

ARLINGTON—THEN AND NOW

By JAMES TURMAN BARRON

Parkington—Ball's Crossroads

The crossroads at Glebe Road and Wilson Boulevard ranks as one of the busiest in Arlington. This was the crossing of two of the earliest roads in the County: the road to the Falls (Glebe Rd.) and the road to Falls Church (Wilson Blvd.). The area known as Ballston shown in these photographs reflects changes made between 1950 and mid-1971.

Originally owned not by Balls, but by descendants of the Birches, Ballston was Arlington's first true hamlet. The land adjoining it was a part of the Colville tract, willed to an Earl of Tankerville,¹ and sold to Samuel Shreve for 340 pounds, 11 shillings, 10 pence, and one half-penny.

Sometime in the early 1800s, a relative of John or Moses Ball (early settlers in what became Glencarlyn) founded an inn on the southwest corner of the crossroads (site shown in the far right of these photographs). Also listed in some accounts as a tavern, the Balls' structure was a two-story log building. It became a central point for community activity and was known as Ball's Crossroads or "Xroads." Later the area was developed as "Ballston."



Glebe Rd. and Wilson Blvd. From Arlington Historical Society Archives. 1950

The "old" view here does not reflect the many changes that have taken place at this crossroads. Streets have been paved, then torn up and paved

¹ The Earl of Tankerville (the "present" one, that is) was listed by Colville as his father's brother's daughter's son. That Earl's son sold the land to Shreve.



Parkington. Photograph by J. T. Barron. 1971

again. At the time the "old" view was recorded, Parkington Center was not in operation; however, it would soon gain national prominence as a result of its emphasis on automobile-oriented one-stop shopping.

It was not until the decade of the 1960s that the rest of Ball's Crossroads began to be developed. For a time, a private school was located near one corner; open land was predominant in the vicinity of the others.

Clarendon

The village of Clarendon officially began at the end of March 1900. Its 25 acres were split by what is now known as Wilson Boulevard, and



Wilson Blvd. From Arlington Historical Society Archives. 1930



East on Wilson Boulevard, July 4, 1971. Photograph by J. T. Barron

bounded by Jackson Street on the west, Highland and Herndon Streets on the east. There was an electric rail line to Clarendon.

Central Clarendon has changed little from its former appearance. The photographs show that most of the buildings of thirty years ago are still standing. The theatre closed about twenty years ago, and shops and offices moved into the renovated building. The other stores along Wilson Boulevard have changed hands, but the store facades are recognizable.

Fort Haggerty

The Civil War was an event of major importance to Arlington. The Federal City's proximity required that defenses for Washington be located in Northern Virginia. Thus in late May 1861, troops marched across the Potomac bridges¹ to begin building a series of forts to protect the Capital.

The group that crossed the Aqueduct Bridge (predecessor of Key Bridge, slightly east of present Key Bridge) first worked on Fort Corcoran, a major fortification on the crest of a hill on the Georgetown-Falls Church Road (site of Wilson School).

Fort Haggerty, actually a blockhouse, was designed to control Aqueduct Bridge approach. Fort Haggerty overlooked Analoestan (now called Roosevelt) Island, the Alexandria Canal, and the Potomac River.

¹ Frank L. Ball, "Electric Railways of Arlington," *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Oct. 1966.

² C. B. Rose, Jr., "Civil War Forts in Arlington," *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 14.



Fort Haggerty. Copy of print from Library of Congress



Fort Haggerty. Photograph by J. T. Barron

Named for Colonel James Haggerty, who died at Bull Run in July 1861, the fort had a perimeter of only 128 yards. Today, Fort Haggerty is flanked by a maze of apartment complexes, roads, and the Potomac air corridor. The site is marked by the Arlington Historical Commission. (Marker shown in center of picture.)