$9,000 at the upper end. To put these



prices in perspective one must consider that the average annual income at that time was about \$2,300.

Ashton Heights grew through the 1920s in accordance with the blueprint that Ashton Jones had drawn for it. He, and the other subdividers, had tried to ensure, through the insertion of various proscriptions into their deeds, that their property values would be maintained at a acceptable levels. Jones had also taken steps to ensure that the future development of adjoining land would prove just as profitable.

Initially, Arlington County was heavily dependent on utility companies in the District for the provision of services. The installation of utilities in Ashton Heights took place, in large measure, though, as part of county-wide programs. The installation of major utilities and services in Ashton Heights, including water, sewage, gas, electricity, and telephone occurred during the area's most intensive period of development. Ambitious public interest projects undertaken by the County Board made it possible for residents to enjoy a wide range of utility services almost immediately. By 1940, water, sewage, gas, electric, and telephone service were available to nearly every home in Arlington County.

In 1927, Arlington County tapped into the existing Washington Aqueduct system and its filtration and treatment plants. The Army Corps of Engineers operated the Washington Aqueduct at this point, and continues to do so today. In order for Arlington County to become part of the system, an Act of Congress was necessary. In 1926, the 69th United States Congress passed two acts relating to the county's use of the Washington Aqueduct. The first act authorized the sale of water to Arlington and the second allowed for the connecting of that supply to a proposed county water system. In the spring of 1927, the county Board of Supervisors proposed a \$750,00 bond issue to finance the new system. In order to insure that the measure was placed on the June ballot, 2,000 signatures were needed. Mrs. R.L. Eacho of the Ashton Heights Citizens Association headed the signature drive in her area, collecting seventy-five names. The measure passed on June 15, 1927 by a wide margin.

Construction of the system began almost immediately with the laying of a twenty-four inch supply line from the Dalecarlia filtration plant in Washington, D.C. across the Chain Bridge and along Glebe Road to Lyonhurst. At first, thirty-six miles of supply and service mains were laid with connections to 340 houses. By 1938, 140 miles existed with 7,870 metered connections. A parade through Clarendon was

held to celebrate the turning on of water which occurred on November 3, 1927.

The sewage system, as it had developed to this point was unsatisfactory. In 1930, there were seventeen different community systems with twenty-six lines serving 1,334 users. Most systems simply took the sewage out of the community, only to dump it in a nearby stream or on another person's property. By 1933, county residents, tired of polluted streams and open cesspools, passed a bond issue. Construction of the new system began in 1934, and included thirty-five miles of trunk sewers and seventy-five miles of lateral lines, together with a treatment plant on Glebe Road and three lift stations.

In 1911, with the founding of the Rosslyn Gas Company, gas service was introduced to Arlington County. Their manufacturing plant was located on the Potomac River in Rosslyn. In 1917, Rosslyn Gas came under the control of the Washington Gas Company, and in 1942, the two companies merged. Original gas lines were installed in Ashton Heights between 1921 and 1936. For example, Irving Street received lines in 1921, Jackson Street in 1923, and North Norwood in 1936. In 1930, the Washington Gas Company undertook a major installation of new gas lines to expand service in Arlington County. The expansion project included 144,000 feet of mains and service lines, and was one of the company's largest single installations within the county.

Alexandria County Lighting was the first company to provide electric lighting in Arlington County. By 1931, their plant, located on the Alexandria waterfront, provided electric service as far as Clarendon. Virginia Electric Power Company was incorporated in June 1929 as the Virginia Railway and Power Company, and is known today as Virginia Power. In December 1931, the company entered into an agreement with Arlington County to provide street lighting. Under the terms of the contract, the company installed and maintained 1000 one-hundred candle power lamps. Extensions to the system were made at the request of the county. Ashton Heights received street lighting earlier than the date of this contract, probably in 1930.

As early as 1898, the Falls Church Telephone Company was chartered to provide telephone service to the region. Soon after, a switchboard was installed in Rosslyn, in a small building at the end of the Aqueduct Bridge. The company had fifty customers, who were mostly businesses and government agencies. In 1916, the Falls Church Telephone Company was absorbed by the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company. By 1918, there were 555 telephones in Arlington County. In 1920, a new central office was constructed in

Clarendon Circle, which served 750 telephones. Dial service was announced the same year. In 1959, Arlington residents were first able to dial long-distance calls directly using a three-digit prefix.

In the early 1930s, the residential development of Ashton Heights was slowed because of the state of the economy in the aftermath of the Stock Market Collapse. From 1931 through 1933, only sixteen houses were built north of Pershing Road. But Washington's economy recovered faster than the rest of the nation's, and by 1935 home building in Ashton Heights resumed its earlier vigor. The houses that were going up significantly differed from their wood-frame predecessors. In the new sections of Ashton Heights, west of and including North Monroe Street, the houses built were almost entirely brick colonials. These houses were constructed by fewer builders who built larger numbers of houses at a time.

One builder in the Arlington area who constructed a number of houses in Ashton Heights was Frederick E. Westenberger. Westenberger began his career as a self-employed carpenter, building one or two houses at a time on lots he purchased from Ashton Jones. Eventually he was constructing as many as ten houses simultaneously on contiguous lots. Westenberger remembers having to obtain approval from Jones for some of his early house plans as a condition of the property deeds.

Two other successful builders who started with small-scale construction in the Arlington area, including Ashton Heights, were the brothers Marvin and Lincoln Broyhill. Their company, M.T. Broyhill and Sons Corporation, grew to become one of the largest home building companies in the Washington area. Immediately following World War II, they constructed over 15,000 houses in Northern Virginia. The Broyhill Corporation continues to operate, as do the Broyhill Contractors, who advertise themselves as "Three Generations of Craftsmen."

Development of neighborhood streets paralleled the builders' progress. The subdividers initially determined the lay-out and construction of streets. They determined to what degree improvements were made, resulting in considerable variation between subdivisions. No legislation controlled the improvement or development of platted streets until 1938 when an ordinance was passed setting forth the requirement that subdivision streets had to comply with the Master Highway Plan.

Prior to the 1930s street development was quite random and uncoordinated throughout the county. No continuity

existed between and within neighborhoods or sections and many roads had the same names. This became such a problem that some stores in Washington refused to deliver goods to the area and residents had to include the name of the subdivision in their street address in order to receive mail. Finally, in 1932, the new county manager government revamped the street system, renaming the streets as we know them today.

Control of these county roads became a hotly contested issue when, in 1932, the Virginia General Assembly approved a means by which the counties could be relieved of road construction and maintenance responsibility. The "Byrd Road Act" permitted the county to give its road responsibilities over to the state. Critics saw the plan as a proposal to abandon "local control over purely local matters" and a means by which the state could centralize power. Arlington County was one of four within the state to reject the idea and opted to continue local jurisdiction. Consequently, the mileage of county roads lengthened and only major avenues such as Glebe Road, Lee Highway, parts of Washington Boulevard, Arlington Boulevard and Columbia Pike, as well as Route 1, became the state's responsibility.

Highway development, on the other hand, was more orderly than residential development and emphasized regional planning with adjacent jurisdictions. Arlington County's transportation officials tried to incorporate regional cooperation in thoroughfare planning and often worked in conjunction with the National Capital Planning Commission.

Two early major highway projects in the county were federal projects in which Arlington County had little influence. Memorial Bridge, designed to provide access to Arlington Cemetery, was a component of the McMillian Plan for Washington. Completed in 1932, it also served as the connecting point for the George Washington Memorial Parkway. This parkway, also completed in 1932, linked Washington with Mount Vernon and provided access to the area's first airports (and later National). A major new feature of this highway was the clover leaf crossing designed "to solve the problem of high-speed traffic at crossroads."

Spurred by the federal development, Arlington County began to focus on highways in the early 1930s. In 1927 a Zoning Commission was established in Arlington, and recognizing how important transportation was to Arlington's growth and prosperity, included a transportation section in its overall plan. It was not, however, until 1937 that the Planning Commission became a permanent part of Arlington's local government. Highway improvements, as well as expansion of the system, came with the phenomenal increase in

motor vehicle registrations from 25,620 in 1936 to 40,871 in 1940.

In 1941 the first Major Thoroughfare Plan was adopted providing the foundation for highway development in Arlington for the next three decades. It foresaw and provided guidance for most subsequent construction including the "ultra modern" Shirley Highway which opened in 1949. Since 1941 four additional Major Thoroughfare Plans have been adopted by the County Board, with the latest in 1986.

A concentrated business district emerged along Wilson Boulevard, centered on the convergence of the two earlier rail lines. Wilson Boulevard, between Glebe Road and Clarendon Circle, changed dramatically between the mid-1920s and the mid-1960s. Initially a residential street with a scattered amount of small-scale commercial activity, the corridor was transformed in a piecemeal fashion into a suburban artery lined by apartments and commercial enterprises. Through most of the 1930s Wilson Boulevard largely retained its earlier character. In 1938 and 1939, low-rise apartments began to go up in the northwest corner of Ashton Heights, some fronting on Wilson. There was some infill of the remaining vacant lots in the older parts of the neighborhood, but the majority of construction was of multiple-family dwellings in the northwest. This type of activity continued through the 1940s, with the construction of approximately 137 units.

After World War II, new types of development began to appear, made possible by the passage in 1942 of a comprehensive zoning plan. Motels, chain stores, and automobile dealerships took up residence along Wilson Boulevard. The community quickly lost much of its small town, rural character, which had been intact just a quarter century earlier. By 1950 unified commercial store fronts and large scale retail developments could be found on Wilson Boulevard including Sears and J.C. Penny.

In this period the residential development of Ashton Heights slowed considerably. Seventeen single-family houses were built in the 1950s. A little over half of these were built in the late-to-develop southeastern corner, the old Van Every property. In 1952, there were still 42 undeveloped lots in this section, south of 1st Street, while only 19 remained vacant in the other sections, north of 1st Street.

In the 1960s new building slowed even further. By the 1970s it had come to a virtual halt with only four new houses going up. The 1980s, though, saw a modicum of new building, spurred by the arrival of the Metro system.

Thirty-five new units, many of these attached houses, were erected between 1980 and 1990.

The post-war decades saw a steady increase in the issuance of building permits as owners began to renovate and make alterations to structures that were now forty to fifty years old. Rooms were added; whole stories were added; kitchens and baths were remodeled; new dormers and fireplaces were affixed. Other than superficial and cosmetic modifications, such as the addition of fences, alterations to porches were the most prevalent changes.

Demolitions have occurred in Ashton Heights since the 1950s. Twenty-one dwellings have been demolished in the last four decades. Piedmont Street, in the western part of the neighborhood, has borne the greatest number of losses with eleven demolitions. Yet a remarkable number of structures are virtually unchanged. Indeed, even the oldest streets in Ashton Heights have a good amount of intact, unaltered, and even unadded-to building fabric.

No discussion of Ashton Heights would be complete without taking into account the residents and the social, educational, and religious institutions which they established. Ashton Heights has been historically, and continues to be, a homogenous and relatively prosperous neighborhood. It is a small, tightly-knit community whose residents possess a strong sense of identity. Demographically, Ashton Heights has been a model of stability since its settlement. The population density of Ashton Heights has remained fairly constant with very few demographic changes. Employment for most young families was provided by the federal government. The neighborhood was, and continues to be, a haven for families whose jobs necessitate that they be within a short commute of downtown Washington, D.C.

The composition of the neighborhood has continually been affected by cycles in family life. The general pattern has been that young families move into the neighborhood, raise their children, grow old, and are eventually replaced by new young families. It is common in Ashton Heights today to find a couple with young children who are new to the neighborhood living next door to an older couple who have lived in the neighborhood for thirty or forty years. However, Ashton Heights' housing stock has appreciated greatly in the last twenty years and is becoming out of reach for many young families. It appears to be drawing older, more established families with higher incomes, yet it continues to be the kind of safe, quiet community in which families can raise their children.

During the early development of Ashton Heights, children attended the nearby Clarendon School, later known as the Maury School. Located at 3350 Wilson Boulevard, the Clarendon School opened on September 20, 1910 with seven teachers and nearly 300 students. Until the mid-1920s, this school, as well as the other schools in the Arlington School District, only taught elementary education. In order for children in the county to continue their education, they could either attend a private school or ride the streetcar to public schools in Washington, D.C.

Arlington County's growing population and the lack of sufficient secondary schools attracted the attention and action of the school board. Money from community bonds and the Virginia State Board of Education's Literary Fund was provided to renovate existing buildings and construct new schools. The county school board received a \$15,000 loan for the construction of each new elementary school, and a \$30,000 loan for the construction of a new high school. By June 1925, fourteen schools were completed or under construction.

Several of the new schools were attended by children who lived in Ashton Heights. The Washington-Lee Junior-Senior High School was built in 1924 to meet the county's need for a secondary school. Located at 1300 North Quincy Street, this was the largest school in the county when it was built. It opened in the 1925-1926 school year to students in grades seven through twelve. The building could hold 550 students, and contained eighteen classrooms, two laboratories, a cafeteria, library, and gymnasium. In 1938, Washington-Lee became just a high school serving grades ten through twelve. Despite the presence of this new facility, numerous parents continued, into the late 1950s, to send their children to public schools in Washington, D.C.

In order to alleviate crowding at the Washington-Lee School, the Thomas Jefferson Junior High School was built in 1938 on Walter Reed Road, now the site of the Arlington Career Center. This school was the first separate junior high school in the county; and seventh- and eighth-grade children from Ashton Heights attended school at this location. In 1973, the building was demolished, and a new Jefferson Junior High School was built at 125 South Glebe Road, the former site of the Henry School.

The Clay Elementary School was built in 1926 at Seventh and Highland Streets. The dividing line distinguishing the Clay School district from the Maury School district ran directly through Ashton Heights, somewhere between Jackson and Irving Streets. Children from Ashton Heights attended the Clay School until it closed in 1973.

In 1953, the Filmore School was built at 33 North Filmore Street. A small school with four classrooms and eight multi-purpose rooms, it was built for students who lived in the section of Ashton Heights between Lee and Washington Boulevards. In 1973, the Long Branch Grade School was built on the same site, and incorporated most of the Filmore School into its design. The Maury, Clay, and Filmore Schools were consolidated into the new Long Branch School in the early 1970s.

Residents of Ashton Heights are involved in numerous social clubs and organizations, many dating from its settlement. Clubs such as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lion's, Knights of Columbus, and the Women's Club of Ashton Heights have grown to maturity with the neighborhood. There are also organizations for children in Ashton Heights, including Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts troops.

The two organizations with the strongest links to the Ashton Heights neighborhood are the Ashton Heights Women's Club and the Ashton Heights Civic Association. The women's club was formed in 1924, and soon after a clubhouse was built at what is now 413 North Irving Street. The building was designed by Hazel Davies, and a local contractor was engaged to build the clubhouse for \$4,700. With the help of Ashton Jones, the club members were able to secure a loan. Numerous fundraisers, including bake sales and dinners, enabled the club to pay off the mortgage early in 1945. Over the years, the women's club has sponsored Girl Scout troops, charity drives, art exhibits, and the American Red Cross. The Ashton Heights Civic Association was formed prior to 1924. This group's goal is the improvement of the Ashton Heights neighborhood as well as the larger community. The association holds monthly meetings, publishes newsletters, and sponsors an annual yard sale. Every household in Ashton Heights is eligible for membership.

There are several churches located within or near the boundaries of Ashton Heights, to which many neighborhood residents belong. The Clarendon Methodist Church purchased a site on Sixth Street between Irving and Ivy Streets in 1932, and completed their structure in 1941. Other churches in or near Ashton Heights include: the Arlington Church of Christ, Faith Lutheran Church; the Christian Church; the Clarendon Presbyterian Church; and St. George's Episcopal Church.

Ashton Heights is representative of numerous suburbs that developed across the nation during the interwar decades, and despite rapid growth, commercial expansion, and pressures for development, it retains much of its original character. Not exotic, Ashton Heights is a familiar and



homey place with meaning for its residents. The neighborhood conveys a sense of cohesiveness, not only architecturally, but socially as well. High-quality, reliable housing stock continues to attract people of similar backgrounds to the neighborhood, much the same as it did in earlier decades. Its merits are no less evident today than they were in the 1920s. Ashton Heights is worthy of measures that will protect it for years to come.

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