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# Snake Hill to Spring Bank Volume II



## The Changes in the Groveton Area

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# Introduction

The Groveton area has undergone rapid changes from sparsely populated farm land to a variety of densely populated suburbs. These changes have become the theme for Groveton High School's publication of oral history in print—*Snake Hill to Spring Bank, Vol. II*. These changes reflect the attitudes, traditions, jobs, wildlife, and landmarks of the community. With the help of knowledgeable residents, students of Groveton High have actively researched and recorded those changes in order to compile a second volume of the publication which originated two years ago as a bicentennial project.

Students participated in at least two interviews, one of which they followed through to the last step of sending it to the printer. This meant hours of word for word transcribing from the taped interviews. All the material was then edited with careful attention given to preserving the oral quality of the taped interview and the character of the narrator. Some students did additional research in pertinent documents or by untaped telephone interviews.

Our thanks to:

JACK ABBOTT—A birder who practices this hobby near Hunting Creek and Dyke Marsh, two of his favorite places in the community.

WALDRON ADAMS—A long time resident of the Gum Springs area.

WALTER ANDERSON—A psychiatrist at the Belle Haven medical center.

RUSSELL ALLEN—A graduate of Groveton High, now attends Groveton's games and is a member of the Groveton Boosters Club.

PAT ARNOLD—A lifetime resident of New Alexandria and the former owner of Pat's Market on Belle Haven Road.

SLADE BARNES—Came to the Groveton area in 1939. He shared his extensive knowledge of the history of the area with us.

LEONARD BARTELS—A captain in the United States Army. His family has lived in both Bucknell Manor and Hybla Valley.

JOE BEARD—Retired, was the county agricultural agent for Fairfax County from 1937 to 1970.

VIRGINIA BENNETT—Wife of LAWRENCE BENNETT, and LENA SHERWOOD are daughters of Bert Ayres, owner of the Ayres Dairy Farm and also known as the "Knight of Groveton."

ALISON BROWN—A lawyer, he has knowledge of the changes in racial discrimination laws and is a resident of Hollin Hills.

RUBY BURDETTE—Lives on Memorial Street. She worked at the Beacon Hill Airport from its beginnings in 1925.

EVERETT CLOCKER—A retired forester and resident of the community for 25 years, is interested in saving Dyke Marsh.

CHESTER CHINN—Chief of the Penn Daw Fire Department.

MIKE DESMOND—A resident of the Cherry Arms Apartment on Route 1 tells a story about a deer that fought its way to death inside his apartment.

ESTHER DEVERS—Owned the first fried chicken business on Route 1 and recalls much of Groveton's past from the early 40's.

RICHARD DODSON—A long time resident of Franklin Street who is a student of Civil War activities in this area.

JOE DOVE—The community's first paid fireman and its first mailman.

ED EICHELBERGER—An employee of the Fairfax County Park Authority for many years. He is the resident caretaker of Stoneybrooke Mansion.

RAY GALLAGHER—A resident of the Belle Haven area and the author of several articles on local history.

DICK HAMMERSCHLAG—A member of the Park Service at Haines Point with an overview of the Potomac.

KATHERINE HECOX—Lives in Bucknell Heights. Gives her views on the changes in the community during war time.

HERBERT HUDSON—Chief of Police at the Groveton substation. Captain Hudson grew up in the community.

LEONARD and SUSIE MANTIPLY—residents of the Fairhaven community and active in the Fairhaven Civic Association.

CAS NEER—An architect whose experience in the Hollin Hills development includes living there and planning additions to its houses.

KATHERINE POPKINS—Wife of Earl Popkins, now deceased, and the owner of Popkins Farm.

PENNY PROFFIT—Builds driveways and tennis courts in the community. His father, also in the building trade, helped widen Route 1.

WILLIAM RANDALL—Long time resident of Spring Bank tells the history of the Randall Estates property.

EDWARD RISLEY—Active in community affairs with a special interest as a Friend of Dyke Marsh.

HARRISON ROUSE—A caretaker for the Mt. Vernon plantation and was a fireman for the Penn Daw Fire Department.

RICK SAMPSON—Director of the Social Center which meets in the old Catholic Church and one room school at the corner of Popkins Lane and Route 1.

EDITH SPROUSE—Resident of Hollin Hills and a historian of the community. She is chairman of the History Commission of Fairfax County.

ALLAN STEVENS—Director of the National Puppet Center in Alexandria and the son of John Stevens, caretaker of the Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church.

HILLCRESS STOKES—A resident of the Quander Road community all his life.

EDWARD STOOPS—Recalls the landing of lighter than air craft at the Hybla Valley airport.

CARL TAVENNER—Tells of the site for a school house that was part of Washington's estate.

E. C. TRICE—A state trooper patrolling Route 1 from Alexandria to Ft. Belvoir.

ROWENA VIAR and GARTH VIAR—The wife and son of Mr. Bill Viar who owned the horse stable where Bucknell Elementary is now.

EMILY VOZZOLA—Was a teacher at Groveton Elementary School.

TOM VUONG and NANCY QUAN—Two students at Groveton High School whose families recently moved to our community.

BUSHROD C. WASHINGTON—A descendant of George Washington's family who maintains an interest in local history.

BUCKY WILSON—A former volunteer fireman for the Penn Daw Fire Department.

These local residents have generously shared their knowledge about the area and without their help and patience the publication of this book would not have been possible.

# Landmarks



*Plane at Beacon Field*

## Burdette

We rented that field, when we got there in 1925. It was just open pasture. We flew the plane in from St. Louis. That started the airport.

We had students and eventually several other planes were there. They would build a shop where they were trained to repair the planes. They had great big wings. It had a standard engine. If anything happened to the wings they would be recovered.

Then it became Ashburn flying school. Mr. Bob Ashburn took it all over and then he had a flying school there. He trained students and I worked in the office.

The first airplane that was there was in 1925 and it was flown in from St. Louis and it made it. Later other people had their own planes there. There were different models. Not a great many, say four or five to start out with. The boys came out from Washington mostly and other parts of the county, and took instructions. My husband was the instructor and we also had another young man from Aldern, Virginia.

There were always accidents of some kind, and there were fatal mishaps later on. Most everybody pitched in and students and everybody helped.

When there was an accident the wings had to be repaired. The wings had to be doped and covered when they were broken and destroyed. We got the material from Bolling Field and they were taken from old parachutes. It was a very nice silk material and we'd cut it out and then repair the wings, put dope on them, and get 'em together again.

Quite a few of the students did learn to get their pilots license. Of course it's quite different from what they get now, but I mean they did learn to fly those things.

Fifteen dollars an hour was the rate on flying lessons until they were able to take over for themselves.

I didn't fly myself. I had two small children and I thought the best thing for me was to stay on the ground.

There was a field at that time in Hybla Valley. They handled Eagle Rocks. They had an agency for Eagle Rocks and that was the Rodeson Brothers. Also there was a man came there, his name was Woodhouse. He had a big dream of buying up all land down at Hybla Valley, and opening a Zeppelin airfield but it all fell through. These two young men had this Eagle Rock dealership down there and they did have a training service down there too.

Arthur Godfrey came to Beacon field and he learned to fly there. He was a regular visitor. Mr. Frank Blair, he worked for the Washington News, had an airplane and kept it there. He came out regularly to fly his own plane. A lot of people gradually bought their own planes.

When Mr. Ashburn took over I was responsible for telling them which area they could stay in and which they couldn't stay in. I had to go through quite a "rigamarole" to get that. We had an area and if they got out of that area I was in trouble which wasn't very good. It was around Mount Vernon and up the river. You had to stay on a certain territory. The Civil Aeronautics Board had a control of that.

National Airport, when it first started, was a smaller place. There used to be a little race track called "Boggy Bottom" there, somewhere, and they began to fly out of that at first. But of course National Airport came quite a lot later.

The airport was where Beacon Mall is now. As a rule we had a big wind sock, and they usually took off from that field, from north to south. Of course it had to be according to the wind. If the wind wasn't in the right direction at that time when they were flying those things, why you had to be careful. If the wind was in the opposite direction, you went to the other end and went with the wind. There was no taking off from east to west, because the field wasn't wide enough.

The "Beacon Light" was put there. It was a revolving light that directed airplanes at night into this area, and all into the Washington area. That was the first beacon light in this area, and it was on that field.

When we started in there it was a cow pasture. And we rented it to Mr. Pierce Reid.

We also had a guy in there that had a little black plane called a "Camel." It was a queer looking thing and the guy that flew it was just about as queer. We started with a Standard, OX5 motor with banner. It had enormous wings, and an awful loud motor. It did get off the ground and come back. We used to have people come out from Washington and get their pictures taken beside the planes.

At that time there was no communications, you just looked after yourself, because there wasn't that many airplanes around at that time. We were the first ones around this part of the country. Also Eagle Rock had their's at Hybla Valley field. That was about the only two besides College Park.

On the plane it said \$2.50 for a ride. Quite a few came out and just took a chance on it and took rides in it, mostly on Sunday afternoon and Saturdays. There wasn't any flying for distance. They'd fly over the area. We used to fly out to Rockville and Gaithersburg, Maryland.

He went out to the Robinson Aircraft Corporation in Saint Louis where Lindberg was. (At that time Lindberg was flying the mail out of there), and he took this course. His diploma is there. He got his diploma in 1926. He bought the plane, there and flew it back here to Groveton, and it landed out there where the Beacon Mall is.

My husband was a man before his time, in a way, and he had always had an idea about wanting to fly. His father was in a position to do it, so he sent him to St. Louis to that Robinson place out there for training.

There was one guy who come in from New York and had a glider. That created quite a bit of excitement. Eventually people would come in, from cross country and like that, but not too far.

When Mr. Ashburn took over we had a number of different kinds up there, Ronkas and Piper Cubs. I saw most all of the wrecks. The boy that I said got killed out there, I've forgotten just what plane he was flying now, but it was either a Ronka or a Piper Cub. He was crazy about flying, but he was reckless. He wanted to take all kinds of chances. He was the only one that got killed on that field. Then there was another young man, now he didn't belong to the field. He flew in here from somewhere else. He crashed it in my back yard, which was where the car wash is now. That had no connection with the Burdette airport. That was when the Ashburns worked there. Then there was my husband. He had one accident there. He came in too low and hit the wires up there where the First Federal is now. He didn't get hurt but he damaged the plane right much.

Mr. Ashburn built this little hanger, and the office was up over top of it. A lot of people kept their planes there. They were repaired there also. It was really called the Ashburn flying school. Then when the Second World War come on, of course they made us move back from the coast.

The community had mixed feelings. Some of 'em didn't like it and some of 'em were opposed to it. Especially later on when the school was built there. They won out and we kept the field until after the war.

We trained a lot of girls up there too. We had the girls program and I was quite excited. You'd be surprised at how many there were, and a lot of 'em did go on to get in the air force. They had a class type program, and then they would have so many hours that was included in this program. It depended on the individual of course on how many hours it takes to get their pilot's license. Some of 'em will get it in a shorter time than others, but they have to have so many flights and then when they were capable, when they were able to takeoff and land and make the required pattern, then they got their private learner's permit; then their private pilot's license.

I think they started out at 16 or 18. I know there were a lot of the boys that came out there that probably were a little bit younger but that wasn't the strictest rule and regulation that they had. In the later years, I think it was 18 that they began training.

## Proffit

The plane was a DC-4 and the story was that the pilot had been told to bring the plane down to a two hundred foot level. This hill is exactly two hundred feet. He had his landing gear down and the landing gear actually came through the lilac hedge, just like you were making a perfect landing. Then it was immediately after that, the disaster befell it. The wing hit the little pump house that they had up there. It sheared it off just like it had been cut off with a razor blade, wing height. It ran through some hedges and down this little valley right across the street. The left wing hit into the bank and flew up on the hill. It nosed over, stood on its nose and was on fire at that time. None of the people were killed. I think the co-pilot lost an eye. All the survivors got out safely. Nylon stockings were very much sought after at that time. The survivors of the crash came up to the house and this woman says, "Oh my goodness, I've torn my nylons." I guess that was one of the biggest disasters.

## Stoops

I've lived in this area since 1939. My occupation was shop foreman at the District of Columbia Correction Department in Lorton, Virginia.

Beacon Field was an airport, which was owned by Colonel Reid. Where the Safeway store used to be, and now Memco, that's where he had his home. His son ran the airport and during World War II they used to train navy pilots on the field. We had the watch service up on top of Collard Street. We had the tower where we watched for planes. We had our men going up the streets for blackouts.

Mr. Crocket got a store across the highway, down at Lee Street, which was the only store around in this section, where you could buy meats or any kind of can goods. They also had a bar there and a restaurant. He had lodging for the night and little cabins outside. That was called the "White Owl Inn," and that was known from Florida to Maine. Penn Daw Motel was also a Motel where people used to come out from Alexandria to eat. They had a restaurant and cabins for the accommodations of tourists.

Fairhaven was built back in, I say around '38, '39, or '40. There's one part where gypsies have moved in there, and a palm reader I believe. There is different nationalities that are living around here now, that wasn't around here in the earlier days. That comes with the population growth.

Here at Groveton on the top of this hill is the highest point on Number 1 Highway from Maine to Florida. The early maps used to show elevation, in sea level. Years ago, when the Graf Zeppelin visited the United States, it flew through Washington, D.C. and the vicinity looking for a field to land. They were told in Hybla Valley there was a small airport. The Graf Zeppelin came over from Washington, flew around this vicinity, and finally made a landing in Hybla Valley. The captain of that ship, predicted that was one of the finest spots that he had seen for landing lighter than air crafts. Some people were very enthused about it. They wanted to put a small air field for dirigibles and blimps.

They used to have quite a few blimps fly around Washington and this area. When one of these big dirigibles flew around the county side they were immense, ranging from 500 to 600 feet long and flying so low you could really get a good view of what the ship looked like. It was a great thrill for the kids to see it flying through the skies.

## Viar

GARTH VIAR: Well, we moved to the Groveton area in 1930, 1934, down where Perkins Pancake House is now. The house was a white stucco house. Right across the street there was a motel called Evelyn Inn. The Penn Daw Hotel was there and there was big mansion down where K-Mart is now, called Spring Bank, which dated back to colonial times.

ROWENA VIAR: I think that was one of the Mason homes originally. I don't know the details on it but I'm sure it was owned by a Mason.

GARTH VIAR: It was just torn down. Well it had deteriorated, just a little of it left, that's what they tore down and built K-Mart. There was Beacon Airport where the Beacon Mall Shopping Center is now which was run by a fellow by the name of Reid. His father owned all that land and also had a big mansion about where Memco is now. Memco or Holly Farms, right along in there.

ROWENA VIAR: Arthur Godfrey used to keep his airplane there. He used to fly to that airport before he became a national T.V. star, radio star. He used to be on local radio, WJSV, which is now WTOP.

GARTH VIAR: They also used to have horse shows up there at the Beacon Airport, that was after they stopped using it as an airport. The horse shows were sponsored by the fire department. The horse shows were one of the factors in the building of the fire department. We got no money from the county because it was strictly a volunteer fire department.

Right where Bucknell Heights is, where the elementary school is at the crown of that hill, is where my father, Bill Viar, had his stables. Where Bucknell Manor is, is where our riding trails were. We used to rent horses, train jumping horses and show horses. Quite a few of them come out of there were the best. I guess one of the best known

jumping horses all up and down the east coast was named "Hijack." The horse could jump 6½ foot and could get up to 7 foot.

ROWENA VIAR: When we moved down here to this area, it was real country. Some of the vacant lots that had not been built on, in Groveton, still had little corn stubbles where they had cut down corn, cause it had been farm. All of that was farm land. They had just started building the Groveton subdivision when we first moved out here. Where the old Groveton High School is now Bryant, had been farm owned by a fellow name of Burt Ayres. He had a dairy farm and then they made it into a gravel pit.

GARTH VIAR: Burt Ayers and Lud Popkins used to ride in the jousting tournaments. That was before we moved to Groveton. Lud Popkins, his farmland, joined right into Burt Ayers. That's all houses now. Just past going up Popkins Lane, past where the old Groveton High School is, where the stone houses are, that was just cow pastures.

Where National Airport is now that was all river. They put gravel on top of all those woods and everything. Most of that gravel that went into National Airport came out of Burt Ayres gravel pit. What didn't come out of that pit came out of my father's pit which is right across the road where the telephone building is.

ROWENA VIAR: Then where that gravel pit is, was originally Ayres' property too, cause we bought it from Ayres.

GARTH VIAR: Off of King's Highway, where Stoneybrooke is, there's a little subdivision in there. That house there dates back to colonial times. I don't know the exact history on it but I do know its been remodeled. They say that even on a foggy morning or evening you can stand on the porch of that place and see a coach and four horses driving around the circular driveway. That's been a legend for a long time. I think they even wrote about it in the Gazette a couple years ago.

Over next to Mount Comfort Cemetery on Kings Highway there's a big hollow there, they call Dead Man's Hollow. That's supposed to date back quite a few years. Somebody got killed in that hollow and they say that his ghost still comes back.

There was the Nightingale, it dates back to the 30's. The original Nightingale Club, right where the 1320 club is now, it burned down. It was made of logs. The logs came from the property where Woodley Hills trailer court is now, and Mr. Nightingale built a larger one that operated as the Nightingale Night Club.

Down on North Kings Highway across where the Jefferson Manor Shopping Center is there used to be a great big white mansion. That was called Mt. Eagle Club which dated back to colonial times, was originally a colonial home.

We had this one goat who liked to drink beer. He was quite a beer drinker. He would sit down on his hind legs and hold his front paws up and hold a bottle of beer. He would use them like bare hands and hold the beer bottle and drink the whole bottle of beer. You would never want to leave a 2 x 4 or anything leaning against the barn or he would go up on the roof of the barn. He could get up but he couldn't get back down, so you would have to go up and get him.

Down where Bucknell Manor is there used to be a pack of wild dogs, 25-30 in the pack. I guess they roamed through that part 5 or 6 years before they were ever rounded up. They had gone wild and ran in a pack, just like a pack of wolves.

The gypsies came in somewhere around '39. I don't know whether they caused any trouble. They did have a gypsy camp. They sort of stayed to themselves.

Over where Georges is now, they had sort of a restaurant called "Mom's Place" which, in comparing then to now, would be more or less like a truck stop. They had some cabins and a few gypsies moved into those cabins and then they set up gypsies stand. There was quite a few of them, they even came in with children. They didn't have the

gypsy wagons as portrayed in the movies but they had trucks with bodies built on them. I guess they would be equivalent to the old conventional gypsy wagons. There might be still some living in the area right now.

ROWENA VIAR: Seems to me there was another group of them over around the Fort Hunt area. Of course, they always used to say they were part Indian.

GARTH VIAR: There used to be an airport called the Hybla Valley airport. It was like Beacon Airport, privately owned, private planes. All of that was originally designed for what they called an air junction back in the 20's and 30's. It was a dirigible airport called the Mount Vernon Air junction where Lockheed Boulevard comes off of Fordson Road. There was a little building on the east side of what is now known as Lockheed Boulevard.

It's like a little office building on each side of what is now Lockheed Boulevard, with a big archway over top of it that said "Mount Vernon Air Junction." You could walk through this archway. One of the buildings went into this archway, you could walk across and come down the ladder over on the other side. I used to play in them when I was a kid.

ROWENA VIAR: What's the name of that Motel up there by the house where we used to live?

GARTH VIAR: It's the John Yancey Motel now. I think, it used to be called the Wagon Wheel.

ROWENA VIAR: There's a restaurant, and in back of that a big house. We lived in that house at one time. And that's where they used to come play. Well it was really deserted at that time except that Mr. Aicholz lived in part of it.

GARTH VIAR: Mr. Aicholz was sort of a hermit, I guess you might say. He lived by himself, he raised pigs and he more or less squatted in one of those buildings. But anyway that was set up for a dirigible airport and then after the Hindenberg crashed they called it off. So it never did materialize. The Navy had part of the land which Fairfax County later got.

## Popkins

This farm and Lud's together was 385 acres. Ayres came between Route 1 and Lud's. Then Lud bought the little chapel, in other words bought the school and left it for St. Louis. Then Father Smet got into it so they could build the church.

The whole thing, the two farms, was 385 acres all together. George was the first child, and then Lud and then Maude. Lil and Earl are the youngest. George went to Washington and he worked for the district government and Lil worked for the federal government. Jack went to Texas and married a woman from down Texas.

Earl was three years old when they came here. He was born 1893. I was born 1894. He bought it through Senator Edwards of New York. Then he died and they finished paying for it through the boards. When I got here it was paid for.

The road when I first came out here was nothing but gravel to the highway till Earl and Lud gave the road to the state. Popkins Lane belongs to the state. They paved the road up to Coventry Road. Then they stopped. They didn't come up here to do a thing. We had the double gate. He shut it at night. It was down at Popkins Lane.

As you go past those double gates we had four apple trees. And then all along the road near the fence we had cedar trees. They had a strawberry patch and they told me if I picked the berries I could get money for them if I took them to town.

All the trees have died except one. Everyone said, "Don't cut it down because it looks so pretty up there with all the birds on it."

Coventry Road wasn't there then, it belonged to us, you see. We got rid of White Oaks during W.W. II. That's how White Oaks developed.

The house and all is the same, but they had two cherry trees out on the hill. Everything was just typical country in other words. Real farmers those days.

This house was built from the lumber of Fort Lyon.

When we had heat put in we had a little wooden door, like a little basement, and where the wooden door is we would put potatoes and stuff like that for the winter. It would preserve them. But then when we had heat put in we wanted radiators so we had to get somebody to dig under the house. So Dick Ferguson, he had to crawl on his stomach and dig and dig and dig all under here so we could get radiators here.

I didn't realize how much work till I got out here. His mother and father was still living here. And they were very nice. I got along fine. I can't say anything about my in-laws, just as nice as could be.

Will Randall was almost like one of the family. He and his brother, George, they real old fashioned colored people, always nice. The Wilkinson's farm is down over the hill, Kirk Wilkinson's place. I didn't know too much of the farm. We had to borrow money to pay off the other Ayres, I knew that much. That was back when Earl's father died and he was the only farmer, so the other six had to be paid off. We had to borrow money from the bank to do that.

We made a pond for the cows to walk in and keep the flies off in the summer. The kids used to go up there and bathe and they wasn't very particular about bathing. The cows stayed there all night long but they (the kids) bathed there anyway.

The pond fed from all kinds of natural springs. When they built houses on them, I don't know what happened to the springs.

Milk really tasted like milk. We used to make butter. Now I buy butter but it don't taste the same.

The horse and buggy horse was Faxie (Fairfax). Earl, he had stuck to the same names as Maude or May, or Nellie and May or something. We had a riding horse, Alice, a very expensive horse. We used to breed horses in those days.

We used to have so many dogs. We've always had dogs around here ever since I've come out here we've had either English setters or hounds. The last dog I had was an Irish Setter. His name was Jeb. I don't know where we got him. But he was a nice dog and a big dog; he was so ferocious you couldn't get near him. He'd knock you down and he'd look at you. He'd jump up on you. So Charlie Beach—I said, "Charlie, you tell Jean (it was a friend he worked with) if she wants a good dog, come down here and get this Jeb."

I couldn't put up with Jeb cause when I got up in the morning, if he knocked me down I couldn't get up! And nobody would know I was down there, so I don't know what might happen to me. I might freeze to death or something or other so I got rid of Jeb. That's the last dog I had and I don't want any more.

We had some ducks, but the ducks never did stay there very long. Somebody had duck dinner.

I don't hear much about the church any more. I'm not working over there and I don't know much about what's going on. In fact, when I read the bulletin, I don't know any of the names even. I used to take care of the little chapel on Saturdays. I'd go clean up and bring the linens home, wash them and take them back. That was my job on Saturdays.

Our courting in those days was buggy rides and over to Burgundy Farm where they had dances on Saturday nights. We'd drive over in a buggy. Lud and Leo lived over there and had dances on Saturday night. We'd go to the dance and come home at midnight. Some of the neighbors had an orchestra.

I had a girlfriend who married a man by the name of Cane. She said, "Let's go down by the river tonight." I forgot what excursion it was. I said, "Oh, I don't know."

"Oh come on," she says, "I'm not going to have any fun alone, so come with me."

I said, "OK, then, you and I can go as a date." We got down to the water. There was Frank and the other man standing there.

I said, "Who's Frank there with?"

She said, "Oh, I was talking to him the other day and he said he might go down."

I said, "You fooled me, didn't you? You brought me down here so you could have a date."

So then Frank came up and introduced me to Earl.

We'd go to a movie, maybe, on Saturday. I'll tell you my feelings of a thrill on Saturday night when I was a youngster was to go down to King Street at Mr. Blocks and get some ice cream, ten cents a dish. I'd get a quarter a week. I'd go to a movie for fifteen cents and get my ice cream for ten cents. That was my whole weeks wages. Try and do something like that now for a quarter.

I could look out this window and see the Potomac and go down on the hill and see the boat go down to Marshall Hall all lighted up. But you can't see anything anyways near the Potomac now on account of the trees and houses all built up.

We had three men and Hunt Day, he was the oldest. He'd come through White Oaks singing and waking people up. People always knew when Hunt was going to work. You could hear him singing.

Anne Pollard, she's the daughter of Jim. She came up here and worked, washing and ironing for a dollar and a half a day. She worked 7 til 7. She'd walk home. You can't get anything like that now.

I had a cookstove. They'd bring wood in. And in the dining room and the living room we had a potbellied stove to keep warm.

It was during the Civil War, I think, the northerners came here and used it more like a hospital. Then it was burned down.

During World War II we had it right down there where Penny Proffit lives—the headquarters. They had everything down there. They'd bring the garbage up here and in those days we fed it to the pigs. I swear it was a shame to see all that good meat and everything being thrown away.

Henson's brother-in-law, he always calls me "boss lady," said something about staying at the farm at night. I said, "Oh, I'm not scared."

He said, "You're not?"

I said, "No, I'm not scared when I have spirits walking around the house with me. There's seven people that died here. They didn't hurt when they were alive and they're not going to hurt me when they're dead." I hear 'em walking around at night and I hear 'em talking to me at night but I can't understand what they're talking about. I wake up furious at night.

## Stevens

You know the field at the top of the hill? Apparently there was a grave of an American Revolutionary soldier. I can't possibly tell you the name, but when I was little most of the tombstone was still there.

I suppose we moved up to the hill in . . . 1946. The estate was privately owned by Marilyn Lillian Thorpe. Apparently it was at its peak about ten years before that when the gardens were still very attractive. Lillian used to throw fancy garden parties, so it was terribly sophisticated stuff. Merl Thorpe was into oil and magazine publishing or something like that. The place was really elegant in a slightly after art-deco kind of way.

The windmill was still turning. It was still pumping when I was a kid. On the major drive shaft there was a flange, which was actually to keep the rain from leaking into the plate that went around the drive shaft and I used to be able to stand on the little flange and ride up and down on the drive shaft of the windmill. It was the old well and later on a new well was put in way out farther in the field with an electric pump, at which time the windmill, except for decorative purposes, went into disuse.

There was a wonderful sign that used to hang out on Fort Hunt Road that said Hollin Hall. It was a metal cut out sign. It had two trees, one was a little fir tree and a bigger one like oak tree and there was a cardinal sitting in the kind of like oak tree and squirrel sitting down on the ground looking up at it. It was all open work. I have no idea what became of the sign.

The Old Mansion is terribly sensitive to pressure and if you close one door downstairs, you may open three upstairs or vice versa. On occasions when I was sort of house sitting the Old Mansion house and there were some freaky occasions when I knew I was the only one in the house and I had closed all the doors and I would come back a little bit later and all the doors would be open. There was one time I remember in particular. The kitchen side of the house, the windows were open to let a little air in and I came home one afternoon, came into the kitchen and I heard children playing downstairs, so I carefully opened up the little door at the bottom of the kitchen stairs and tippy-toed my way up, looked around, and needless to say, no children anywhere to be seen. I started running up and down halls, checking rooms, going up on the third floor and constantly, I could hear the children. They seemed to be coming from those two front rooms in the old servant's quarters. I called my papa on the telephone and said "I believe there's ghosts in this here house!" I even held up the phone and said, "Can you hear them? Can you hear them?" What it is, the house being on a hill, it was really acting like radar.

One of the Thorpe sons was a music critic for the Star. At any rate, he was a musician, and a little opera was done. This was long before the church was there or everything cultural got there. Later on, when the church got into action, all kinds of things started to happen. First the Boxwood Concerts.

They started out rather quietly, like Charlie Byrd coming over to play, and a couple of folk singers called "Bud and Travis." Originally the stage was in the lower bowl which is now Mason Hill. There was a little tiny stage that wasn't very big. It was like a band shell and the acoustics sounded just lovely.

Then the productions got more extravagant. The stage got to be ten times bigger and it pulled a couple of real turkey events, the Don Cossack Dancers or something like that, which went over like a lead balloon. The big event was the "Limelighters." An enormous crowd showed up and it rained. I'm not sure they had rain insurance or not. Anyway, that kind of ended the "Boxwood Concerts" series.

A couple of years after that, some friends and I decided that was an ideal place to hold a theatre. We called it the Boxwood Theater. We did that for seven years in all. We were playing in the oval grove at the top of the hill. We did *Tom Thumb the Great* followed by *Oedipus at Colonus*, followed by *Cadus and Marisand*, *Victims of Duty*, and finally a play called *Clearer Tomorrow*. From there we wanted to keep "Boxwood" alive. We did a season of "Boxwood" in Georgetown. Next year we did *Romeo and Juliet*, and the *Girl of the Golden West* over at the top of the hill. Next year, we moved down to the swimming pool, where the concrete slab is now. We did *Peer Gynt*, *Mid-Summer Night's Dream*.

The opening night of the first Boxwood show, they paved Mason Hill Drive. Cars couldn't get up it and because they had to reroute a lot of stuff the water was turned off. So not only could they not get to us, but once they got there they had no water to drink, or for the johns or anything. We'd been warned about the water, so we had vats of it ready to do whatever we had to do. It still didn't save people the inconvenience of walking up from Fort Hunt Road to the top of the hill. People did it though.

The year after that the girls decided they wanted better parts so we did a whole season of heroines. There was *Alice in Wonderland*, *Electra* and *Undine*. Next year we did only one piece called *Dimension of Miracles*. By the next year things took a very different turn. We did *The Maids of Jenine*, in the chapel, and *King Henry the V* which Robert Dunn directed. We did that all over the grounds. That was the end of my career and the Boxwood theatre.

I can remember the first time I saw a puppet, which was in Alexandria. In the window of Mike's Hardware Store was a puppet theatre built by some Cub Scouts. I went home and made up a little puppet of colored construction paper and cut it out and tried to glue it together with Vaseline. It didn't work.

Year by year the place begins to look more rundown. I don't think it has lost all its charm. Naturally the older it gets, the more money it should cost to really keep it up properly. Gone are the days of the formal gardens, full of roses and fields of dahlias.

When I was at my youngest there was a tree behind the junior house. It had a low fork in it and we used to get up in one little branch. The branch is gone, but the tree's

still there. I spent my teenage years in an old apple tree. It had good swinging branches. I walked out of it one day. I had this branch I used to walk on a lot. I had no idea what was on my mind, I simply walked right straight off the end. My father was standing at the back of the potting shed, and happened to be looking out and he just roared. I could've broken my neck. I think he would've roared anyway. Down in the woods behind the turkey sheds, there was a tree with a swing in it.

The whole area was a land grant to him (George Mason). I think he might've built Little Hollin Hall but I really don't think he lived that far down the road. I'm sorry that the area has suffered from overbuilding as much as it has. The last section of woods that was ripped out was really important. It was like wild, wild forest even though it was maybe 100 yards wide.

## Tavener

Mr. Tavener has lived at 3600 Lockheed Blvd. for most of his life. "I came into the area in 1927. The land had come from a Mr. Pearson. I built this house in 1955 or so." Mr. Tavener said that a Henry Wood lived on the other side of Harrison Lane. "Mr. Wood sold his land to the government for a dirigible airport about 1935. There used to be a lot of hunting back in them woods behind Henry Wood."

Mr. Tavener commented about the many changes that have taken place over the years. "There used to be an old school for colored folks built by George Washington. A few years back they plowed it up, and now a Mr. Alcorn has a house there." About half a mile behind the Alcorn's house, there is a heavily wooded area. According to Mr. Tavener the government used to have road tests of some sort there. "That was before they gave it to the county for a park." He also said that a McWilliam family sold a lot of land to a Mr. Owens for a cemetery. "That's where Mount Comfort (cemetery) is now!"

## Barnes

The first public school that was built in the United States was built by George Washington. It was built down on Harrison Lane, and the foundation is still there today. Right out in the woods, right out there about 100 yards is the stone foundation for that school house, and the house right there on the corner is built out of the material that was torn down from that school house.

Before Mount Vernon High School was built, which was opened in 1940, they went to school in Lee Jackson High School in Alexandria on Duke Street. That took care of the territory from Alexandria to Woodbridge to Annandale. You know where the old Groveton grammar school is? At the time they built that little school it had eight small rooms to it, but the people in this area got up in arms and wanted to know where they was going to get enough children to fill that school!

When they built Mount Vernon they didn't have any gym. Groveton High School was the first high school built in Fairfax County that had a track or stadium that was built by the School Board. Before Mount Vernon when they played basketball they went to Fort Belvoir and played in the Quonset hut down there at Fort Belvoir. They didn't have an auditorium. When they had a commencement exercise, they went to the Reed Theater in Alexandria.



*The Social Center, formerly school and church on the corner of Popkins Lane and Route 1*

## Sampson

The building, as I understand it, is about 120 years old. It was first built as a mission church, then it became a Fairfax County public school. Some people say it was a Catholic church first, some say it was a school. I don't know to be honest with you, but I do know it was a one room school house for a good bit of time. The front doors and the back were added on later. So the original building was one room. It was the only Catholic church in the area for a long time. Then the parishoners in St. Louis decided they needed a bigger facility and began to build the new church.

About five years ago we came over here and asked if we could use the building for our programs. We're a rehabilitation program, working with adults with emotional problems in the community. In the evening the building is used by scouts, brownies, F.H.A.'s, 4-H and a lot of different clubs.

Now we're moving out. We can't get licensed in the state working in a building that is in this kind of condition. The volunteer groups in the church might get together and donate their time and rebuild the building. All the flooring and subflooring is rotting, so it is going to have to be ripped out. The roof and the A frames are rotting. A lot is going to have to be done.

There is an equal chance that it will be bulldozed to get rid of it. If the community doesn't pick up on the building it will probably be demolished.

## Dixie Pig

Our program is part of the new movement toward mental health in the community mental health system. The community mental health movement is about 10 or 15 years old. It resulted in the building of the new Mount Vernon Community Health Center. What they began to find out was that all the people were shipped out of the hospital, sent back to the community with only the community health center for support. They begin to find out that it wasn't enough and people needed something to do during the day if they can't get a job. Then we began to have programs. It started out pretty much like a social club, which is just a place for people to come and hang out, shoot pool and play cards. They had counseling available to them. It was mostly a place to go so you could live a comfortable life.

The last four or five years, that whole thing has changed to shift the emphasis on rehabilitation. Now we have a rehab counselor who works in vocational training and job placement. We spend a lot more time doing things like group meetings. We talk about goals for change, about how you change, and deal with people's feelings. We offer skills courses like cooking, sewing, homemaking skills, job finding skills, and interpersonal skills. We do actual teaching on how to interact better.

We are in very close conjunction with the community mental health centers and department of social service and private doctors. Generally what happens is a person will be referred here from one of those organizations for the daytime program.

The history of the Dixie Pig was shared with us by Mr. Slade Barnes. He told us that the original building, situated on Route 1, was built by Mr. Reagan on the edge of his farm. It was called the Sun Light Grill. A restaurant known as the Dixie Pig was located near the Potomac River. The land on which it was situated was converted into parkland, after which the restaurant moved to its present location.

The baseball diamond next to the Dixie Pig was used for a carnival ground by the fire house. The restaurant was sold several times. During the war it was closed and the owner's family lived in it. In 1946 brick was added and the windows in the Dixie Pig were remodeled.

## Wilson

Two women originally opened this (Dixie Pig) and I think, one of the women is still active in it. The two women split up 'cause the Dixie Pig name was supposed to be private and the recipe and everything was supposed to have been theirs. They give the recipe to the one in town there. The other woman she broke away from them and opened a "Southern Pig" down at Penn Daw back in the early 40's.