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## HISTORIC CONTEXT REPORT

Town of Washington Grove

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

A number of significant regional and national events and trends have shaped the development, design, and character of Washington Grove since its founding as a Methodist camp meeting in 1873. Principal influences over the first half century included nineteenth-century suburbanization, the resort/excursion phenomenon that originated in the years following the Civil War, Progressive Era reforms aimed at improving sanitation, and the Chautauqua movement. During the early twentieth century, Washington Grove transitioned from a summer religious resort into a small, but distinctive community of year-round residents with strong ties to their heritage, but waning interest in camp meetings. In 1929, the tradition of outdoor religious revivals came to an end at Washington Grove, signaling its transformation eight years later into an independent municipality.

As a municipal corporation under state law, the Town of Washington Grove possessed the legislative and administrative power to levy taxes for much needed modernization projects. Home Rule gave Washington Grove control over planning and zoning, which had a significant impact on the town's development. During this period, many platted, but unoccupied lots were sold off, and the corner of Railroad Street and Washington Grove Lane was officially declared a commercial zone. The period after World War II was a time of intense residential building and remodeling in Washington Grove. New architectural forms characterized the infill development, and subjects such as the changing relationship between cities and suburbs and the environmental movement shaped the physical fabric of the town. The current period is characterized by a continuation of the community's postwar efforts to preserve and protect the natural and built resources and the cultural traditions that contribute to Washington Grove's sense of place. These topics and others are explored below to provide a context for understanding the primary historical themes that shaped Washington Grove's development.

## **B. THE FOUNDING AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF WASHINGTON GROVE (1873-1901)**

### Origins and Early Development of Camp Meetings in the United States

Religious camp meetings have been an American phenomenon for over 200 years. While no standardized definition exists, a camp meeting is an outdoor preaching event at which participants sustain themselves and camp overnight, often in tents. Camp meetings are temporary gatherings, typically lasting a few days to a week at the end of the summer. Scholars have developed several theories as to the origin of the camp meeting, and there is still debate over the location and date of the first meeting. Historian Charles Johnson, in his classic work *The Frontier Camp Meeting*, advanced the concept that the camp meeting originated on the Kentucky frontier where populations were sparse and travel and communication were difficult. While preaching outdoors was common throughout the eighteenth century in rural and backwoods areas where churches, or even basic assembly structures, were not available, the element of overnight camping, often for several nights, was missing from these gatherings. Johnson asserted that camp meetings did not achieve universal popularity or standard form until 1800, the year Presbyterian minister James McGready organized several highly successful outdoor revivals in Logan County, Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> More recent scholarship suggests that the earliest camp meetings did not arise from circumstances

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), 32.

created by the frontier and were organized in the Carolinas or Georgia during the last decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Many support the claim that the Rock Springs Camp Meeting near Denver, North Carolina, which dates to 1794, may have been the first camp meeting in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Camp meetings allowed preachers to reach a wide audience and did not require much in terms of infrastructure or planning, as attendees were expected to provide their own food and shelter for the duration of the event.

The earliest camp meetings were the work of Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists. While the Methodist church never institutionalized the camp meeting, this form of religious revival was embraced as an important part of the practice and led to Methodist dominance in American Protestantism in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The most famous, some argue notorious, early camp meeting took place at Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in 1801. It lasted nearly a week, attracted tens of thousands of participants, and received wide coverage in the press, launching the camp meeting movement onto the national stage. Preachers at Cane Ridge and other early camp meetings spread the doctrine of universal redemption, and audience members were known to manifest their salvation by shouting, falling down, “jerking,” and dancing. The religious fervor of huge crowds often created a frenzied atmosphere of heightened emotions that resulted in disorderly conditions. Following the national trend, camp meetings emerged as an important practice for Methodists in the Washington area in the first half of the nineteenth century. Washington Grove historian Philip K. Edwards states that camp meetings for the Washington District of the Methodist Church occurred as early as 1815.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1830s, camp meetings had evolved into more sedate events, subject to rules of order, sometimes enforced by a civil officer. Attendees came for spiritual renewal and development. At some campgrounds, churches erected society tents to house church groups. The revivals fostered a sense of religious kinship, and socialization and recreation became important facets of camp life. Excessive socialization, which was characterized in literature of the day as the “pic-nic spirit,” was criticized by many of the movement’s detractors. Others, such as Reverend B. W. Gorham, author of a camp meeting manual published in 1854, embraced the extra-religious pleasures of camp meetings.<sup>6</sup> As historian John R. Stilgoe notes, “Much of the excitement of camp-meeting convocations derived from the pure pleasure of group activity. For families accustomed to week-long isolation and hard work, meetings offered a social release unlike that of raisings, bees, and funerals.”<sup>7</sup> In his camp meeting manual, Gorham also promoted the religious

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground: A Study of the American Camp Meeting* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Lippy, “The Camp Meeting in Transition: The Character and Legacy of the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Methodist History* 34, no. 1 (October 1995), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Philip K. Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937: A History of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association* (Washington Grove, MD: by the author, 1988), 16. The basic units of organization of the Methodist Church are annual conferences and districts. The Washington District was one of several districts within the Baltimore Conference.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha’s Vineyard* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>7</sup> John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 233.

campground as a place of good health, forecasting the next phase of camp meeting development wherein existing camps as well as new revival sites were promoted as religious alternatives to secular summer resort communities. To Gorham, the “purity and constant freshness of atmosphere” was one of the many circumstances that rendered the campground “a healthful resort.”<sup>8</sup>

While many revivals were located within topographically indistinct clearings or ordinary groves, the landscape became, in effect, a holy ground due to its function as a setting for worship. Some of the earliest camp meetings had a forest setting, where man, devoid of material possessions, could be one with God and nature in a “sacred grove.” Trees provided shade, privacy, fuel, and building material. At night, these forest settings, lit by firelight, were both mysterious and awe-inspiring, creating a sense of otherworldliness. Isolation was an important factor in selecting a camp meeting site because it offered an environment free from disruptions, a place apart from worldly temptations. Wesleyan Grove, founded on the island of Martha’s Vineyard in 1836, was located in a grove of oaks close to Nantucket Sound on a gentle northwest-facing slope that faced away from the water “in an introspective fashion.”<sup>9</sup> By midcentury, other factors in selecting a camp meeting site held greater weight than isolation. Gorham’s 1854 manual emphasized the benefits of a site with a bountiful supply of good water, adequate pasturage, a tree canopy for shade and shelter from the wind, easy access from principal thoroughfares, and a level topography, among other considerations.

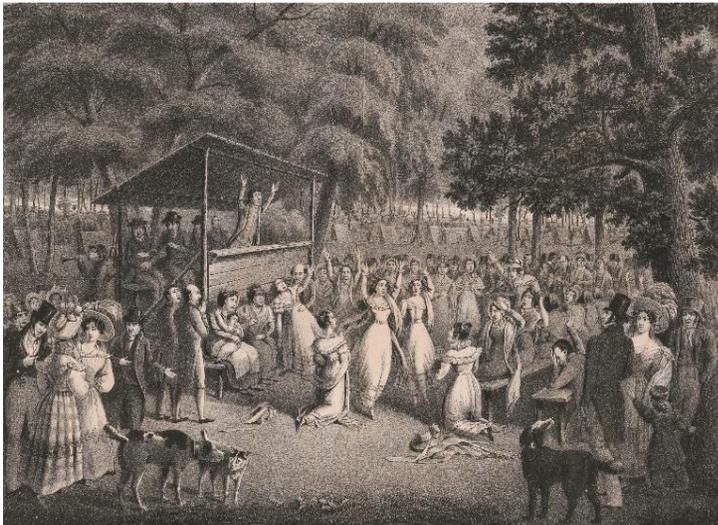


Figure 1: Lithograph published circa 1829 of the preacher’s stand at an unidentified camp meeting. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

The physical arrangement of the earliest camp meetings were not planned. In his book, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America*, published in 1810, historian Jesse Lee describes a campground arranged in the shape of an “oblong square.”<sup>10</sup> At the center of the camp in a clearing was the assembly area with a preacher’s stand (pulpit) or sometimes two – one at either end of the assembly space. In its simplest form, the preacher’s stand was a raised, wooden platform, although covered variants were common. (Figure 1) Benches within the assembly area, if present, were often hand-hewn and backless, arranged in

rows, sometimes with a central aisle. Canvas tents or wood “board tents” were set up around the clearing

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<sup>8</sup> Rev. B. W. Gorham, *Camp Meeting Manual, A Practical Book for the Camp Ground; in Two Parts* (Boston, MA: H. V. Degen, 1854), 64-65.

<sup>9</sup> Weiss, *City in the Woods*, 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America* (Baltimore, MD: Magill and Clime, 1810), 360.

in various configurations. Historian Charles Johnson has shown that three plans were widely used for early nineteenth-century frontier revivals – rectangular, circular, and open horseshoe.<sup>11</sup> An example of the latter was depicted by architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820) in his 1809 sketch of a camp meeting in Virginia.<sup>12</sup> The spatial configuration of most campgrounds was the work of anonymous builders and planners. As historian Ellen Weiss has documented, the radial concentric plan at Wesleyan Grove is of particular interest because this plan type was little used in the United States. Its derivative, the wheel plan, however, was featured at a number of campsites across the United States by the 1870s. Campsites arranged in a wheel plan featured a central gathering space and radiating paths or streets arranged like spokes around a hub.

The earliest permanent building constructed at many campgrounds was a tabernacle. These were typically large, open, timber-frame pavilions located in a clearing at the center of camp to shelter both the pulpit and seating area. While the roof provided shade and shelter from the rain, its open sides offered natural ventilation, unrestricted sightlines, and clear transmission of the speaker’s voice. Wesleyan Grove had a canvas tabernacle until 1879, when it was replaced with a permanent iron structure that could seat thousands under its three-tiered roof. The tabernacle as a building form eliminated the distinction between interior and exterior space, recognizing the campground as divine space and encouraging man’s communion with nature.

Canvas tents provided the earliest and simplest form of shelter at camp meetings. They were inexpensive, easy to transport, and quick to set up and take down. As noted above, “board tents,” simple frame structures clad with weatherboard, were also used for temporary accommodation. Indian Fields, an active Methodist campground in Dorchester County, South Carolina, features a ring of ninety-nine board tents around a central tabernacle.<sup>13</sup> They are two-story, front-gable structures with simple, shed-roof porches and minimal window and door openings. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: View of the “board tents” at the Indian Fields Methodist Campground in Dorchester County, South Carolina, 1988. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, HABS SC-595)

Gorham objected to the use of board tents, calling them “shanties,” and recommended cloth tents. He described the construction of a 12-foot-wide tent with a 9-foot ridgepole that provided enough space for a family of six to eight. For society tents, he recommended a tent measuring 20 by 30 feet. Most tents were modest constructions, reinforcing the idea of primitive simplicity. Sometimes tents

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<sup>11</sup> Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting*, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Latrobe’s sketch is reproduced in Weiss, *City in the Woods*, on page 10.

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Dixon, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, “Indian Fields Methodist Camp Ground,” July 28, 1972.

were embellished – fly tarps with scalloped and sometimes embroidered front edges and tent walls hung with flags, bunting, and decorations fashioned out of tree branches or other vegetation. Often the tents were built on low, wood platforms to separate the tent floor from the damp earth. At Wesleyan Grove, some families erected wood-sided tents with canvas tops – a shelter form that bridged the gap between all-canvas tents and frame cottages.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 3: Detail from a print of the Sing Sing Camp Meeting in New York published circa 1840. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

When the canvas walls of individual tents were raised or pulled aside, interior spaces became semi-public, encouraging socialization. A print depicting the Sing Sing Camp Meeting in New York in 1838 illustrates this aspect of camp life and anticipates the proliferation of front porches as tents were replaced with cottages. (Figure 3) The owners of tents that adjoined the assembly area or tabernacle could simply open their tent to participate in religious meetings and other revival activities. Tent walls could also be manipulated to regulate sun, shade, and the circulation of air.

Beginning in the 1840s, when the religious fervor that characterized the Second Great Awakening began to diminish, the camp meeting movement fell into a period of relative dormancy that lasted through the Civil War. Starting in the mid-1860s, however, scores of camp meeting sites were established in the East and the Midwest.<sup>15</sup> This period of camp meeting development is known as the Religious Resort Period, because it parallels the resort/excursion phenomenon that extended from the Civil War to World War I, when middle-class city dwellers eager to escape urban conditions retreated to lake, ocean, and mountain destinations made accessible by new forms of transportation.<sup>16</sup> The summer resort phenomenon had its origins in and was advanced by the development of American suburbs in the nineteenth century.

### Nineteenth-Century Suburbanization and the Emergence of Summer Resorts in the Washington Region

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<sup>14</sup> Lester Walker, *Tiny, Tiny Houses or How to Get Away from It All* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1987), 47-48.

<sup>15</sup> Charles A. Parker, "The Camp Meeting on the Frontier and the Methodist Religious Resort in the East – Before 1900," *Methodist History* 18, no. 3 (April 1980), 183.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Jo Lampl and Clare Lise Kelly, "Historic Context Report, 'A Harvest in the Open for Saving Souls,' The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County," prepared for the Maryland Historical Trust, 2004, 7. Hereafter shortened to Lampl and Kelly, "'A Harvest in the Open for Saving Souls,' The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County," 2004.

National trends in suburban development in the nineteenth century can be linked to the evolution of transportation systems and technologies that established both intra- and intercity connections and fostered residential growth outside the urban center. The earliest suburban communities were developed during the railroad era, when railroad companies, seeking new sources of revenue, built passenger stations along their routes to connect cities with small rural villages. The residential communities that developed around the stations became semirural enclaves where the upper and upper-middle classes built fashionable villas on large lots, finding reprieve from overcrowding and other issues afflicting America's rapidly industrializing cities. As historian Kenneth T. Jackson has documented, reformers such as educator Catherine Beecher (1800-1878), landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852), and architect and landscape gardener Calvert Vaux (1824-1895) were highly influential in shaping American attitudes toward family life and domestic architecture and in romanticizing the benefits of semirural living in naturalistic settings.<sup>17</sup> Railroad commuting was well established in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and other major urban centers before the Civil War. Horse-drawn streetcars, also known as horsecars, were developed in the early 1830s and offered another mode of transportation to the early commuter class.

Washington, D.C., lacked several key conditions that drove early suburban development in other cities across the United States. With a population in 1860 of a little over 60,000 – less than one-tenth the population of New York City at the time – the District had yet to confront many of the issues afflicting larger metropolitan areas. Manufacturing existed within a narrow range of foundries, breweries, and mills, and heavy industry was scant. The city's poor air quality was primarily due to its topography and local climate rather than a proliferation of smokestacks. In 1860, only one line of horsecars operated in Washington, D.C. These omnibuses did not run on rails, however, and offered a primitive form of transit given the generally poor condition of the city's streets.<sup>18</sup>

After the Civil War, however, living conditions within the city began to change, creating greater impetus for suburban development. The population of Washington expanded as migrants relocated to the city from surrounding rural communities and from the South. By 1870, the population had increased to over 109,000 inhabitants. Washington was located in a topographic bowl, and its low-lying areas suffered from drainage and sewage problems that were exacerbated by the city's growing numbers. Outbreaks of malaria and other diseases were common. In 1871, Alexander "Boss" Shepherd began a comprehensive public works project that included tearing up the streets to lay sewers, leveling and paving the streets and avenues, removing abandoned buildings and other nuisances, and burying the long-abandoned Washington City Canal. The prospect of semirural living offered a compelling alternative to the urban upheaval that would soon overtake the District.

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<sup>17</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 61-67.

<sup>18</sup> LeRoy O. King, Jr., *100 Years of Capital Traction: The Story of Streetcars in the Nation's Capital* (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1972), 3.

Thus, by the early 1870s, suburban communities emerged as nodes along the major railroad lines entering Washington. These included Seabrook and Hyattsville along the Washington Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad, Huntington City (Bowie) along the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad, which opened in 1872 and was operated by the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Linden on the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O, which began operations in 1873. Linden, platted in 1873, was the first railroad suburb in Montgomery County. The original plan of Linden identified approximately twenty lots on about 12 acres of former farmland.<sup>19</sup> Ten years later, New York Congressman Benjamin F. Gilbert purchased a 90-acre tract in Montgomery County about 6 miles outside the District, which he subdivided and platted as the suburb of Takoma Park. Gilbert capitalized on the existence of convenient and affordable commuter service on B&O's Metropolitan Branch, and Takoma Park quickly attracted buyers. To promote suburban development, the B&O offered discounted freight rates for lumber destined for sites on along the Metropolitan Branch.<sup>20</sup>

The first electric streetcar (or trolley) system began operations in Richmond, Virginia, in February 1888. The technology proved safe and reliable and was quickly adopted by cities across the country as a replacement for horse-drawn streetcars. In fact, the first electric streetcar in the District – the Eckington and Soldiers' Home Railway – was chartered in June 1888 and began operations that October.<sup>21</sup> Suburban streetcar lines soon followed, providing connections to nascent residential developments such as Tenleytown, Glen Echo, and others. Streetcar suburbs attracted a wide range of socioeconomic groups from the working to the upper-middle class.

While the physical plan of most early railroad and streetcar suburbs conformed to a gridiron street system, practitioners such as Downing, Vaux, and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, Sr. (1822-1903) were strong advocates for a more naturalistic approach influenced by the English Picturesque landscape tradition. One of the most influential planned railroad suburbs inspired by the Picturesque movement was Riverside, designed by Olmstead and Vaux in 1868-69. Located outside Chicago, Riverside featured public parks and gracefully curved and sunken roads that preserved and enhanced the natural features of the land.<sup>22</sup> Chevy Chase, a southern Montgomery County streetcar suburb that bordered the District, embraced the traits of picturesque suburban planning promoted by Olmsted.<sup>23</sup> The first section of Chevy Chase, platted in 1892, had an informal, sylvan character that featured curvilinear parkways and landscaped parklets.

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<sup>19</sup> Michael F. Dwyer, Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, Maryland Historical Trust Nomination Form for the National Register of Historic Places, "Linden Historic District," June 3, 1975 (amended).

<sup>20</sup> Clare Lise Cavicchi, *Places from the Past: The Tradition of Gardez Bien in Montgomery County, Maryland* (Silver Spring, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2001), 39.

<sup>21</sup> King, *100 Years of Capital Traction*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Charles W. Snell, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, "Riverside Historic District," February 10, 1970.

<sup>23</sup> Kimberly Prothro Williams, Elizabeth Jo Lampl, and William B. Bushong, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "Chevy Chase Historic District," 7:3, draft dated October 1998.

Encouraged by the convenience of travel by commuter rail and streetcars, resort hotels and boarding houses proliferated in the countryside outside Washington, D.C., during the late nineteenth century. For those Washington residents who could not afford a permanent relocation to the suburbs, resort hotels offered the opportunity to spend their summers “in the country.”<sup>24</sup> Summer vacationers could take lodging by the week or on a more long-term basis. The High View, a resort hotel in Boyds, Maryland, built in 1887, catered to families and vacationers fleeing the hot city during the summer months.<sup>25</sup> Often, suburban real estate speculators built hotels within their communities to encourage local development. In 1893, Gilbert opened the 160-room North Takoma Hotel in Takoma Park. An article published in the *Washington Post* the following year admired the hotel for its convenience. It read, “There are probably a thousand men in Washington today who would be glad to learn of a summer hotel which possesses every element of country comfort and is at the same time within speaking distance to their office in Washington.”<sup>26</sup> The developers of Chevy Chase built a hotel within one year after the community’s first residential subdivision was platted.

#### The Religious Resort Period of Camp Meeting Development

Given that they were often organized in locations that offered clean sources of water, fresh air, crisp breezes, and generally salubrious conditions, Methodist camp meetings were promoted as religious alternatives to secular summer resort communities in the years after the Civil War. The seaside resort of Ocean Grove, New Jersey, founded as a Methodist camp meeting in 1869, epitomized the trend. One hundred miles to the south of Ocean Grove was the South Jersey Camp Meeting Association (established in 1875), which was located on a stop of the Cape May and Millville Railroad. Camps such as Ocean Grove and South Jersey attracted cottage owners, cottage and tent renters, and hotel guests, as well as daily excursionists.<sup>27</sup> The popularity of religious resorts is reflected in newspaper coverage of the period.

At the Methodist campgrounds that transitioned into summer resorts, tents, which were comfortable for temporary revivals but impractical for longer periods, were often quickly replaced with cottages. Although inherently distinct from tents due to their permanency and building material, camp meeting cottages carried over many of the key characteristics of the earlier form – the peaked shape, large front openings, uninsulated walls, and economical use of interior space.<sup>28</sup> The Gothic Revival in architecture and the writings and works of landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing and architect Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892) had a profound impact on the design of camp cottages. The religious symbolism of Gothic Revival architecture made it ideally suited for the spiritual nature of Methodist camp meetings, and Carpenter Gothic-style cottages formed a logical step in the transition from tents to permanent buildings.

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<sup>24</sup> Jane C. Sween, *Montgomery County: Two Centuries of Change* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1984), 95.

<sup>25</sup> Cavicchi, *Places from the Past*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> “About People You Know, What They Are Doing and What They Say,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 1894.

<sup>27</sup> Parker, “The Camp Meeting on the Frontier and the Methodist Religious Resort in the East – Before 1900,” 187.

<sup>28</sup> Troy Messenger, *Holy Leisure: Recreation and Religion in God’s Square Mile* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 49.

Typically, camp meeting cottages were built on existing tent lots, which placed restraints on the dimensions of the building footprint. Most cottages were equipped with front porches that simulated tent awnings, extended interior space into the public realm, and provided an area for socialization. Front-gable roofs evoked tent forms and created an additional half story that allowed for extra light and ventilation to the interior, and, in some cases, provided space for a sleeping loft. Cottages could be utilitarian or fanciful, depending on the period in which they were built, local traditions, and the socio-economic standing of the owner.<sup>29</sup>

While at some campgrounds special sections of the site were set aside for cottages and platted with larger lots, it would not have been unusual for new cottages to stand side by side with their canvas neighbors. Some camp meetings, such as Ocean Grove, have retained their tent tradition. Approximately 100 family tents surround the auditorium there. Each consists of a canvas-covered porch, a tented living/sleeping area, and a frame structure at the rear with a kitchen/dining area and bathroom. The canvas is stored in the frame section over the winter.<sup>30</sup>

Camp meeting associations acted as the governing body for many campgrounds during this period. Wesleyan Grove was institutionalized in 1868 when the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association was incorporated by an act of state legislature. A board of trustees and various committees were formed to order life in the community.<sup>31</sup> The Northport Wesleyan Grove Camp Meeting Association, formed in 1873 on Maine's Penobscot Bay, was authorized to acquire land and develop a wharf, key factors in its development as a summer colony.<sup>32</sup> These associations passed laws that regulated public conduct, commerce, the use of recreational facilities, and other aspects of camp meeting life.

### *Carpenter Gothic*

In the early nineteenth century, Gothic Revival architecture emerged in the United States as a solution for Americans searching for an ideal ecclesiastical architecture. Many reasoned that because Christianity had flourished when Gothic architecture was in its prime in Europe, churches should be built in as close to the correct version of Gothic as possible.<sup>33</sup> The style was eagerly adopted for American church building, particularly in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. American architects and builders drew inspiration from English writers such as John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Augustus Pugin (1812-1852), both of whom argued for the Gothic style in moralistic terms. Ruskin and Pugin declared that Gothic architecture should not just have decorative features like tracery, but that medieval building techniques should also be revived. New buildings claiming to be Gothic, they argued, should derive their character from the direct expression of

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<sup>29</sup> Lampl and Kelly, "'A Harvest in the Open for Saving Souls,' The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County," 2004, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Walker, *Tiny, Tiny Houses*, 58-59.

<sup>31</sup> Weiss, *City in the Woods*, 34.

<sup>32</sup> Kirk F. Mohney, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, "Bayside Historic District," November 8, 1996.

<sup>33</sup> David P. Handlin, *American Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 87-88.

their structure.<sup>34</sup> The first American house to be built in a Gothic Revival style was Sedgeley, designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe for a Philadelphia merchant in 1799.<sup>35</sup> The house had four corner pavilions accented with pointed-arch openings, pointed-arch windows with Gothic hood moldings, and an arched corbel table. Gothic Revival became a popular style for residential architecture as the nineteenth century progressed.<sup>36</sup>

The picturesque qualities of Gothic architecture found an audience among Americans nervous about the rise of industrial society, who worried that the rearrangement of life and work that industrialization had wrought was threatening the family. In response, builders and architects searched for a domestic architecture that captured the ideal family life. The houses they admired, architectural historian David Handlin writes, were rural cottages that “echoed in their architecture the rugged and irregular countryside in which they were located rather than the refined classical buildings” of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>37</sup>

Among the most influential voices in translating Gothic architecture for American domestic use were landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing and architect Alexander Jackson Davis. Through their writings and built work, Downing and Davis freely interpreted English cottages and villas for an American audience.<sup>38</sup> Davis’s enthusiasm for Gothic architecture developed early in his career, as he was drawn to romantic literature and sought to capture that aesthetic world in his designs. Working on church projects in the office of architect Ithiel Town (1784-1844) furthered Davis’s enthusiasm for Gothic architecture.<sup>39</sup> In his own practice, he designed a number of houses in the style. Downing, meanwhile, as a premiere tastemaker of the mid-nineteenth century, helped to popularize the Gothic cottages and villas designed by architects like Davis.

Downing wrote of the cottage as the ideal form for the American working class. Workers, he wrote, “are desirous to have their home of three rooms tasteful and expressive, no less than among those whose

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<sup>34</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 148.

<sup>35</sup> William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Architects and Their Buildings, Volume 2: Technology and the Picturesque, Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 288.

<sup>36</sup> Handlin, *American Architecture*, 87.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>38</sup> Alma deC. McArdle and Deirdre Bartlett McArdle, *Carpenter Gothic: 19th Century Ornamented Houses of New England* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1978), 18.

<sup>39</sup> Pierson, *American Architects and Their Buildings*, 271.

dwelling number thirty rooms.”<sup>40</sup> Like Pugin and Ruskin, Downing and Davis recommended natural materials and the honest expression of those materials. Given its affordability compared to other materials, wood was a logical construction material. New technologies like the steam-powered scroll saw and building methods such as balloon framing allowed houses to be built more quickly and economically.<sup>41</sup>

Downing and Davis’s vision was articulated in the latter’s design for a gatehouse at the Blithewood estate in Barrytown, New York. (Figure 4) Published in Davis’s book *Rural Residences* in 1837, it was, according to architectural historian William Pierson, the first house in American architecture to be



Figure 4: *The Blithewood gatehouse was an inspiration for modest, Gothic-style cottages in the nineteenth-century United States. (Reproduced from William H. Pierson, Jr. American Architects and Their Buildings, Volume 2: Technology and the Picturesque, Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 306.)*

designed and published as a “cottage.”<sup>42</sup> The gatehouse had a steeply pitched, cross-gable roof and gables fitted with bargeboards featuring tracery-like patterns, finials, and pendants. The front and rear gabled bays projected slightly from the exterior wall plane. Its nearly cruciform plan was the result of two intersecting blocks. This massing, writes Pierson, “rejected altogether the single rectangular block of the classical tradition in favor of the dynamic opposition of strongly directional units.”<sup>43</sup>

In his book *The Architecture of Country Houses*, published in 1850, Downing devoted a chapter to cottage designs, featuring drawings by architects like Davis. Downing referred to the cottage style as English cottage, or “rural Gothic.”<sup>44</sup> The houses had steeply pitched gables, board-and-batten exteriors, porches, and decorative woodwork. Downing considered the pointed gable to be the most striking feature of such

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<sup>40</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: Dover, 1969), 71.

<sup>41</sup> James L. Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of England, 2001), 23-24.

<sup>42</sup> Pierson, *American Architects and Their Buildings*, 305.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 307.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, *A treatise on the theory and practice of Landscape Gardening* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), 58.

cottages.<sup>45</sup> A plate from his book depicting a “Symmetrical Cottage,” features a front gable fitted with decorative bargeboards and a finial and pendant. (Figure 5) Such ornamental details were derived from English domestic architecture.<sup>46</sup>

In his writings, Downing cautioned against “overwrought verge boards” and “an excess of fanciful and flowing ornaments of a card-board character.”<sup>47</sup> However, as historians Alma McArdle and Deirdre Bartlett McArdle have documented, “...in many instances the simple gables and bargeboards of Downing’s unpretentious cottages quickly became a veritable riot of decoration....”<sup>48</sup> Carpenters made liberal, and at times fanciful, interpretations of the Downing/Davis cottages, partly because sourcebooks on Gothic architecture were not as widely available as those devoted to classical architecture. This interpretation of the Downing/Davis cottages by builders became known as Carpenter Gothic. The style often featured gable ends fitted with decorative bargeboards sawn from thin pieces of lumber; the fragility of the ornament earned it the moniker “gingerbread.”<sup>49</sup> Carpenter Gothic embraced the new technology of the day,



Figure 5: Andrew Jackson Downing included a plate for this “Symmetrical Cottage,” designed in a “rural Gothic” style, in his book’s chapter on cottages. (Reproduced from Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 104.)



Figure 6: A Carpenter Gothic-style cottage (with later additions) at 1 The Circle in Washington Grove. (Robinson & Associates, 2018)

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 402.

<sup>46</sup> Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, 104-06.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>48</sup> McArdle and McArdle, *Carpenter Gothic*, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

as scroll-sawn bargeboards and machine-turned knobs and spindles became common features.

Carpenter Gothic-style cottages found a receptive audience among Methodist camp meetings in the mid-to late nineteenth century, particularly as the physical presence of campgrounds transitioned from tents to permanent buildings. The style's religious symbolism made it ideally suited for the ethereal escape camp meeting organizers hoped to establish. Indeed, the cottages often resembled churches, with double-door entrances, steeple-like finials, and scroll-sawn bargeboards that evoked tracery.<sup>50</sup> The house at 1 the Circle in Washington Grove, as an example, captures well the spirit of the Carpenter Gothic cottage. (Figure 6) Built between 1878 and 1885, it has a steeply pitched, front-gable roof and features architectural detailing characteristic of the style. The house also boasts a generous wraparound porch. Although a later addition to 1 the Circle, porches were a common feature of camp meeting cottages.

### The Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association

During the post-Civil War period, Washington's Methodist community experienced a resurgence, led in part by Reverend B. Peyton Brown (1830-1896), the enthusiastic pastor of Foundry Church between 1866 and 1869 and again between 1876 and 1879. By 1868, Foundry was actively joining with other area churches to plan for a series of regional camp meetings. After a succession of planning meetings, a revival was held that August at Haislip's Woods near Annapolis Junction on the Washington Branch of the B&O Railroad.<sup>51</sup> Local interest in camp meetings was intensifying at this time, and, three years later, Foundry helped organize another camp meeting a few miles from Annapolis Junction at Severn Circuit. Methodist leadership in Washington, however, desired a campground that could be under their ownership and control and organized a committee to select a site for a permanent camp. The committee, which included Reverend Brown, William R. Woodward (an attorney), Flodoardo Howard (a doctor and pharmacist), and several others, likely carried out their search during the late winter and spring of 1873.<sup>52</sup> The site they decided on was a 267-acre tract in Montgomery County that comprised the corner of a farm owned by Elizabeth Magruder Cooke (1804-1886), the widow of Nathan Cooke Sr. (1803-1869), who was once described as a "consistent member and worker of the Methodist Church South."<sup>53</sup> Nathan Cooke was a successful Maryland farmer, landowner, and investor. Relying in large part on slave labor, he grew crops on his farm and raised sheep and swine.<sup>54</sup> The portion of Cooke's farm selected for the camp meeting site included two springs, wooded groves, and fields. It was conveniently located along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad, yet ensconced in Montgomery County's agricultural landscape. The

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<sup>50</sup> Lampl and Kelly, "A Harvest in the Open for Saving Souls,' The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County," 2004, 99.

<sup>51</sup> Homer L. Calkin, *Castings from the Foundry Mold: A History of Foundry Church, Washington, D.C., 1814-1964* (Nashville, TN: Parthenon Press, 1968): 107-108.

<sup>52</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 30.

<sup>53</sup> John Bowie Ferneyhough, ed., *Year Book of the American Clan Gregor Society* (Richmond, VA: Curtiss-Neal, Inc., 1928), 25.

<sup>54</sup> Archives of Maryland, Biographical Series, Nathan Cooke Sr. (MSA SC 5496-035312), available at <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5400/sc5496/035300/035312/html/035312bio.html>.

Metropolitan Branch, which stretched from the northwest corner of Washington, D.C., to the mouth of the Monocacy River, commenced passenger and freight operations on May 25, 1873.<sup>55</sup>

Reverend Brown and his committee presented their choice for the camp meeting site at a meeting that took place at Foundry Church on June 16, 1873. The site met all of the criteria for a suitable camp meeting location. The heavily wooded areas of the property offered privacy, protection from the elements, lumber for building and fuel, and provisions for camping. Its meadows offered open clearings for carts, wagons, horse pens, and mercantile stands. The was easily accessible by rail from Washington yet far enough from the city to enhance the sense for participants that the camp meeting was “a world apart” from everyday demands and routines. These last two factors were particularly important to the organizers of Washington Grove, who planned for the camp meeting to become a popular summer resort in addition to a successful religious revival. The organizers took stock subscriptions at the June 16 meeting to raise capital for the acquisition of the property and initial improvements to the grounds. On July 3, 1873, the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association of the District of Columbia and Maryland purchased the land and the railroad right-of-way from Cooke’s widow for the sum of \$6,636.25.<sup>56</sup> The following day was the Fourth of July, and the association held a promotional picnic on the grounds. A description of the event read, “Yesterday a large number of Methodists of the District spent the day at the new campground – about one thousand going out on the Metropolitan branch road. The parties separated into small picnic parties, and rambled through the woods, all being well pleased with the location.”<sup>57</sup>

The Washington Grove campground was located southwest of Emory Grove, a Methodist camp meeting established by African Americans.<sup>58</sup> Although the exact date of the first Emory Grove camp meeting is unknown, it is believed to have begun informally in the 1860s by area slaves who gathered together in a local grove. The Emory Grove revival attracted participants from across Maryland as well as surrounding states. When the railroad opened in 1873, Emory Grove participants could travel to the camp meeting by train, disembarking at the Washington Grove station.

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<sup>55</sup> AD Marble & Company, Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Form, “Washington Grove Humpback Bridge (M: 21-220),” 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 35-36.

<sup>57</sup> “At the New Camp Ground,” *Evening Star*, July 5, 1873.

<sup>58</sup> The former campgrounds were located within Johnson’s Park, a public park located north of the Midcounty Highway between Woodfield Road and Washington Grove Lane in Montgomery County. For a detailed history of the Emory Grove Camp Meeting and a description of the physical character of the site, see Lampl and Kelly, “‘A Harvest in the Open for Saving Souls,’ The Camp Meetings of Montgomery County,” 2004, 35-61.

The first camp meeting at Washington Grove began on August 13, 1873, and lasted for ten days. Although the weather was poor, with days of torrential rain, the event was declared a success. On a plateau of high ground within a clearing in the woods was the preacher's stand and rows of wood benches. Initially, the tents at Washington Grove were arranged in a grid pattern, with their entrances facing the preacher's stand and assembly area. (Figure 7) This arrangement has its origins in early nineteenth-century campgrounds, which, as previously noted, were typically laid out along one of three plans – rectangular, circular, or open horseshoe. By the second camp meeting in 1874, the initial rectangular grid plan had been altered to accommodate an octagonal central gathering space. A newspaper article dated July 6, 1874, describing an excursion to Washington Grove in advance of the ten-day camp meeting reads, "Numbers who are

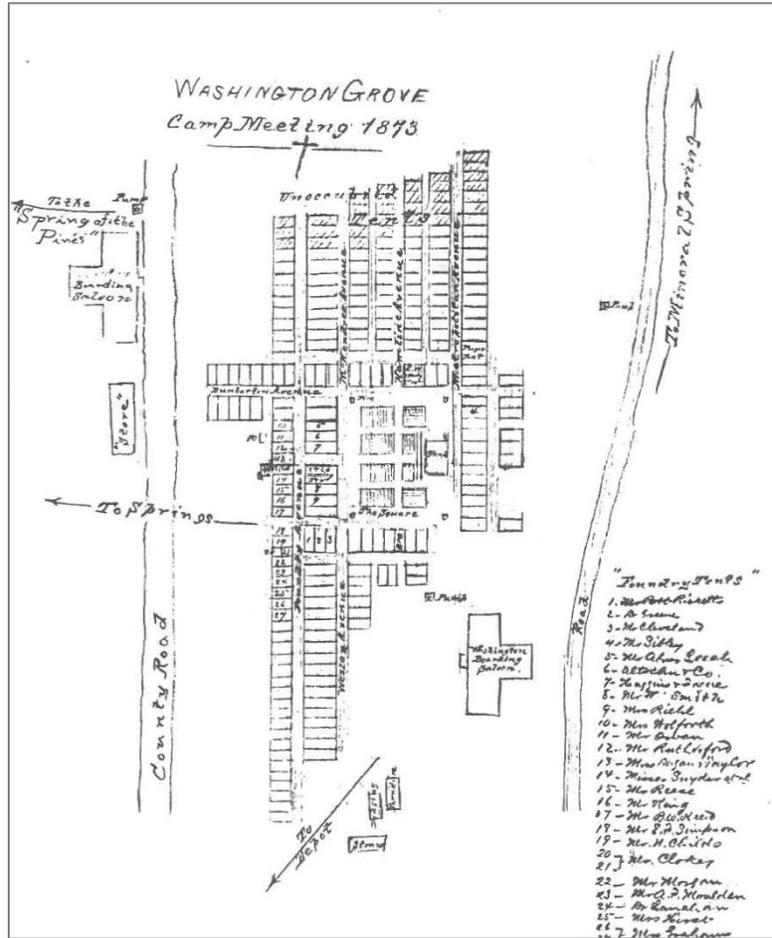


Figure 7: Sketch made in 1873 showing the arrangement of the tents at Washington Grove's first camp meeting. (Reproduced from Edwards, Washington Grove, 1873-1937, original copy in Washington Grove Archives, "Sketch Map by James L. Ewins, Camp Meeting in 1873" (1873), MA.00023.02)

contemplating a sojourn in the grove...inspected the newly-arranged grounds, and endeavored to locate their proposed homes in the woods. The stakes show that the inner court has been changed in shape from a square to an octagon, with radiating avenues entering upon it from four opposite directions."<sup>59</sup> Eventually the octagon evolved into a circle, and the camp meeting took on a wheel plan featuring a central gathering space, the "Sacred Circle," surrounded by tent sites and radiating paths, also lined with tent lots. The radial paths were designated First Avenue through Sixth Avenue. (Figure 8) As previously noted, this arrangement was a derivative of the radial concentric plan most notably used at the Wesleyan Grove camp meeting on Martha's Vineyard. Edwards postulates that the rectangular plan may have evolved into a wheel form due to the weather, writing that, "There must have [been] much moving about of boundaries as tents were placed where they were practical instead of in neat rows."<sup>60</sup> The site's topography may have also influenced the spatial configuration of the grounds. The founders of

<sup>59</sup> "Pic-nics and Excursions," *Evening Star*, July 6, 1874.

<sup>60</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 44.

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Washington Grove placed the preacher's stand and assembly area at a high point within the property (roughly 522 feet or 159 meters above sea level), and the principal pedestrian route into the grounds followed along the crest of a ridgeline. Because the ridgeline curved slightly east around the assembly area, the wheel plan may have been a more natural fit for the shape of the land.

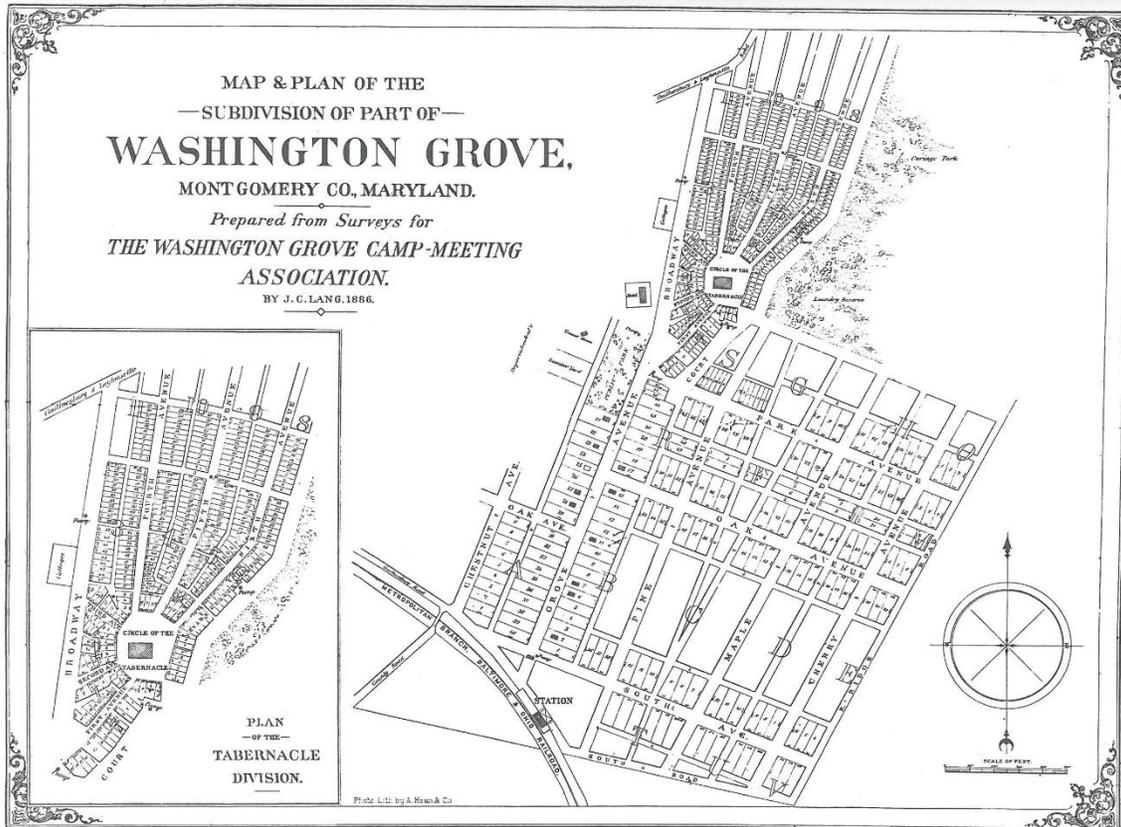


Figure 8: Map and plan of Washington Grove from surveys by J. C. Lang, 1886. (Reproduced from Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, original copy in Washington Grove Archives, "Plan of Subdivision Part of Washington Grove, Surveys by J. C. Lang, Tabernacle Division" (1886), MA.0023.04)

A flyer distributed by the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association in advance of the first camp meeting indicates that three sizes of canvas tents were available for rent in 1873 – 10 by 12 feet, 12 by 16 feet, and 14 by 20 feet.<sup>61</sup> These tents came with a fly and were erected on wood platforms. Participants could also provide their own tent, but were charged a fee to rent a lot. According to Edwards, lots measured 15 by 20 feet or 15 by 30 feet.<sup>62</sup> An article in the *Evening Star* newspaper from August 13, 1873, reported that tents were "mostly about 14 feet square," perhaps indicating that most attendees furnished

<sup>61</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 39.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

their own tents rather than renting them from the association.<sup>63</sup> In addition to the tents used by individual families and by church groups, open air tents were used to shelter “boarding saloons” that provided meals for campers and for daily excursionists. Market stands sold straw, furniture, perishables, and other goods. In September 1873, one month after the official opening of the camp meeting, the *Evening Star* reported that “the railroad had erected a station house at the grounds.”<sup>64</sup> (While nineteenth-century newspaper articles refer to this building as both a station house and as a depot, the term depot will be used to describe the original



Figure 9: Undated view of the tabernacle at Washington Grove, built in 1877. This structure was demolished in 1905 when the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association built an auditorium for Chautauqua in Woodward Park. (Washington Grove Archives)

building, which was a large frame structure with a gable roof that sheltered an open waiting area and enclosed storage space. The term station will be used to refer to the enclosed structure built across from the depot in 1906.) In 1877, the preacher’s stand and assembly space were replaced with a permanent pavilion known as the tabernacle. (Figure 9) Typical of the form, it was open on all sides, and heavy timber posts and beams supported a wide hipped roof. Bracing at the top of the posts resembled tree branches. A description of the tabernacle written in 1879 gives its dimensions as 48 by 70 feet.<sup>65</sup>

The founders of Washington Grove intended from the start that it would also operate as a summer resort. A promotional pamphlet from July 1873 read, “After the land has been plotted, it is the intention of the Trustees to issue renewable leases to sites suitable for summer residences, for which its nearness to the railroad, its elevated position...its salubrity, and numerous other advantages, renders it more desirable to the public than any other place in the vicinity of Washington.”<sup>66</sup> In fact, newspaper reports from the period reveal that Washington Grove was being used as a summer retreat rather than simply a temporary revival

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<sup>63</sup> “The Washington Grove Camp Meeting, Description of the New Grounds and Arrangements for the Meeting,” *Evening Star*, August 13, 1873. The same figure was reported by the *Baltimore Sun*. See “The Washington Grove Camp Meeting,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 15, 1873.

<sup>64</sup> “The Washington Camp-meeting Association,” *Evening Star*, September 17, 1873.

<sup>65</sup> T. H. S. Boyd, *The History of Montgomery County, Maryland: From its Earliest Settlement in 1650 to 1879* (Baltimore, MD: W. K. Boyle & Son, 1879), 117.

<sup>66</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 39.

site and had its first permanent summer cottages as early as 1878.<sup>67</sup> A newspaper account reported that the cottages were painted white, “so as not to mar the beauty of the contrast made under the thick green foliage of the forest trees and the clear white of the tents.”<sup>68</sup> The same article noted that the houses were “handsomely arranged with Venetian doors, and divided into rooms to suit the convenience of their families, and ornamented according to the taste of the inmates...” Summer residents set up house well before the camp meeting, making good use of the grounds and its amenities for the entire season. Features such as Maple Spring were popular destinations for nature walks, picnics, and other passive recreational activities.

For those who resided at Washington Grove, whether for a week or two to attend the camp meeting or for the entire summer season, the association provided many of the civic amenities offered by contemporary suburban communities. The most viable and enduring nineteenth-century suburban developments offered a range of facilities such as hotels, schools, libraries, churches, club buildings, athletic fields, public parks, and sometimes small business districts.<sup>69</sup> The suburb of Kensington had the first public library (the Noyes Library) in the Washington, D.C., area, which opened in 1893. Francis G. Newlands, the founder of Chevy Chase, induced buyers to his community by providing a post office/library, public schools, a hotel, a recreational lake, and a country club. While Washington Grove did not have a school or a library, there was a hotel, a market, and open spaces for games and organized sports. Built in 1881, Washington Grove’s hotel (variably called the Albany Hotel or Hotel Albany) served long-staying seasonal guests as well as day-trippers. It was located within Howard Park, a small park along the north side of Center Street between Grove Avenue and Chestnut Road. Its design and construction were supervised by one of the Grove’s founding trustees, Richard H. Willet, who operated large lumberyards in Washington, D.C., and Maryland.<sup>70</sup> In 1884, the Grove could also lay claim to a barbershop and a dentistry.<sup>71</sup> Starting in 1886, a seasonal post office operated out of the hotel; year-round postal service began in 1890.<sup>72</sup>

Washington Grove had a dedicated stop on the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad, and the Humpback Bridge, a timber, pony truss bridge built by the B&O in the 1870s and located about 600 feet northwest of the Washington Grove station, greatly facilitated local travel, trade, and communication by providing a safe above-grade crossing at a blind curve in the tracks. The subdivision of Oakmont on the west side of the tracks from Washington Grove was platted in 1888 by Henry Beard and James G. Craighead of Washington, D.C. Oakmont’s developers hoped to take advantage of the popularity of the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>68</sup> “God’s First Temple,” *Washington Post*, August 3, 1878.

<sup>69</sup> Kimberly Prothro Williams, Elizabeth Jo Lampl, and William B. Bushong, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, “Chevy Chase Historic District,” 8:56, draft dated October 1998.

<sup>70</sup> “The Camp Meeting Season,” *Washington Post*, May 7, 1881, and Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 160.

<sup>71</sup> “City in the Woods: Religious Services at Washington Grove – The Guests of the Hotel,” *Washington Post*, August 15, 1884.

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 168-69.

camp meeting and the convenience and proximity of the railroad to subdivide and sell the land for residential development. The initial plat for Oakmont included a park “dedicated for public recreation,” that was located directly across from the railroad depot.<sup>73</sup> The parcel north of the park was owned at the time by the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association. (This land was later sold.) The parcel to the south was improved in 1889 when Beard and Craighead built a two-and-a-half story, frame building on the lot, which operated as a general store (likely with living quarters above).<sup>74</sup> In 1894, the Washington Grove post office moved into the store, where it remained for over eighty years until 1978.<sup>75</sup> For the residents of Washington Grove, the market and the post office were an important part of camp meeting life.

Washington Grove’s earliest cottages typically featured steeply pitched, front-gable roofs that evoked the shape of canvas tents. While the massing and form of Washington Grove’s cottages were in part influenced by the canvas structures that initially made up the community, nineteenth-century trends in architecture and vernacular building had a strong influence on the Grove. Nationally, the Carpenter Gothic style, which was developed by builders as an American domestic interpretation of the Gothic Revival, was pervasive. At Washington Grove, this style was expressed using scroll-sawn bargeboards, bracketed pendants,



*Figure 10: Undated view of Washington Grove showing two forms of cottage construction and design. The house on the left features board-and-batten siding. (Washington Grove Archives)*

decorative dressings over or around windows and doors, and turned or chamfered porch posts. Board-and-batten construction created a visual quality consistent with the vertical emphasis of the style. (Figure 10) Interior spaces were high and narrow. Gable windows provided ventilation and natural light. In some cases, a loft was built to create sleeping quarters above the ground-floor level. Many cottages featured double front doors, sometimes with flanking full-height windows. When the front doors and windows were open, much of the interior was exposed to view. Another significant feature was the front porch, which was typically built on grade or slightly raised. Most porches had hipped roofs and extended across the entire width of the cottage. A visitor writing in 1879, noted, “[The cottages] are all diversified in their architecture as in their internal appointments. Yet there is an air of harmony about them, standing amid

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<sup>73</sup> Montgomery County, Circuit Court Land Records, Liber J.A. 9, Folio 490, June 23, 1888.

<sup>74</sup> “Washington Grove Restaurant a Hub since 90-year Post Office Stint,” *Montgomery County Gazette*, September 9, 2009, available online at [http://www.gazette.net/stories/09092009/damanew231658\\_32546.shtml](http://www.gazette.net/stories/09092009/damanew231658_32546.shtml))

<sup>75</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 170.

the white tents, that is pleasant to the eye.”<sup>76</sup> Many of Washington Grove’s cottages were built within close proximity to one another. One observer, writing in 1887 described, “a jumble of gable ends and ridge roof, airy verandah and picket fence.”<sup>77</sup>

Like many religious campgrounds, the transition from tents to permanent cottages at Washington Grove took place over a number of years. A historic photograph of the Grove from 1886 depicts the two generations of dwellings standing side by side. (Figure 11) As was the case at many camp meeting sites, the cottages at Washington Grove were initially built on tent lots, which constrained their size and massing. As a result, many cottages had a rectangular plan that measured 14 feet wide by 30 feet deep. The house at 315 Grove Avenue, which faces Second Avenue and dates to circa 1888, still retains its historic, 14- by 30-foot core. The original size of the cottage at 1 the Circle was 14 by 40 feet. Cottages were typically built on posts (often locust or cedar due to their resistance to decay) without foundations. The framing was minimal, typically consisting of 2- by 4-inch studs on 54-inch centers for both walls and roof. According to oral tradition, canvas was used to insulate and weatherproof the walls and roofs.<sup>78</sup> Local builders of this period used triple-beaded, tongue and groove lumber for interior paneling, exterior siding, and porch ceilings, and some of the cottages at Washington Grove featured this distinctive type of lumber.<sup>79</sup> Frequently, cottages were expanded as more space was needed. A newspaper article from 1880 noted that while new cottages continued to be put up, “many of those already built have been enlarged by the addition of kitchens and dining rooms.”<sup>80</sup> Canvas was sometimes used for exterior passages between the main house and kitchen wings.<sup>81</sup>



Figure 11: View of the Jackson family in front of their cottage, “Fern View,” in 1886. Note the tent immediately to the left in the image. Today, Fern View comprises part of the cottage at 319 Grove Avenue. (Washington Grove Archives, courtesy Sara M. Bettencourt, owner.)

<sup>76</sup> “A Christian Camp,” *Washington Post*, August 8, 1879. This same article noted that the cottages were painted green and white rather than all white as reported the previous year.

<sup>77</sup> “At Washington Grove: The City of Tents Looks Very Beautiful,” *Washington Post*, August 11, 1887.

<sup>78</sup> Washington Grove Round Table Discussion, August 31, 2018, recording available in WGA.

<sup>79</sup> Cavicchi, *Places from the Past*, 39. The cottage at 127 Grove Avenue, for example, features triple-beaded, tongue and groove exterior siding.

<sup>80</sup> “At Washington Grove, Sixteen Cottages Already Occupied – Improvements During the Year,” *Washington Post*, July 3, 1880.

<sup>81</sup> Washington Grove Round Table Discussion, August 31, 2018, recording available in WGA.

While the names of many of the carpenters and builders who worked at Washington Grove are unknown, records indicate that one “pioneer cottage builder” was W. A. Scott.<sup>82</sup> Scott was an African American who was living in the area when Washington Grove was founded. In 1883, he was appointed superintendent of the grounds and was given year-round use of a one-and-a-half-story, frame, Carpenter Gothic-style house located near the corner of Center Street and Chestnut Road (the site of the current parsonage at 101 Center Street). Behind the superintendent’s cottage stood several outbuildings and fields.

Because outdoor space was limited, some families planted small gardens in front of their cottages. A newspaper account from 1884 provides a description of the trend. “Perhaps the prettiest cottage in the grove is that of Mr. Ignatius Knott. It is surrounded with a miniature garden in which are tiny beds of flowers in unique design and several urns filled with flowering plants,” it reads.<sup>83</sup> The trees, tabernacle, and fire stands at Washington Grove were whitewashed.<sup>84</sup> This tradition encouraged a “beautiful and cleanly appearance” and allegedly protected the trees from insects and fungus.<sup>85</sup> Lamplight and moonlight reflected off the painted trunks, helping with nighttime visibility.

Initially, the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association issued stock at \$20 a share. Around 1880, the association embraced the concept of “located stock,” wherein ownership of stock ensured the investor one vote at stockholders’ meetings and a tent or cottage site depending on the number of certificates he held. One share entitled the stockholder to one tent site. Once the tent site was selected, it was said to be “located.” Five shares entitled the stockholder to one cottage site. Administration of this system was difficult, as most of the Grove had not yet been platted. As Edwards has noted, this quickly created a messy state of affairs that involved “leaseholders without stock, stockholders without lots, and lots without leases.”<sup>86</sup> The association corrected the situation in 1882 when it adopted a new charter and bylaws (submitted to the Maryland legislature in 1883) that included a provision for 99-year leases.

Since the first camp meeting, Grove Avenue served as the principal pedestrian route into Washington Grove. Road improvements came early. The avenue, which cut through a wooded section of the property, was described in 1883 as “an inviting walk, because of its deep and cooling shade.”<sup>87</sup> For these reasons, residential development along Grove Avenue was inevitable, despite its independence from the “Sacred Circle.” In a plat map recorded with the county in 1883, the 1,000-foot-long avenue was divided into thirty-nine building lots that measured 50 feet by 150 feet.<sup>88</sup> These generously sized and regularly spaced lots

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<sup>82</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 135-136.

<sup>83</sup> “City in the Woods: Religious Services at Washington Grove – The Guests of the Hotel,” *Washington Post*, August 15, 1884.

<sup>84</sup> “The Camp Meeting Season,” *Evening Star*, August 11, 1881.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 111.

<sup>87</sup> “Washington Grove, A Delightful Resort – the Grounds and Cottages – Opening of the Camp,” *Washington Post*, August 5, 1883. This article references Grove Avenue as Broadway, its earlier name.

<sup>88</sup> Plat map recorded in Liber E.B.P, No. 28, Folio 58, copy available in Washington Grove Archives (hereafter shortened to WGA).

contrasted greatly with the small, often irregular parcels around the Circle, an area that came to be known as the Tent Department.

Although Washington Grove's initial layout (comprising the Tent Department) derived from camp meeting traditions, its later development had a gridiron plan typical of many late nineteenth-century suburbs. Outside the Tent Department, the layout of the roads and the arrangement of lots was primarily guided by two plans – the 1886 Lang plan and the 1897 Maddox plan. As previously mentioned, the association adopted an amended charter in 1882, which prompted an evaluation of its undeveloped lots and open spaces. Thus, around 1885, it hired surveyor and civil engineer J. C. Lang to survey and prepare a plan for the grounds. The plan, which was dated 1886, created new building lots along a system of alternating avenues (for pedestrian use) and roads (for vehicular use).<sup>89</sup> This scheme reinforced the sylvan character of Washington Grove and had a beneficial impact on the health, safety, and appearance of the grounds. (It can be seen as an early precursor of the Radburn scheme of community planning, which derived from Garden City principles and became popular in the late 1930s and 1940s as an alternative to standard suburban subdivisions that placed houses facing the street and sidewalks. The Radburn system utilized a circulation system that separated pedestrian and automobile traffic by grouping houses on a common green facing a network of pedestrian paths. Access roads and driveways were located at the back of the lots. In theory, this plan increased neighborhood safety by reducing traffic accidents.<sup>90</sup>) The Lang plan also dedicated several blocks of land for public parks and set aside the undeveloped, wooded area in the northeast quadrant of the Grove, now known as the East Woods, as a "Laundry Reserve" and "Carriage Park." The latter indicating one of the areas where camp meeting attendees who did not arrive by train could leave their coaches and wagons.

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<sup>89</sup> National Register documentation for the Linden Historic District in Montgomery County notes that, according to oral history sources, the suburban development of Linden, platted in 1873, also featured separate vehicular and pedestrian routes. See Michael F. Dwyer, Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, Maryland Historical Trust Nomination Form for the National Register of Historic Places, "Linden Historic District," June 3, 1975.

<sup>90</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, David L. Ames, and Sarah Dillard Pope, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960," E: 20-21.

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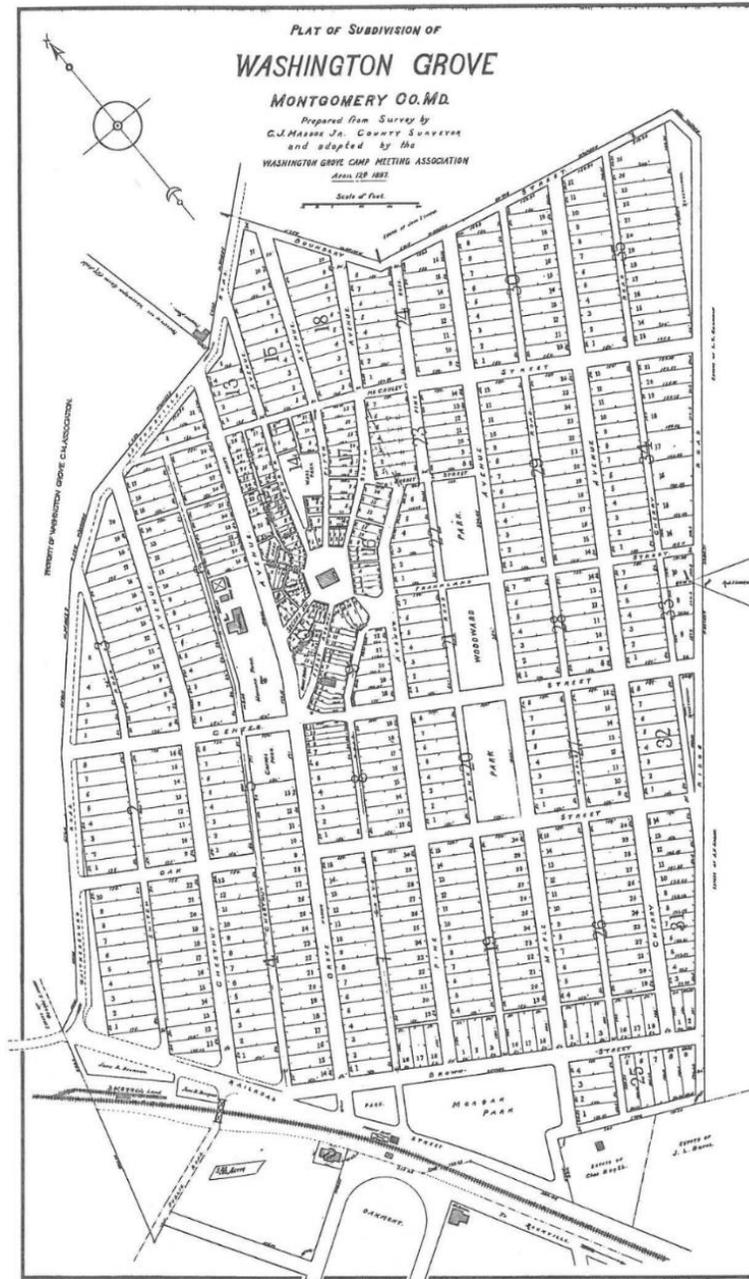


Figure 12: Maddox plan dated 1897. Note the contrast between the layout of roads and lots in the Tent Department, which surrounded the “Sacred Circle,” and the Cottage Department, which was platted later in response to demand for more building sites and larger lots. (Reproduced from Edwards, Washington Grove, 1873-1937, original copy in Washington Grove Archives, “Plan of Subdivision with Tabernacle, Maddox Surveyor” (1897), MA.0023.08.)

The later plan, prepared by Montgomery County surveyor C. J. Maddox in 1897, carried over many of the concepts of the Lang plan, but took into account the entire property, with the exception of the woods west of Laytonsville Road (Washington Grove Lane), now known as the West Woods. (Figure 12) Outside the Tent Department, in what came to be known as the Cottage Department, the Maddox plan laid out generous building lots, measuring 50 by 150 feet or larger, 50-foot-wide avenues, and 25-foot-wide roads.

The plan identified several small parks within the Tent Department, including Wade Park and Knott Park, and set aside three blocks within the Cottage Department as a public park named in honor of William R. Woodward, one of Washington Grove's founding trustees. In contrast with the Lang plan, the roads and avenues east of Grove Avenue were set parallel to it rather than parallel to Ridge Road, eliminating many of the irregular lots of the earlier plan and defining a gridiron system. The gridiron plan was an efficient and inexpensive way to subdivide and sell, or, in the case of Washington Grove, lease the land. As Edwards has noted, "The Maddox subdivision plan is almost indistinguishable from the present town plan, a testimony to both its sensibility and its adaptability."<sup>91</sup> While the Maddox plan subdivided the northeast quadrant of the Grove (identified as a "Laundry Reserve" and "Carriage Park" on the Lang plan) into residential lots, the area – now known as the East Woods – was untouched until the late 1940s-early 1950s, when several parcels along the north side of Center Street were developed. By 1964, however, the East Woods were designated as a forest preserve. Two fire hydrants in the East Woods remain today as evidence of the residential growth once projected for the land.

The original, 267-acre tract purchased by the organizers of the Washington Grove camp meeting included nearly 47 acres on the west side of Laytonsville Road (now Washington Grove Lane). As the location of two springs (Whetstone Spring and Maple Spring), this wooded area was a vital source of water and an essential part of the camp meeting grounds. Separated by a roadway from the Tent and Cottage departments, the woods were never platted for residential development. In fact, the West Woods were not included in the 1897 Maddox survey. Instead, the woods were harvested for timber, and camp meeting attendees and summer residents used the logging trails for picnics and excursions. A newspaper article chronicling the camp meeting of 1894 gives the following description of the West Woods, "Beyond the buildings rustic rambles lead to the mineral springs and many other beautiful shade spots, which lie outside the fence that surrounds the settlements. It is a model picnic ground, where every spot is shady, and a pump or spring lies at every turn...."<sup>92</sup>

As residents began to extend their stays past the summer months, demand increased for a place for religious assemblies that would provide greater comfort in poor weather than the tabernacle. To provide such a space, the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association built an assembly hall (now known as McCathran Hall) at the south end of Howard Park in 1901. Designed by architect A. L. Harris of Washington, D.C., the building was comprised of an octagonal hall that measured 20 feet to a side and an attached meeting room that measured 20 feet square.<sup>93</sup>

By the end of this period of its development, Washington Grove had become an established resort community with hundreds of residents that made it their home for the entire summer. It boasted a popular hotel, postal service, some paved roads, a fine collection of summer cottages, and recreational

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<sup>91</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 127.

<sup>92</sup> "Opened by Leaguers: They Hold a Camp-Meeting at Washington Grove," *Washington Post*, August 21, 1895.

<sup>93</sup> There is little information discovered to date about the life and career of architect A. L. Harris. The attribution of McCathran Hall to Harris comes from a short article in the *Evening Star*. See "Families in Summer Quarters," *Evening Star*, June 18, 1901.

facilities, including tennis courts. One newspaper account characterized it as “a veritable *urbe un rus*, a sylvan city...nature and modern improvements combined.”<sup>94</sup>

### **C. WASHINGTON GROVE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY (1902-1936)**

#### Suburbanization in the Progressive Era

Historians continue to debate the nature of progressivism and the Progressive Era, which lasted roughly from 1890 to 1920, but those who identified as progressives in the early twentieth century were generally committed to enacting economic and social reforms at local, state, and federal levels on behalf of the public interest. The depression of the 1890s, increased urbanization, the closing of the American frontier, discoveries by investigative journalists of governments corrupted by the influence of business interests, and the transformation of American society through immigration led Americans to believe that existing institutions could not meet the needs of a rapidly changing country. Progressives argued that the nineteenth-century faith in unrestrained individualism and an unregulated marketplace had created a nation controlled by greed and blind social forces that were destroying American society and ideals. Progressives broadly favored intervention into economic and social life to bring industrial change under control and alleviate its worst conditions.<sup>95</sup> A powerful faith in environmental determinism convinced reformers that improving the physical environment would “elevate” rural social life.<sup>96</sup> Society could be improved and government could be reformed to serve the public interest, progressives argued, by employing technocratic experts who could apply their knowledge to specific problems.

At the turn of the twentieth century, American families investing in the suburbs could expect to buy a detached home in a safe and sanitary environment that offered every modern convenience. Across the country and in the region there was massive public investment in roads, sewers, playgrounds, and other services.<sup>97</sup> As the new language of illness associated with great cities, industrialism, and technological advances entered into the American consciousness, reformers advocated for “permanent residence among the trees,” writes historian John Stilgoe.<sup>98</sup> Utilities and essential services became a prerequisite for creating the best environment for suburban living.

#### The Impact of Infrastructure Improvements at Washington Grove

At Washington Grove, one of the most aggressively pursued undertakings of the Progressive Era was the issue of sanitation. Widespread public belief that disease was caused by dirt, stagnant water, and “miasmas” in the air coupled with the threat of periodic summer outbreaks of cholera, diphtheria, and

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<sup>94</sup> “In the Old Fashioned Way,” *Washington Post*, August 7, 1892.

<sup>95</sup> John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 136.

<sup>96</sup> John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland, Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 196.

<sup>97</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 131.

<sup>98</sup> Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 189-90.

other diseases led the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association to take active measures to maintain a clean well water supply and to drain or dry out low, swampy areas and locations prone to recurring puddling and flooding. Concurrently, the association encouraged growth in undeveloped areas of the grounds, as cramped conditions within the Tent Department were equated with urban overcrowding and raised concerns over the spread of disease and the increased risk of fire. In 1886, the president of the association warned stockholders, “Living as we do – many of us – in closely built avenues, one careless and uncleanly family might cause serious trouble for all.”<sup>99</sup> As a result of increased attention to these issues, the residents of Washington Grove began to reframe their relationship with the built environment. The preference for the shelter, shade, and enclosure of the forest setting was cast aside in favor of open spaces characterized by circulating fresh air and penetrating sunshine.

By 1885, the association had created a Committee on Grounds and Safety, whose most pressing matter was perceived to be “the proper sanitation of the place.”<sup>100</sup> Wells were frequently inspected and the water tested to ensure a clean supply. Work included digging ditches to channel surface water, filling sunken lots and poorly drained sections of the parks, and laying sewer pipes to facilitate drainage. Clearing the drains and culverts was the responsibility of the superintendent of the grounds, and residents were encouraged to properly dispose of their waste water. The association hired a scavenger service to remove “night soil,” and camp privies were located in the East Woods where the waste was treated with lime. The hotel’s sewerage was deposited in a cesspool in the West Woods.<sup>101</sup>

By 1880, the association had installed an 18-inch drain pipe within the Circle to eliminate standing water around the tabernacle.<sup>102</sup> The pipe channeled water under Grove Road and into the East Woods. Early improvements such as these, however, were found insufficient. In 1905, a sewer was constructed by private means along the west side of Grove Avenue, but it only served a small number of residents. In 1912, the association installed a sewer under Grove Road with professional assistance from a sanitary engineer, and its success triggered more study of the issue. The following year, the *Washington Post* reported, “At a recent meeting of the stockholders of Washington Grove, Md., new members were elected to the board of trustees on a progressive ticket, and last week the stockholders authorized...the installation of an electric street lighting system and an examination [by] a civil engineer of the present sewage system with a view to making a new system.”<sup>103</sup> Washington Grove, however, would not have a modern water and sewer system until 1927. The design and construction of the sewer system, which would serve Gaithersburg as well as Washington Grove, was the responsibility of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. Water and sewer lines were run under the avenues, the old sewers were

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<sup>99</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 131.

<sup>100</sup> “Timeline: Sanitation, Health, Disease, Clean Water, Safety, Alcohol, Fire,” prepared by Wendy Harris, Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission.

<sup>101</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 316.

<sup>102</sup> “At Washington Grove,” *Washington Post*, July 3, 1880.

<sup>103</sup> “Washington Grove Elects,” *Washington Post*, June 8, 1913.

disconnected, and a much-needed fire hydrant system was installed. It was the largest engineering project at the Grove to date. Despite the convenience of the modern system, some residents were slow to install indoor plumbing and connections.<sup>104</sup> The Grove discontinued its scavenger service around 1930, and, by 1938, all of the wells were filled and most of the pumps were pulled.<sup>105</sup>

As noted in the 1913 *Washington Post* article, another essential service introduced at Washington Grove during this period was electricity, which was supplied by the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) and powered an electric street lighting system. The Grove's first streetlamps burned kerosene (coal oil) and were affixed to rough hewn wood posts. From around 1890 to 1895, gasoline lamps were used, but the cost became prohibitive. In 1896, to save money, the association reinstalled its kerosene lamps so that the oil could be used during the months of May, June, September, and October, when fewer people were living on the grounds.<sup>106</sup> Eventually, all of the gasoline lamps were sold at public auction. The Grove also had a gas lamps starting in 1891. A newspaper report noted, "In one of the cottages, that of Mr. Cissel, natural gas is employed, and he has connected his machine with two jets in the tabernacle with such satisfactory result that it has been determined to employ the gas next year."<sup>107</sup> Gas lamps would remain the primary fuel for streetlights until 1914, when they were replaced by the electric streetlights. The new system used iron poles with elegant curved tops. Power was turned on that July to fifty-one customers, including the association, which lit the assembly hall and the Chautauqua auditorium (described below).<sup>108</sup> The introduction of electric streetlights was seen as an important step toward a new era of development in Washington Grove.

Yet another major infrastructure project of this period involved Washington Grove's roads. By the 1920s, the condition of the Grove's streets and alleys had become a critical issue. Increased automobile ownership meant more traffic that required tougher road surfaces. During the nineteenth century, improvements to the roads and paths within Washington Grove occurred as funds became available. However, urban families wishing to relocate to the suburbs had many options, and Washington Grove needed to compete. Thus, by 1928, the Grove had all of its roads paved with a thick base of cinders (donated by the B&O) that was then packed and oiled, which acted as a binder.<sup>109</sup> This vastly improved access and movement through the grounds.

Finally, reflecting national concerns shared by many American suburban families with "protecting the self and family from intrusion," improvements to the Grove's perimeter fence became a priority in the early

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<sup>104</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 316-19.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 377. Today, there is still evidence of Washington Grove's well water system, which supplied water to residents for over fifty years. Examples include the well pumps in the yard of 127 Maple Avenue and under the carport of the house at 201 Grove Avenue. Near the back of the house at 117 Grove Avenue stands a frame well house with a hipped roof, exposed rafters, and wood siding. There is also a well house located at 12 the Circle, at the eastern end of the lot, near the Circle.

<sup>106</sup> President's Report, May 1896, WGA, Box D-1, File DA.0001.22.

<sup>107</sup> "Inland Asbury Park," *Washington Post*, August 17, 1891.

<sup>108</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 250.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 352.

twentieth century.<sup>110</sup> Since the mid-1870s, fences were used to mark boundaries and land use divisions, to provide privacy and protection to participants in the camp meeting, and to deter the use and distribution of alcohol. By 1892, a “handsome and substantial fence” had been erected around the entire grounds, replacing the first generation perimeter fence that had fallen into disrepair. For a time, African Americans were permitted to walk through Washington Grove along Grove Avenue to get to the Emory Grove camp meeting. Later, however, with Jim Crow segregation and the doctrine of “separate but equal” confirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in the Plessy v. Ferguson decision of 1896, the B&O trains and stations, including Washington Grove’s, were segregated. Washington Grove’s perimeter gates were closed to Emory Grove camp meeting attendees in 1897.<sup>111</sup> In addition to the perimeter fence, picket, split rail wood, and wire fencing was used around public parks and buildings, to demarcate and secure pastures owned by the association, and by homeowners to delineate property lots. In 1908, a wire fence was put up around the auditorium in Woodward Park. In 1910, the association again upgraded the perimeter fence, enclosing the entire property with “good, strong wire fencing.”<sup>112</sup> Historically, some cottage lots were fenced, although fences between or in front of cottages within the Tent Department were less common than fences within the Cottage Department, where lot sizes were generally larger. Hedges and porch blinds were also used by families to provide privacy and protection from intruders.

#### Park Beautification and Recreational Amenities

The early twentieth century also saw Grove residents shift their focus from the spiritual and restorative attributes of the environment to its aesthetic and recreational qualities. In suburban communities across the country, beautification efforts were seen as a moral necessity. Village improvement by beautification, historian John R. Stilgoe writes, was “no whimsical pastime, but a vitally urgent effort at turning back city evil.”<sup>113</sup> In many instances, these beautification efforts were undertaken by women’s groups, as they were perceived to be an extension into the public realm of a female’s role in the home. A growing number of American families were also privileged with increased leisure time, which came with it a growing acceptance of physical activity and sport. The benefit and value of recreation shaped the development of suburban landscapes, where “real nature was forgotten in the midst of manicured greens and all-weather tennis courts.”<sup>114</sup>

With the construction of the assembly hall in 1901, the tabernacle in the Circle became obsolete. In 1905, the 28-year-old timber structure was demolished. After clearing away the debris, draining the space, and filling and leveling the ground, the association took steps to “beautify” the grounds of what was then called the “Plaza.” This included planting grass seed and laying drainage pipes.<sup>115</sup> It was also around this

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<sup>110</sup> Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 196.

<sup>111</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 137.

<sup>112</sup> Grounds Committee, May 1910, Box H-4, File DA.00H4.38.

<sup>113</sup> Stilgoe, *Borderland*, 214.

<sup>114</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 99.

<sup>115</sup> Grounds Committee, June 1908, WGA, Box H-4, File DA.00H4.34.

time that the Washington Conference of the Methodists' Ladies Guild established a tradition of park beautification projects in the Grove. The organization sponsored improvements to Knott Park, Jackson Park, Wade Park, and Morgan Park. The association carried out grounds improvements as well. In May of 1913, the president boasted that 200 fruit and shade trees had been planted over the course of the year. Later, in 1920, the Grounds Committee reported that a "landscape gardener" by the name of Mr. Murphy had visited the Grove and submitted an estimate for furnishing and planting evergreens and shrubs. These would be planted following a design by Washington Grove resident Nettie Craig, a member of the Ladies Guild.<sup>116</sup>

In 1905, Woodward Park was informally expanded west to Grove Road. That same year, the area bound by Oak Street on the north, Maple Avenue on the east, the building lots on Pine and Maple avenues on the south, and Grove Road on the west was set apart for recreational purposes and dedicated as an "Athletic Park."<sup>117</sup> This land was poorly drained and consisted of mainly thicket and bog before it was adapted for recreational use.<sup>118</sup> Also in 1905, the eastern half of Oak Avenue and Maple Avenue were cleared and graded, and an auditorium for Chautauqua was constructed in the park. (See additional text on Chautauqua below.) In addition to the auditorium, built structures in Woodward Park included a men's clubhouse (no longer extant), a girls' clubhouse (built in 1910), which was later used by the Woman's Club before being destroyed by fire in 1939, and a stone fireplace, built in 1935. Woodward Park's tennis courts and athletic fields were popular with residents and the public. For a period beginning in 1903 and continuing through at least 1916, track and field events were held in the park every summer.<sup>119</sup> They attracted athletes from Maryland as well as from neighboring states.<sup>120</sup> Private tennis courts, laid out on empty building lots, also proliferated in this era. At one time there were twenty or more active courts scattered across the grounds.<sup>121</sup>

In 1910, the association initiated a project to create an "artificial lake" in the West Woods that would be fed by Maple Spring. The lake (now known as Maple Lake) was used for recreation in the summer and to harvest ice in the winter.<sup>122</sup> Since water sports were discouraged by the Methodists, however, the recreational function of the lake did not immediately flourish, and its use as an ice pond was short lived.

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<sup>116</sup> Grounds Committee, September 1920, WGA, Box H-4, File DA.00H4.73.

<sup>117</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 195.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 120.

<sup>119</sup> See "Sports at the Grove," *Washington Post*, September 8, 1903, and "Hold Athletic Meet of Numerous Events," *Washington Post*, September 5, 1916.

<sup>120</sup> Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A, *A Rural Survey in Maryland* (New York: n.p., 1912), 47.

<sup>121</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 177.

<sup>122</sup> Grounds Committee, May 1910, WGA, Box H-4, File DA.00H4.38.

As a result, the lake fell into disuse for a number of years until the summer of 1927, when it was briefly revitalized.

#### Development of the Commercial Corner

As Washington Grove and the neighboring subdivision of Oakmont developed in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the surrounding area mainly supported family operated farms. Wheat and dairy farms located along the railroad corridor benefitted from the cheap and efficient means of transportation it offered. In addition, Laytonsville Pike (now Washington Grove Lane) was an important part of the local road network that connected Gaithersburg with Laytonsville and points north. One local farm, which bordered Washington Grove to the west, was owned by Thomas I. Fulks, a prominent Gaithersburg farmer and businessman. A 50-acre farm south of Ridge Road, which was purchased by Washington Grove as part of the original land acquisition for the camp meeting but sold in 1890, was known as the Casey farm. These agricultural properties and others contributed to Washington Grove's rural setting well into the twentieth century and added to its appeal as "a place apart" from urban life.

Although platted for residential development in the 1897 Maddox plan, the lots facing the corner of Washington Grove Road and Railroad Street (Lots 1 and 2 of Block 1) had been used for nonresidential purposes since the camp meeting era. Thomas I. Fulks owned shares of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association and located them on the corner lots. In 1897, he was granted permission by the association to operate a general store with living quarters on Lot 2. Given the Methodists' condemnation of "worldly habits," Fulks was prohibited from selling alcohol from his establishment, which he called the Washington Grove Store. Five years later, in 1902, Fulks, then president of Gaithersburg Milling and Manufacturing, purchased a 238-acre farm west of Washington Grove and across Washington Grove Lane from his store. The purchase of the farm was subject to a lease of part of the property that bordered on the railroad tracks to Henry C. Miller for the period 1900 to 1906. It is not known what type of business Miller conducted on the property, but when his lease expired, Fulks did not renew it. Around 1910, Fulks rented the general store to Marshall Walker and opened a feed supply business on the property adjacent to the railroad tracks that had formerly been leased to Miller. The operation included a feed mill (built circa 1910 from an old hay barn that stood on his farm), a feed store, and an office. In addition, the property featured a rail siding and a scale, which was embedded into the ground next to the store.<sup>123</sup> In 1919, the local Odd Fellows lodge purchased Lot 1 from Fulks, and the following year the organization built a large hall on the property for their meetings. The Odd Fellows Hall was a two-story building designed by architect W. S. Ploger of Washington D.C. It was built of concrete block molded to resemble rusticated ashlar stone and dressed quoins and featured a stepped front-gable roof.

In 1896, after the railroad freight siding was moved from the east side of the Humpback Bridge to the west side, the association sold the small triangle of land it owned between the tracks and Railroad Avenue to John B. Diamond. Later, likely in the first decade of the twentieth century, the property was acquired

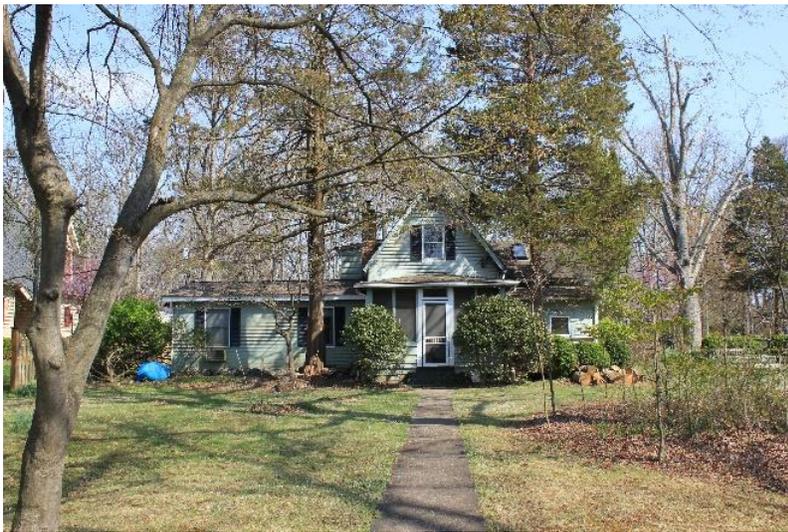
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<sup>123</sup> Information on Fulks, the Washington Grove Store, and the feed mill complex comes from Gail Littlefield and Judy Christensen, draft Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, "Gaithersburg Farmers' Supply, Wayne Feed, Sunshine Feed, Thomas I. Fulks Store," no date. Copy provided courtesy Gail Littlefield, Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission.

by the Washington Grove Manufacturing Company. Standard Oil purchased the property in 1914, and by 1933 it had been improved with a one-story brick building, adding another commercial presence to the corner of Washington Grove Lane and Railroad Street.

### Decentralization and Residential Development

Taken together, concerns over health and sanitation, infrastructure improvements, the construction of the auditorium in Woodward Park, the beautification of the parks, and the development of recreational facilities had the effect of encouraging residential development outside of and away from the historically sacred precinct of the Circle and represented a decentralization of community life in Washington Grove at the opening of the twentieth century.



*Figure 13: According to oral tradition, the original section of the house at 205 Maple Avenue, which dates to circa 1885-90, was moved to its current site in 1905. (Robinson & Associates, 2018)*

In the first decade of the twentieth century, several avenues platted in the Maddox plan were cleared and graded, opening up new residential blocks for development. These new areas were attractive to Washington Grove residents who wanted larger lots and more sanitary conditions. Since not all residents had the means or desire to build new homes, however, this period witnessed a series of cottage relocations wherein residents moved existing cottages, often from the Tent Department, to new lots.

For example, in 1905, the cottage that stood next to 15 the Circle, was moved to the southeast corner of Oak and Maple. (Later, in the 1960s, this cottage was demolished.) The same year, a cottage that stood on a Circle lot that is now part of 402 Fifth Avenue was moved to 205 Maple Avenue. (Figure 13) In 1906, a cottage in the yard of 413 Grove Avenue (the Teepe cottage) was moved to 105 Grove Avenue and renovated. Also in 1906, a cottage in the yard of 1 the Circle was relocated to 102 Center Street and renovated. In some instances, two or more cottages were combined to create larger homes. The house at 102 Ridge Road, for example, is the result of two nineteenth-century cottages that were moved to Ridge Road in the second decade of the twentieth century and joined to form one residence. By and large, the repositioning of cottages created open pockets of space, relieved crowded conditions, and mitigated the threat of devastating house fires within the Tent Department while expanding the built environment of the Grove.



Figure 14: View of 202 Chestnut Avenue looking northwest. This house has not been substantially changed since its construction in 1903. (Robinson & Associates, 2018)

Shortly after the turn of the century, Frank R. Rynex became the first resident to build a year-round house in Washington Grove – a watershed moment marking the transition from religious summer resort to suburb. According to Edwards, Rynex, who had been living with his young family in a cottage on the Circle, purchased five shares of stock and “located” them on Chestnut Avenue. Records suggest Rynex was not alone in speculating on Chestnut Avenue. In 1903, the president of the association reported, “The lots on Chestnut Avenue are mostly taken and that avenue [is] fast building up....”<sup>124</sup> The Rynex house at 202

Chestnut Avenue, which was completed in 1903, was a one-and-a-half-story, Carpenter Gothic-style, frame house with a cross-shaped plan and a deep, wraparound, front porch. (Figure 14) The Rynex family enjoyed leading a “country life” at Washington Grove, and soon other “pioneers” joined them in year round living. While some families built new houses, others winterized existing cottages and built additions to give them more space.

New residential development within Washington Grove in the early twentieth century encompassed a diverse range of architectural forms and styles, reflecting the evolving preferences of middle-class American families. Some of the new houses had vernacular forms that echoed the Carpenter Gothic architecture of the camp meeting era. These included the house at 409 Fifth Avenue, built in 1909, which had a gable-front-and-wing plan with a shed-roof porch located within the L made by the two wings. 405 Brown Street, built in 1914, was a two-and-a-half-story, gable front house. It was clad with German lap wood siding. While the front porch extended across the entire front façade, it lacked the Carpenter Gothic decorative details that characterized the earlier era. A more compact version of the gable front form was built at 311 First Avenue. This one-story cottage was built between 1920 and 1935. Early twentieth-century pattern books, however, offered American families a wide selection of houses at affordable prices and helped popularize Craftsman, Colonial Revival, English Tudor and other styles at the local level.

### *Colonial Revival*

Colonial Revival is the term used to describe buildings, landscapes, furniture, and decorative arts, as well as a host of other artistic media, that reference a storied American past. In high demand since the nineteenth century and continuing well into the twenty-first century, the style builds off of Americans’ long-standing fascination with their early history. Architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson argues that Colonial Revival is best understood as an attitude, which mines the past for references, forms, and motifs

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<sup>124</sup> President’s Report, May 1903, WGA, Box D-1, File DA.0001.30.

in order to recreate them in contemporary building. Wilson calls the style the United States' "most popular and characteristic expression."<sup>125</sup>

Colonial Revival-style houses typically consist of a rectangular block with a symmetrically arranged façade. At the center of the front façade is often an entry porch, at times pedimented and supported by columns, that shelters a door commonly accented by sidelights or a fanlight. Variations on the Colonial Revival house range from two-story, Georgian-style houses to one-and-a-half-story Cape Cods. While some examples are nearly identical to earlier colonial homes, others take more liberty or adapt them to suit modern needs, such as attaching a garage.<sup>126</sup>

The *colonial* the revival refers to is itself vague, but generally encompasses the period from initial European settlement in North America to the end of the American Revolutionary War in 1783. The colonial period that became so celebrated could also include, however, buildings constructed after the war, through what has been termed the Federal period (1780-1820) and into the Greek and Roman revivals of the 1820s through the 1860s. Americans built scores of houses and churches based on these colonial prototypes. Federal, state, and local governments adopted the style for courthouses, post offices, and other public buildings. Sources included antebellum plantation houses, homes of famous Americans like George Washington, or noted public buildings like Independence Hall. Stylistic variations included the Dutch Colonial Revival, with houses characterized by their gambrel roofs, and Spanish Colonial Revival, which encompassed a variety of styles including Spanish Baroque and Moorish.<sup>127</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, the restoration/reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, fostered a sense of stability and connection to the past as the Great Depression upended American life. The project encompassed the restoration or reconstruction of Williamsburg's colonial-era buildings, while some 400 later buildings were demolished. In the decades to come, Americans in large numbers built imitations of the houses at Colonial Williamsburg.<sup>128</sup> Another important American tastemaker that promoted Colonial Revival home design was Sears, Roebuck and Company. From 1908 to 1940, Sears published house plans

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<sup>125</sup> Richard Guy Wilson, *The Colonial Revival House* (New York: Abrams, 2004), 6.

<sup>126</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, second edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 409.

<sup>127</sup> Wilson, *The Colonial Revival House*, 144.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 167-72.

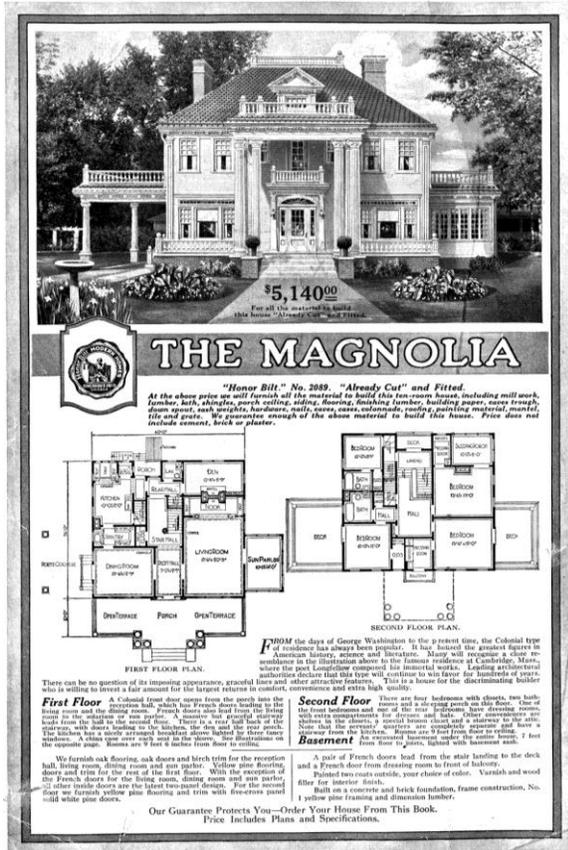


Figure 15: “Magnolia” house model, offered by Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1919. (Sears, Roebuck and Company, Modern Homes, 1921)

in their catalog, *Modern Houses*, from which customers could choose from a series of models. The company offered mail-order kits that contained all the materials needed to construct a house. The popular housing styles of the day were represented, including a variety of Colonial Revival-inspired forms. The Colonial Revival-style model known as the Magnolia, for instance, was said to be based on the home of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. (Figure 15) Although the exact number of Sears houses is not known, it is estimated that there were between 50,000 and more than 100,000 built.<sup>129</sup>

The Colonial Revival was the most prominent residential style in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century, and Washington Grove is home to a number of Colonial Revival-style houses. 103 Brown Street, built in 1920, exemplifies one of the most common Colonial Revival forms – the two-story central block with one-story side wings. (Figure 16) The house is sheltered by a hipped roof and has a symmetrically arranged front façade. At the center of the front façade is a paneled front door crowned by an entablature and pediment and flanked by pilasters.



Figure 16: The house 103 Brown Street in Washington Grove is a typical Colonial Revival-style house. (Robinson & Associates, 2018)

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 101-03.

### *Craftsman*

The Craftsman style developed in the early twentieth century as a fashionable expression of the Arts and Crafts movement that originated in England in the late nineteenth century. Inspired by English writers such as John Ruskin and Augustus Pugin, the designers who led the Arts and Crafts movement rejected the symmetry and proportion of classical architecture as arbitrary and unresponsive to human needs. “Theirs was a domestic architecture,” architectural historians Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan write, “designed not to awe but to protect and provide the proper atmosphere for the pursuit of the simple life.”<sup>130</sup> Arts and Crafts designers idealized medieval architecture and a pre-capitalist, guild-based economic system that they argued valued craftsmanship and the dignity of work. Architecture, they believed, should be developed from local materials, craft traditions, and the vernacular tradition of a particular region. Pugin stressed structural honesty as one of his rules for architecture. Indeed, many Arts and Crafts architects left structural elements, such as roof rafters, exposed to highlight the building’s construction.<sup>131</sup>

American Arts and Crafts supporters also embraced these guiding principles. These Americans saw the movement as a vehicle to develop a domestic architecture appropriate for modern America, an approach sometimes termed *organic* architecture. The movement manifested itself in the United States as typically either regionally developed or adaptive of older English styles.<sup>132</sup> English precedents were most common in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states in the 1870s and 1880s. Architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886), for instance, adopted an English Queen Anne and Tudor decorative vocabulary in his design for the William Watts Sherman house in Newport, Rhode Island.<sup>133</sup> In the Midwest, the drive for regional, organic architecture was led by a group of architects later termed the Prairie School. The architects’ most influential spokespersons were Louis Sullivan (1856-1924) and Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Sullivan believed that an organic architecture, which had simple massing and incorporated nature-derived ornamentation, would free architecture from the restrictive rules of classicism. Wright articulated the Arts and Crafts principle that a building should respond to its site.<sup>134</sup> The Wright-designed, Prairie School-style houses were integrated with their site by extending the horizontal planes to reflect the Midwestern prairie.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 107.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>133</sup> Jeffrey Karl Ochsner and Thomas C. Hubka, “H. H. Richardson: The Design of the William Watts Sherman House,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51, no. 2 (June 1992): 122, 145.

<sup>134</sup> Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 131-32.

<sup>135</sup> Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 208.



Figure 17: View of the front façade, David B. Gamble House, Pasadena, CA. (Robinson & Associates, Postcard Collection)

A regional variation of Arts and Crafts that developed in California gave rise to the movement's most famous American expression – the bungalow.<sup>136</sup> Originating in India in the seventeenth century, bungalows are generally defined as small, low-profile houses with generous porches.<sup>137</sup> California-based architects Charles Sumner Greene (1868-1957) and Henry Mather Greene (1870-1954) helped popularize the form and give it an aesthetic expression for an American audience. Their bungalows adapted the principles of Arts and Crafts to the

California climate. One of the Greenes' best-known works was the David B. Gamble House in Pasadena, constructed in 1908-09. (Figure 17) The house features a low-pitched roof with deep eaves that protect the exterior walls from the elements and sleeping and sitting porches that connect residents to nature. The Greenes used native redwood for the houses' structural beams and for its exterior shingles. The roof has exposed rafters and decorative brackets. The Greenes "delighted in structural revelation, in demonstrating how wood could be joined, interlocked and sculpted."<sup>138</sup>

The Greenes also drew inspiration from *The Craftsman*, a magazine published by Gustav Stickley from 1901 to 1916. Stickley was perhaps the most important disseminator of Arts and Crafts ideas and designs in the United States. Bungalows and modest, two-story residences with Arts and Crafts details were published in Stickley's magazine, leading them to be known as "Craftsman Homes." Stickley's company provided free working plans and specifications or the opportunity for his company to build a house.<sup>139</sup> In addition to Stickley's *Craftsman*, publications such as the *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* published drawings and photographs of bungalows.

The Craftsman style spread across the country by the 1920s, applied to housing forms such as the bungalow or the American foursquare. For their low-cost construction and informal design, bungalows, in particular, were sought after by working- and middle-class Americans.<sup>140</sup> The Craftsman-style bungalow was typically characterized by wide, low-pitched roofs with exposed rafters and deep eaves over

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<sup>136</sup> Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 122.

<sup>137</sup> Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 42, and Anthony D. King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>138</sup> Cumming and Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, 122.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

<sup>140</sup> Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 171.

decorative brackets. The eaves shaded windows and created “a snug appearance” that symbolized shelter and safety.<sup>141</sup> Exterior cladding materials often included weatherboard, German lap siding, and wood shingles, but could vary from one house to another. Craftsman-style bungalows typically had spacious front porches, which stretched across the full width of the house. The porches were commonly supported by tapered, square columns. The exposed rafters emphasized the Arts and Crafts ideal of highlighting a building’s construction. Although brackets were usually added for decorative purposes, they gave the appearance of handcraftsmanship.

There are several Craftsman-style bungalows in Washington Grove, including a cluster in the southeast corner of the town. The house at 127 Chestnut, built around 1920-35, is a notable example of a Craftsman-style bungalow in Washington Grove. 109 Maple Avenue is another good example of the style. (Figure 18) Built in 1923, the one-and-a-half-story house is sheltered by a side-gable roof with deep eaves that are supported by cutout brackets. Extending across the full width of the front façade is a shed porch. The porch is supported by square, compound



*Figure 18: A Craftsman-style bungalow at 109 Maple Avenue in Washington Grove (no date). (Washington Grove Archives)*

columns on concrete piers. Wood stairs lead up to the porch, through a Tudor-arched opening. At the center of the roof’s front slope is a gabled dormer, which also features deep eaves supported by cutout brackets. The eaves of the front porch and dormer have exposed rafters. The house is clad with wood shingles. Other examples of the style include 409 Brown Street, built in 1909, 414 Brown Street, dating to circa 1913, and 3 Ridge Road, circa 1910-25.

During the Great Depression, new construction nearly came to a standstill across the country and in Washington Grove. Locally, families put off improvements, and many of Washington Grove’s cottages sat empty or were leased to generate rental income.<sup>142</sup> In 1933, the association found itself in debt and unable to pay the salary of the superintendent. Development slowly picked up, however, around mid-decade. In a show of confidence for the next stage of Washington Grove’s development, the association adopted its first street numbering system in 1935.

### Chautauqua Comes to Washington Grove

The Chautauqua Movement developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to provide programming and courses for cultural uplift and recreation. Those who established Chautauquas across

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>142</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 346.

the country largely based their program on their namesake, the original Chautauqua Institution in western New York. The Chautauqua Institution was founded by Methodist bishop John Heyl Vincent and business leader and philanthropist Lewis Miller as a summer school for Sunday school teachers. It was located at a Methodist camp meeting facility on New York's Chautauqua Lake. Vincent and Miller's institution added an education component to the Methodist camp meeting program, and, because of these origins, Chautauquas had a long-running connection to American Methodism and camp meetings.

The Chautauqua Institution emerged from the Sunday school movement, which historian Andrew Rieser describes as "North America's first national, ecumenical reform movement."<sup>143</sup> This effort to standardize and improve the quality of Sunday school education began in 1791 in Philadelphia with the founding of the First-Day Society, which was renamed the American Sunday School Union in 1824. Sunday schools were important educational centers in the years before compulsory education, and the American Sunday School Union helped start Sunday schools across the country.<sup>144</sup> The Chautauqua Institution was, Rieser writes, "the first and most famous" of a series of Sunday school teacher training programs that developed in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>145</sup>

Despite Chautauqua's religious beginnings, Vincent and Miller's interest in Enlightenment educational ideals, as well as the success of the first summer class in 1874, led them to introduce secular courses in arts and sciences. "The transformation from a sectarian enclave to a college-style summer school featuring a liberal, humanistic education occurred at a breakneck pace," writes Rieser.<sup>146</sup> The expanded curriculum had as antecedents the popular educational movements of the antebellum period. Lyceums, athenaeums, mechanics' institutes, mail-order book clubs, and other public-focused education programs were well attended in the nineteenth century. In addition to educational courses, Chautauqua soon offered musical performances and lectures on a variety of topics. (Figure 19) Given the institution's natural surroundings on the lake, recreation in a healthful setting also became an important tenet of the Chautauqua ideal.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Andrew C. Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>144</sup> John C. Scott, "The Chautauqua Movement: A Revolution in Popular Higher Education," *The Journal of Higher Education* 70, no. 4 (July/August 1999), 390.

<sup>145</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 34.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 101-03.



Figure 19: Interior view of the auditorium at the Chautauqua Institution in New York during a lecture, ca. 1890 - 1910. (New York State Archives, Education Department Division of Visual Instruction, Instructional glass lantern slides, ca. 1856-1939, Series A3045-78, Call no. D47 CiG25)

In 1878, Vincent began the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), a four-year, mail-order reading program that provided a full learning curriculum, complete with textbooks and exams.<sup>148</sup> Participants were required to read four to six substantial books per year in literature, history, sociology, and science. Students had the choice of either reading on their own or joining a local reading circle.<sup>149</sup> Over the lifetime of the CLSC, there were approximately 10,000 local reading circles.<sup>150</sup> By 1900, around 50,000 people had completed the program.<sup>151</sup> At the end of the program, CLSC participants were awarded a diploma and encouraged to attend a ceremony known as “Recognition Day” at the New York Chautauqua, at an independent assembly, or at a village reading circle.<sup>152</sup>

Students of Chautauqua summer school programs tended to be young adults interested in teaching careers.<sup>153</sup> Much of the success in building the Chautauqua Movement can be attributed to women, who dominated CLSC membership, hosted fundraisers, and led efforts in small towns to incorporate Chautauqua assemblies.<sup>154</sup>

Because Vincent and Miller were not interested in franchising Chautauqua, the movement it inspired was non-hierarchical.<sup>155</sup> What became the Chautauqua Movement manifested itself in two distinct forms – the independent assembly and the circuit Chautauqua. The independent assembly was intended to be in a permanent location and was modeled on the original Chautauqua Institution, with lectures and

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>149</sup> Scott, “The Chautauqua Movement: A Revolution in Popular Higher Education,” 396.

<sup>150</sup> John E. Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua: From Rural Education to Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth-Century America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997), 21.

<sup>151</sup> Martha Vail, National Historic Landmark Nomination, “Colorado Chautauqua,” June 15, 2005, 47.

<sup>152</sup> Theodore Morrison, *Chautauqua: A Center for Education, Religion, and the Arts in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 58.

<sup>153</sup> Scott, “The Chautauqua Movement: A Revolution in Popular Higher Education,” 395.

<sup>154</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 205.

<sup>155</sup> Martha Vail, National Historic Landmark Nomination, “Colorado Chautauqua,” June 15, 2005, 47.

entertainments, academic programs, and recreation in a resort setting.<sup>156</sup> Local organizing committees were typically established to manage the day-to-day responsibilities for staging the Chautauquas.<sup>157</sup> Within just two years of the founding of the Chautauqua Institution, three “daughter” Chautauquas had emerged, in Ontario, Michigan, and Iowa. By the turn of the twentieth century, more than 100 towns hosted independent assemblies. At least twenty-two assemblies were formed on preexisting Methodist campgrounds.<sup>158</sup> In many cases, Chautauquas operated alongside regular camp meeting activities. The Mountain Chautauqua, for example, was founded in 1882 by a group of Methodists as part of the summer resort community of Mountain Lake Park in Garrett County, Maryland. It was the first Chautauqua held in Maryland, and, during its heyday between the 1880s and World War I, the Chautauqua’s educational and cultural activities attracted thousands to Mountain Lake Park. The annual summer program spurred the development of numerous cottages, hotels, and public buildings, many of which remain in excellent condition today.<sup>159</sup>

The circuit Chautauqua was a traveling production that featured a roster of entertainers and educators that visited towns across the United States for just a week or two at a time.<sup>160</sup> (Figure 20) These tent shows were more entertainment focused than the independent assemblies. The first circuit Chautauqua was presented in the summer of 1904 in Marshalltown, Iowa.<sup>161</sup> The success of the circuit Chautauqua, however, came at the expense of the independent assemblies. Organizers of assemblies found it difficult to compete with the consumer-oriented tent shows. In response, many independent assemblies became more entertainment focused and



*Figure 20: A tent being set up for a circuit Chautauqua, Lake Charles, Louisiana, circa 1910s. (Redpath Chautauqua Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries)*

less overtly religious. This shift drove away the Christian fundamentalists who contributed to much of the movement’s early development. Some assemblies even hired lecture bureaus to set their programming.

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<sup>156</sup> Scott, “The Chautauqua Movement: A Revolution in Popular Higher Education,” 394.

<sup>157</sup> Russell L. Johnson, “‘Dancing Mothers’: the Chautauqua Movement in Twentieth-Century American Popular Culture,” *American Studies International* 39, no. 2 (June 2001): 54.

<sup>158</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 47.

<sup>159</sup> Geoffrey B. Henry, Maryland Historical Trust, National Register of Historic Places Inventory, Nomination Form, “Mountain Lake Park,” 1983.

<sup>160</sup> Martha Vail, National Historic Landmark Nomination, “Colorado Chautauqua,” June 15, 2005, 46.

<sup>161</sup> James R. Schultz, *The Romance of Small-Town Chautauquas* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 8.

Because they typically offered package deals, bureaus were often a cheaper option, but the quality of programming could be uneven depending on the bureau.<sup>162</sup>

The number of independent assemblies declined dramatically in the first decade of the twentieth century. They suffered from widespread budgetary problems, and Progressive Era politicians increasingly dedicated funding to establish libraries, parks, and lecture series – formally providing what Chautauqua offered in its programs and classes.<sup>163</sup> By 1911, only thirty-two assemblies remained.<sup>164</sup> The CLSC also declined in membership during this time. Despite their initial popularity, circuit Chautauquas declined by the late 1920s. Automobiles allowed Americans in small towns to travel to cities for entertainment and lectures, and radio brought year-round entertainment into homes.<sup>165</sup> The last circuit shows folded during the Great Depression.<sup>166</sup>

### *Chautauqua at Washington Grove*

A chapter of the CLSC was formed in the Washington, D.C., area in 1883, and interest in forming a local Chautauqua emerged shortly after, leading to the founding of the National Chautauqua Assembly in Glen Echo, Maryland, in 1891. The location featured a spectacular natural setting, rustic stone buildings, an 8,000 seat amphitheater, and electric railway service from Washington, D.C. The venture, however, was short lived. The Chautauqua closed before the beginning of its second season because of a malarial fever scare.<sup>167</sup> In 1901, a group of Washington Grove trustees, some of whom were behind the Chautauqua in Glen Echo, established an exploratory group to study the feasibility of a Washington Grove Chautauqua. The committee, according to Edwards, not only investigated its viability, but planned a complete season of Chautauqua programs, with camp and temperance meetings worked into the schedule. Chautauqua programming officially began at Washington Grove on July 4, 1902, to an enthusiastic reception. Approximately 100 events were planned for the first season, which ran through the month of September. Additionally, outdoor games and recreation were encouraged.<sup>168</sup> The Chautauqua concept was not entirely new to Washington Grove. Recitation, music, and reading had been a regular fixture of the association's hotel, and camp meeting speakers had engaged with social and political topics. Musical performances had also been common there since at least 1889.<sup>169</sup> Before Chautauqua, the Grove was relatively quiet for much of the year, until the camp meeting attracted guests by the thousands. The arrival

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<sup>162</sup> Lynn Dumenil, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 143.

<sup>163</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 242-43.

<sup>164</sup> Scott, "The Chautauqua Movement: A Revolution in Popular Higher Education," 395.

<sup>165</sup> Schultz, *The Romance of Small-Town Chautauquas*, 147.

<sup>166</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 285.

<sup>167</sup> "Chautauqua Era," National Park Service, available at <https://www.nps.gov/glec/learn/historyculture/chautauqua-era.htm>.

<sup>168</sup> "The Grove Chautauqua: Washington Grove, Maryland," promotional pamphlet, WGA, Box D-7.

<sup>169</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 183.

of Chautauqua brought new energy to the Grove and meant that its streets were busy throughout the entire summer.

Like its counterparts across the country, Washington Grove's Chautauqua offered a diverse array of programming and classes, including scientific lectures, political speeches, Stereopticon picture shows, minstrel shows, self-improvement instruction, and recitations from Shakespeare.<sup>170</sup> The roster of performers and speakers included musicians, professors, and religious leaders. Among the more famous speakers who came to Washington Grove was William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), a member of Congress, a three-time Democratic nominee for president, and a popular fixture of Chautauquas across the country. Bryan's economic populism proved especially popular among the large numbers of farmers who attended independent assemblies across the country.<sup>171</sup> A 1906 program of the Washington Grove Chautauqua listed classes in physical culture, art, music, kindergarten, and self-expression.<sup>172</sup> At the end of the season, "Recognition Day" ceremonies were held for CLSC program graduates.<sup>173</sup>

Performers were booked by the association's Chautauqua Committee or through lecture bureaus.<sup>174</sup> Although some assemblies insisted on booking their own talent as a point of civic pride, others went through talent bureaus. When Washington Grove solicited a bureau, they often used the National Chautauqua Bureau, which was known for offering a higher grade of educational fare. Based in Washington, D.C., the National Chautauqua Bureau contracted performers to Washington Grove Chautauqua on several occasions.<sup>175</sup>

After a successful first year, Chautauqua attendance remained steady at Washington Grove through the first decade of the twentieth century, bucking the trend of decline in the rest of the country. The Chautauqua Committee was skeptical of shifting towards more entertainment programming, as other independent assemblies had done. They argued to the association's board that educational features that were either historical or engaged with the latest political questions would be better received by their audience than the lighter fare that had become more common.<sup>176</sup> The religious component of the Chautauqua also continued.<sup>177</sup> In 1910, however, the Chautauqua Committee reported a deficit for the first time, and committee members feared that public interest had waned. It recommended introducing

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<sup>170</sup> John H. Pentecost, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "Town of Washington Grove," April 1980, 8:8.

<sup>171</sup> Paul M. Pearson, "The Chautauqua Movement," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 40 (March 1912), 214.

<sup>172</sup> "Summer Assemblies for 1906," *The Chautauquan* XLIII (March-August 1906), 479.

<sup>173</sup> "Washington Grove, MD," *Washington Post*, August 12, 1906.

<sup>174</sup> Report to the Board of Trustees, Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association, March 21, 1902, WGA, Box D-7.

<sup>175</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 272. Contracts between the National Chautauqua Bureau and the Washington Grove Association can be found in the WGA, Box D-7.

<sup>176</sup> Report to the Board of Trustees, Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association, January 6, 1908, WGA, Box D-7.

<sup>177</sup> Report to the Officers of the Washington Grove Association, November 1, 1909, WGA, Box D-7.

lighter fare, while still avoiding entertainment that ventured toward vaudeville.<sup>178</sup> It is not clear, however, whether this recommendation was implemented or when Chautauqua programming officially ended at the Grove. Camp meeting attendance also began to decline during this period.

### *Chautauqua Architecture and Planning*

Because of Chautauqua assemblies' independent status, no guidebook prescribed how the grounds should be organized or how buildings should be designed. Despite this lack of direction, certain national trends in Chautauqua architecture and planning emerged. In his writings, Chautauqua Institution founder John Heyl Vincent imagined a community organized by circles representing progressively sacred spaces, with each level representing a higher attainment of knowledge. Those who came to Chautauqua for entertainment resided in the outer regions, while Chautauqua graduates dwelled in the center – what Vincent deemed “Upper Chautauqua.” While Vincent’s theory was more philosophical than practical, the Upper Chautauqua concept encouraged density and community, goals generally embraced by Chautauqua planners when they laid out their assemblies.<sup>179</sup>

Many Chautauqua assemblies were organized in naturalistic, parklike settings. Often, meandering paths, copses, and grottoes were incorporated into the design of the grounds to encourage a feeling of remoteness. Repudiating the formal grid signaled an urge to be close to nature and an anti-urban sentiment. While camp meetings tended to be organized around a central point – the preacher’s stand – Chautauquas typically had several aesthetic foci, as their operation required spaces for religious, educational, and recreation



Figure 21: Site plan of Chautauqua independent assembly at Mahtomedi, Minnesota, ca. 1887. (Reproduced from Andrew C. Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 75.)

functions.<sup>180</sup> A site plan for the independent assembly at Mahtomedi, Minnesota, which was nestled between the shores of two lakes, featured curvilinear paths and irregular lots. (Figure 21) The auditorium (labeled “amphitheater” on the plan) was located in an oval clearing overlooking one of the lakes. Like

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<sup>178</sup> Report to the Board of Trustees, September 15, 1910, WGA, Box D-7.

<sup>179</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 71-72.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, 73-75.

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many other independent assemblies, the Washington Grove Chautauqua was established on a preexisting camp meeting site. Thus, the spatial arrangement, which combined a wheel plan with a typical suburban gridiron, was predetermined. (Figure 22)

Chautauqua organizers aimed to create an exotic fantasyland of healthful recreation and learning for their guests. A variety of strategies, many borrowed from Methodist camp meeting sites, were employed to relocate guests to a “natural” landscape to evince a recuperative state of mind.<sup>181</sup> For instance, Chautauqua grounds could be

located at the end of a bridge, on top of a steep hill, on an island, or set within a dense growth of trees. Additionally, elaborate gates, sometimes decorated with classical or biblical design elements, often welcomed guests, further suggesting that one had arrived at a sacred space.<sup>182</sup> Washington Grove embraced the escapist concept as well. As it had in the camp meeting era, the Grove’s tree canopy contributed to a feeling of an environment separate from the modern world. A promotional pamphlet from 1902 declared, “[the Grove] affords a delightful place for those who desire to escape the oppressive heat of summer and to get out into the woods and fields alongside the quieting and uplifting influence of nature.”<sup>183</sup>

Chautauqua assemblies’ built presence varied. Spaces for cultural programming, educational instruction, and recreational purposes ranged from a single building to a resort campus. The rest of the Chautauqua grounds was usually filled out by residential cottages or tents. An example with a significant built footprint was the National Chautauqua at Glen Echo, Maryland, which featured a series of stone-clad buildings, including an auditorium, a polygonal tower, and an entrance gate complex.<sup>184</sup> The Colorado Chautauqua in Boulder, Colorado, had a community house, an art gallery, academic halls, and an auditorium.<sup>185</sup> Other assemblies, however, particularly those not connected to a real estate venture, were more modest. Some

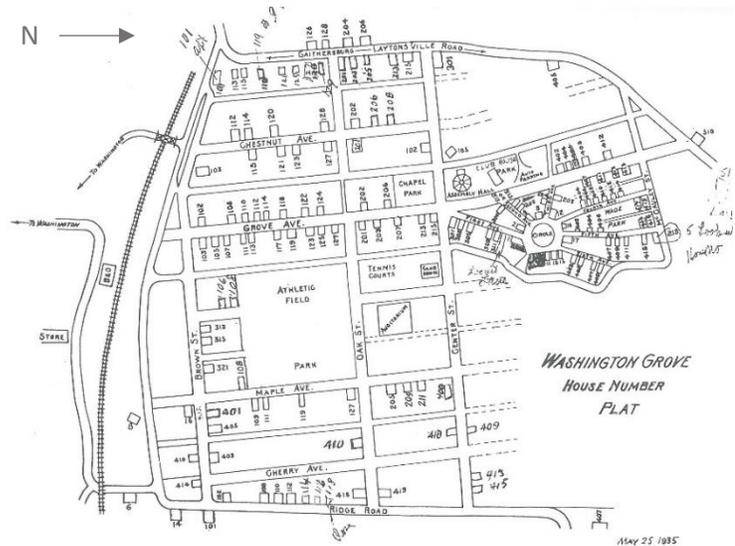


Figure 22: Map of Washington Grove, 1935. (Reproduced from Edwards, Washington Grove, 1873-1937)

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 70-71.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> “The Grove Chautauqua: Washington Grove, Maryland,” promotional pamphlet, WGA, Box D-7.

<sup>184</sup> National Park Service, “Glen Echo Park, Montgomery County, Management Plan: Environmental Impact Statement,” February 2001, 53.

<sup>185</sup> Martha Vail, National Historic Landmark Nomination, “Colorado Chautauqua,” June 15, 2005, 22-25, 50.

housed all of their programming in a single auditorium building. Many of the early Chautauquas began as camps of tents, which served as residential quarters, classrooms, and meeting halls. Most, however, eventually built permanent accommodations. Some evolved into resorts, with hotels, clubhouses, and restaurants.<sup>186</sup>

The signature building and principal focal point in Chautauqua assemblies was the auditorium, or amphitheater.<sup>187</sup> The Chautauqua Institution included both an auditorium – an open-air structure with a gable-on-hip roof – and a smaller Hall of Philosophy, which was a Greek-style temple for lectures. Because building and maintaining a Hall of Philosophy, in addition to the auditorium, proved difficult for many assemblies, few were built. An auditorium, which housed large quantities of ticket-buyers, on the other hand, was a commercial necessity. Most Chautauquas therefore merely combined the functions into one all-purpose building.<sup>188</sup> Perhaps the most influential architect to perfect the design of the Chautauqua auditorium was John Cilley of Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Cilley, a self-taught civil engineer, solved a central problem that proved frustrating for auditorium builders – how to support the structure without a center pole, which was often visually obstructive to audiences. Cilley borrowed from advancements in barn architecture for his solution. Triangular trusses began to be used in the 1880s to free barns of the center pole, which obstructed hay loading. Cilley adopted the concept to stabilize the Chautauqua auditoriums he designed. Due to his influence, many auditorium builders started using triangular trusses in rectangular buildings or a Cilley-designed adaptation, which employed steel tie-rods connected to a collector ring in the center, for circular or polygonal buildings.<sup>189</sup>

Auditoriums were typically large, frame structures with simple massing, usually in the form of a rectangle, circle, or polygon. The level of exterior decoration varied, but many were austere. Indeed, some were essentially wooden shells that kept out inclement weather. One assembly admitted its auditorium “makes no claims to architectural beauty.”<sup>190</sup> Some, however, like the Colorado Chautauqua auditorium in Boulder, were expressed with more flare. There, the front façade of the auditorium featured a temple front flanked by pylons. A large dome sat atop the Redondo Beach, California, Chautauqua auditorium. Popular cladding materials for auditoriums included wood siding or shingles. Other signature features of the Chautauqua assembly auditoriums were clerestory windows for natural light and ventilation and generous window and door openings that let in cross breezes. Creating a space that was readily open to the elements was also meant to emulate the outdoor assembly areas and open-air tabernacles of Methodist camp meetings.<sup>191</sup> Dissolving the division between exterior and interior space was usually

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 22-25, 48.

<sup>187</sup> Pearson, “The Chautauqua Movement,” 211.

<sup>188</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 77.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>190</sup> “Eighth Annual Session of the Cumberland Valley Sabbath School Assembly” (Carlisle, PA, 1892), Cumberland County Historical Society, 5. Quoted in Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 77.

<sup>191</sup> Martha Vail, National Historic Landmark Nomination, “Colorado Chautauqua,” June 15, 2005, 25.

accomplished by either incorporating wall openings filled with sliding doors or leaving the walls entirely open. Despite the Colorado Chautauqua auditorium's decorated front façade, one of its side elevations was left open. Auditorium interiors usually consisted of a single volume with seating and a stage. The stage was usually at one end of the building, even in those that were circular or polygonal.



Figure 23: Chautauqua auditorium, Shelbyville, Illinois. (Available through public domain at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chautauqua\\_Auditorium\\_\(Shelbyville,\\_Illinois\)#/media/File:Shelbyville\\_Chautauqua\\_Auditorium.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chautauqua_Auditorium_(Shelbyville,_Illinois)#/media/File:Shelbyville_Chautauqua_Auditorium.jpg))

A notable example of a polygonal-shaped auditorium was the Chautauqua auditorium in Shelbyville, Illinois. (Figure 23) Built in 1903, the Shelbyville auditorium was an icosagonal (twenty-sided) frame building.<sup>192</sup> It was sheltered by a compound roof topped by a low drum pierced with clerestory windows. At the roof's peak was a conical-roofed cupola. The exterior was clad with German siding. Each of its twenty sides was fenestrated with sliding doors and/or a pair of double-hung sash, wood windows.



Figure 24: Exterior view of the Washington Grove assembly hall (McCathran Hall). Built in 1901, it initially housed religious services. (Washington Grove Archives)

In its first three years, the Washington Grove Chautauqua was held in both the camp meeting-era tabernacle and in the assembly hall. (Figure 24) As described earlier, the assembly hall was built as a year-round place of worship for Washington Grove residents.<sup>193</sup> However, several points raise the possibility that it might also have been planned to shelter Chautauqua guests. First, the assembly hall was formally dedicated on the opening day of Washington Grove's inaugural Chautauqua season, on July 4, 1902.<sup>194</sup> Second, newspaper articles from the period describe its anticipated use for Chautauqua assemblies. The *Evening Star* reported in May 1901, "A new assembly

auditorium is to be built, octagonal in shape and inclosed [sic] on all sides, and capable of seating several hundred people. The contracts for the building will be given out next week. As soon as completed a

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<sup>192</sup> Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 77-79.

<sup>193</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 162-65.

<sup>194</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 185, and "Washington Grove Meeting," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1902.

program of summer Chautauqua schools will be arranged....”<sup>195</sup> Similarly, the *Washington Post* reported in June 1901, “In this building will be held the Chautauqua assembly meetings, lectures, and concerts.”<sup>196</sup> Lastly, its polygonal form and materials were in keeping with trends in Chautauqua auditorium design. Although the building only had one principal entry point, the windows were generously proportioned to bring ample light and ventilation to the interior. A newspaper article published in May 1902, describing the dual secular and religious functions of the assembly hall reads, “The past year...many improvements have been made upon the grounds and cottages, the principal one being the erection of a handsome and commodious octagonal building, known as the Assembly Hall, for the social and literary as well as religious gatherings of the community.”<sup>197</sup>



Figure 25: Exterior view (undated) of Washington Grove auditorium, built in 1905. (Washington Grove Archives)

Washington Grove leaders soon realized, however, that the assembly hall and tabernacle were both insufficient for the number of Chautauqua events at the Grove and the size of its audiences. To provide better accommodation, the association built an auditorium specifically for Chautauqua activities in 1905. (Figure 25) The builder was Hezekiah Day. It was located within Woodward Park, north of Oak Street. The building soon became the epicenter of public life in Washington Grove, hosting Chautauqua programming, camp meetings, and fraternal and political meetings.<sup>198</sup> As noted earlier, this had the effect of shifting the community’s focus away from the camp meeting-era Circle and provided an impetus for relocating cottages from the Tent Department.



Figure 26: Interior view (undated) of the Washington Grove auditorium, facing the stage. (Washington Grove Archives)

<sup>195</sup> “Holds Annual Meeting,” *Washington Evening Star*, May 31, 1901.

<sup>196</sup> “Washington Grove Camp,” *Washington Post*, June 1, 1901.

<sup>197</sup> “Washington Grove Meeting,” *Washington Post*, May 25, 1902.

<sup>198</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 195-203.

The Washington Grove auditorium had a generous rectangular plan under a gable-on-hip roof with hipped dormers. Wood siding clad the lower level of the frame building, while the upper level's gable ends and dormers were covered with wood shingles. The lower level was fenestrated at the front and sides with large openings, each fitted with double sliding doors with divided-light glazing. When the doors were opened the building became an open-air pavilion. Divided-light, pivot windows and dormers provided light and ventilation. The roof was supported by triangular trusses supported by iron posts. Interior surfaces were left unfinished, revealing the building's frame structure. (Figure 26) At the back of the building was a stage flanked by men's and women's dressing rooms. The auditorium could be used as a theater or an arena, depending on the seating arrangement.<sup>199</sup>

### The Conservation Movement and its Impact on Washington Grove

By the late nineteenth century, industrial forces were rapidly consuming American natural resources in the name of progress. Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau announced in 1890 that the western frontier, previously thought of as limitless, had closed. While economic growth had expanded opportunity, many Americans began to worry that unbounded expansion had reached its limits. They argued that conserving natural resources would be needed for society's survival.<sup>200</sup> The creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 had marked an important departure in national policy. Whereas previous policy had been dedicated to transferring lands in the public domain to private use, the designation of Yellowstone demonstrated that the federal government was concerned with the management of public land.<sup>201</sup> Still, such federal interventions were rare, and the timber, mining, and railroad companies, which had powerful sway in Congress, fought hard against efforts at land reclamation.<sup>202</sup>

The conservation movement was part of a broader progressive impulse that characterized what has been termed the Progressive Era. The term "conservation" was first proposed by U.S. Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946) in 1907 to describe the goals of like-minded progressives who sought regulation of the use of nature. While the word had been previously understood in a general sense as protecting something for the future, Pinchot applied the term conservation explicitly to environmental concerns.<sup>203</sup> Pinchot helped define the conservation movement's mission as advocating for the efficient,

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>200</sup> John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 182.

<sup>201</sup> Leroy G. Dorsey, *Theodore Roosevelt, Conservation, and the 1908 Governors' Conference* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2016), 36.

<sup>202</sup> Michael B. Smith, "The Value of a Tree: Public Debates of John Muir and Gifford Pinchot," *The Historian* 60, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 771.

<sup>203</sup> Mark V. Barrow, Jr., "From Crisis to Consensus to Schism: Revisiting the Progressive Conservation Movement," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17, no. 2 (April 2018): 416.

scientific management of natural resources by trained professionals for society's long-term economic benefit.<sup>204</sup> This message of professional management fit comfortably within the Progressive Era mindset of government-by-experts.<sup>205</sup> Pinchot, who presided over the U.S. Forest Service from 1898 to 1910, had studied forestry techniques in Europe and, upon returning to the United States, was concerned at the lack of a coherent forestry policy. Lumber companies were harvesting forests at an alarming rate, under an assumption that natural resources were limitless. In his role at the Forest Service, Pinchot was instrumental in the adoption of sustainable-yield forestry practices in the United States.<sup>206</sup> Such practices would provide "the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time," Pinchot wrote.<sup>207</sup>



Figure 27: President Theodore Roosevelt and naturalist John Muir on Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley, California, in 1903. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

One of the conservation movement's most prominent supporters was President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919). (Figure 27) A known outdoors enthusiast, Roosevelt signaled early on in his administration that the conservation of forest and water resources would be a priority. Although he at times adopted moralistic rhetoric to describe the cause, Roosevelt ultimately shared Pinchot's utilitarian view of conservation for economic benefit. He declared in his first State of the Union in 1901, "The fundamental idea of forestry is the perpetuation of the forests by use. Forest protection is not an end in itself; it is a means to increase and sustain the resources of our country and the industries which depend upon them."<sup>208</sup> Nevertheless, as president, Roosevelt took unprecedented steps to protect the environment. His first major piece of conservation legislation was the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902, which allowed for money from public-land sales in sixteen western and southwestern states to be used to fund irrigation projects in arid regions of those states.<sup>209</sup> The U.S. Forest Service was established in 1905. Over the course of eight years, Roosevelt's administration created five national parks, four big game preserves, fifty-one bird refuges, nearly twenty national monuments, and 150 national forests.<sup>210</sup> Pinchot and Roosevelt also helped expand the notion of conservation beyond forestry to include waterways. They argued that waterways should be

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<sup>204</sup> Smith, "The Value of a Tree: Public Debates of John Muir and Gifford Pinchot," 757.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, 770-71.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 762-63.

<sup>207</sup> Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 505.

<sup>208</sup> *The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents, 1790-1966*, vol. 2, ed. Fred L. Israel (New York: Chelsea House, 1967), 2026.

<sup>209</sup> Chambers, *The Tyranny of Change*, 182.

<sup>210</sup> Dorsey, *Theodore Roosevelt, Conservation, and the 1908 Governors' Conference*, 14.

regulated to ensure the continuation of their diverse use – for commerce, travel, irrigation, and municipal water supplies. Roosevelt convened the Inland Waterways Commission in March 1907 to study use of American waterways. The president himself joined the commission for an inspection trip down the Mississippi River in October of that year.<sup>211</sup>

The principle counterpoint to Pinchot and Roosevelt’s approach within the conservation movement was provided by naturalist John Muir (1838-1914). Situated firmly in the tradition of Henry David Thoreau, Muir argued that wilderness and natural resources should be protected not to serve economic ends, but as a sanctuary for spiritual renewal and an escape from modern society. Muir’s approach, however, failed to gain traction the way that Pinchot and Roosevelt’s ideas had. The utilitarian approach became synonymous with conservation, a term coined by Pinchot, after all, and its goals were institutionalized by Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency.<sup>212</sup>

The movement’s influence extended to Washington Grove, where residents came to understand their woods in more managerial and economic terms. They began to see their trees as a harvestable crop. Washington Grove established a Forestry Committee in 1913 to oversee its woods and to advise on their management.<sup>213</sup> One of Pinchot’s protégés was Fred W. Besley (1872-1960), Maryland’s first state forester, who visited Washington Grove and toured its woodlands on July 13, 1913. Besley, known as the “Father of Maryland’s Forests,” served as state forester from 1906 to 1942.<sup>214</sup> Besley inspected the Grove’s forests as part of a statewide cooperative forest improvement program.<sup>215</sup> Trees that were mature or past maturity, Besley wrote, required an “improvement cutting,” which would bring revenue to the owner and improve the condition of young growth.<sup>216</sup> After dividing the Grove into sections, the forester provided recommendations for cutting, reforestation, and other custodial practices. The present-day West Woods were found to be the best source of firewood, while reforestation was recommended for Morgan Park, which was located along the southern edge of Washington Grove. Its woods created a natural buffer between the noise and dust of the train station and the tranquility of the Grove. The Forestry Committee recommended a balance between the need for firewood and the “injudicious [*sic*]

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<sup>211</sup> Jason R. Holley, “Gifford Pinchot and *The Fight for Conservation: The Emergence of Public Relations and the Conservation Movement, 1901-1910*,” *Journalism History* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 95-97.

<sup>212</sup> Smith, “The Value of a Tree: Public Debates of John Muir and Gifford Pinchot,” 760.

<sup>213</sup> Document titled “Forestry Committee,” November 15, 1982, WGA; Wendy Harris, News Dispatches from Other Centuries, “Portrait of a Founding Mother: Amelia Elmore Huntley, Part Three,” 2017, available at [http://washingtongrovemd.org/town-history/featured-from-the-town-archives\\_0217](http://washingtongrovemd.org/town-history/featured-from-the-town-archives_0217).

<sup>214</sup> “The Father of Maryland’s Forests: M.A.C. Alumnus Fred Besley,” April 17, 2015, *Terrapin Tales*, University of Maryland Archives, available at <https://umdarchives.wordpress.com/2015/04/17/the-father-of-marylands-forests-m-a-c-alumnus-fred-besley/>.

<sup>215</sup> Fred W. Besley to Washington Grove Association, 1915, WGA, Box L-4.

<sup>216</sup> Maryland State Board of Forestry, “Plan of Co-Operation Between Woodland Owners and the State Forester,” Forestry Leaflet No. 18, WGA, Box L-7.

felling of trees.”<sup>217</sup> A “plan of operation” was crafted based on Besley’s recommendations.<sup>218</sup> Assistants trained in scientific forestry were tasked with selecting and marking trees for cutting based on species, maturity, and marketability.<sup>219</sup> The Grove generally followed this approach to maintaining its forested landscapes throughout the next half-century.<sup>220</sup> Besley continued to be involved with Washington Grove in the following decades.<sup>221</sup>

In her study on women’s contributions to the early twentieth-century conservation movement, historian Carolyn Merchant writes, “Propelled by a growing consciousness of the panacea of bucolic scenery and wilderness, coupled with the need for reform of the squalor of the cities, women burst vividly into the public arena in the early twentieth century as a force in the progressive conservation crusade.”<sup>222</sup> Indeed, women took a leading role in many Progressive Era causes. In Washington Grove, the mantle of conservation was carried by Amelia Elmore Huntley. In 1913, Huntley was the first woman to serve on the board of trustees of the Washington Grove Association (the successor of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association). As a member of the Forestry Committee, she was instrumental in bringing Besley to the Grove.<sup>223</sup>

### Early Steps Towards Incorporation

Of equal importance to the physical improvements and decentralization that transpired in the first decades of the twentieth century were the social and cultural changes affecting Washington Grove and its residents. During this period, the annual summer camp meeting lost its prominence among Washington Grove’s attractions, which included Chautauqua programs, an annual track meet and other athletic events, and a kindergarten. In fact, “camp meeting” had been dropped from the association’s name since 1906. Physical vestiges of early camp meeting life, including the tabernacle, the hotel, and the market house, were simply dismantled as they became deteriorated and obsolete. As interest and support for camp meetings faltered, the first open discussion of ending the gatherings came in 1922. After five decades, the tradition finally came to an end at Washington Grove around 1929.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Report of the Forestry Committee, August 1, 1913, WGA, Box L-7.

<sup>218</sup> Secretary of Washington Grove Association to Fred W. Besley, September 23, 1913, WGA, Box L-7.

<sup>219</sup> “Timber Marking Agreement,” 1945, WGA, Box L-7.

<sup>220</sup> Wendy Harris, News Dispatches from Other Centuries, “Our Woods and Walkways: Are They Historic? (Part Two),” 2017, available at <https://washingtongrovermd.org/town-bulletins/town-bulletin-may-2017>; Wendy Harris, News Dispatches from Other Centuries, “Our Woods and Walkways: Are They Historic? (Part One),” 2017, available at <https://washingtongrovermd.org/town-bulletins/town-bulletin-april-2017/>.

<sup>221</sup> “Examination of Trees at Washington Grove,” leaflet by F.W. Besley, State Forester, July 29, 1924, WGA, Box L-7.

<sup>222</sup> Carolyn Merchant, “Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement: 1900-1916,” *Environmental Review* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 58.

<sup>223</sup> Wendy Harris, News Dispatches from Other Centuries, “Portrait of a Founding Mother: Amelia Elmore Huntley, Part Three”; and Wendy Harris, News Dispatches from Other Centuries, “Our Woods and Walkways: Are They Historic? (Part Two).”

<sup>224</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 306.

By the late 1920s, a group of stockholders, led by former president Major Samuel H. Walker and several family members, began to question the Washington Grove Association's system of governance and property ownership. As a result, in 1929, a committee was formed to investigate the matter of stockholders' rights and land titles. The committee's recommendations, delivered in August of that year, recommended a) that each property holder was to be issued a fee simple deed, not subject to the bylaws of the association, b) that the government be changed to a municipal corporation, and c) that the association be dissolved.<sup>225</sup> The deeds would be subject to three covenants – houses had to conform to setback lines and cost no less than \$1,000, property could not be used for commercial activities, and property could not be sold, leased, or otherwise transferred to “anyone of a race whose death rate is of a higher percentage than that of the white or Caucasian race.”<sup>226</sup> The covenant setting a minimum cost on dwellings was written to ensure that the community maintained a consistent character. The racially restrictive covenant was intended to prohibit African Americans and other minorities from obtaining property in Washington Grove. The use of deed restrictions to qualify prospective owners and residents based on factors such as race, ethnicity, and religion were used across the United States at the time. They would be challenged in courts by mid-century.<sup>227</sup> The committee's recommendations received wide support, and work continued toward planning a new government.

Washington Grove's initiative to seek incorporation followed national trends. Starting in the early twentieth century, many camp meeting associations across the country began to transition into independent municipalities or transferred their assets to other local government entities. Although Washington Grove's initial effort lost considerable momentum during the economic collapse of the Great Depression, the initiative was resumed in the mid-1930s. Finally, in 1937, the stockholders voted in favor of incorporation. The charter for the Town of Washington Grove became effective on May 30 of that year.<sup>228</sup>

#### **D. THE EARLY MUNICIPAL PERIOD (1937-1945)**

##### New Government and New Initiatives

As a municipal corporation under state law, the Town of Washington Grove possessed the legislative and administrative power to write its own charter, make its own ordinances, and levy taxes for much needed infrastructure improvements and modernization projects. Washington Grove's original charter “was similar in form to other town charters, but with special provisions respecting the Town Meeting tradition,

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 335-36

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 336.

<sup>227</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, David L. Ames, and Sarah Dillard Pope, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960,” E: 12.

<sup>228</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1873-1937*, 370.

which had grown out of the annual Stockholders Meetings during Association days,” writes Edwards.<sup>229</sup> At the first Town Meeting on July 10, 1937, Roy McCathran was elected mayor, a position he would hold for the next twenty years.<sup>230</sup> Among the immediate concerns facing the new mayor and town council were the roads and walkways, the maintenance of public buildings, the town’s financial health, and residential growth. Volunteer committees were established to focus on specific issues and topics. McCathran and the citizens of Washington Grove were eager to put the deprivations of the Depression behind them.

One of the first major initiatives of the new mayor and town council involved the public wells, which had supplied water to Washington Grove residents for over fifty years. Since the installation of water and sewer lines in 1927, the public wells had become obsolete. By 1938, all of the wells were closed, and most of the pumps were pulled.<sup>231</sup> Road improvements were another priority. In 1939, the first of the Grove’s roads were paved with asphalt, and changes were made to the circulation system within the Tent Department to allow for the passage of automobiles. (The pedestrian-only avenues remained unpaved.) Following the road improvement project, a local stonemason was hired to build stone culverts to route stormwater under the new pavement.<sup>232</sup> Street signs and other traffic signs were posted along the roads and avenues. The street signs were wood and consisted of boards painted brown with white lettering that were mounted to wood posts. The signs reflected the town’s rustic and quaint character and had the added benefit of being inexpensive. This model of street signs would be replicated with few changes until the 1980s. In 1939, the Woman’s Club building in Woodward Park burned, and the town decided that a new building could be constructed on the site of the old hotel in Howard Park. The builder was Brawner Harding of Gaithersburg. The clubhouse was completed in 1940 for \$1,551.<sup>233</sup> The same year, the town made improvements to the assembly hall, including the construction of an addition on the north side of the meeting room.

### Commercial Corner

The general store and Odd Fellows Hall that stood on the lots facing the corner of Washington Grove Road and Railroad Street were the last victims of the Depression, when, in 1940, they were seized by the First National Bank of Gaithersburg.<sup>234</sup> The bank tried to market the properties as residential, but several factors made this difficult – the buildings across the street were commercial/industrial and included a large feed mill complex, the lots faced a busy intersection, and there was little buffer between the lots

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<sup>229</sup> Philip K. Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977: A History of the Town of Washington Grove, Maryland...the first forty years* (Washington Grove, MD: P. K. Edwards, 1999), 141.

<sup>230</sup> In 1957, the assembly hall was renamed McCathran Hall in honor of Mayor Roy McCathran. See Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 135.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, 14-15.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>233</sup> Horan, *A History of the Woman’s Club of Washington Grove*, 21.

<sup>234</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 45.

and the nearby railroad tracks. The bank soon appealed to the town for rezoning, and a measure was passed in 1941 approving the change and officially declaring Lots 1 and 2 of Block 1 a commercial zone, with restrictions against alcohol and gaming. By the late 1960s, the area, which came to be known as the commercial corner, would become the center of a long-fought battle that would test the town's civic identity.

Thomas I. Fulks, who had established the commercial corner and owned the large farm and feed supply store located along the southwest edge of Washington Grove, died in 1935. The next year, his farm and feed supply business were purchased by W. Lawson King. King sold the farm property in 1940, but retained the feed supply business, which he improved and incrementally expanded. King razed the feed store and built a new feed mill at the eastern end of the property in 1942. Then, in 1945, he added a farmer's supply store at the western end of the site. King's new four-story feed mill was built of cinderblock and corrugated metal. It had a gable roof. Four silos, constructed of concrete reinforced with steel straps, stood east of the mill. The silos were also sheltered with a gable roof. The supply store was a cinderblock building with an L-shaped plan. In 1952, he built an addition to the supply store, extending the complex to the west. At some point, King also refaced the buildings between the supply store and the mill with cinderblock. King eventually leased the feed supply operation to Sunshine Feeds, which was succeeded by Wayne Feeds and finally Gaithersburg Farmers' Supply, which closed in 1989.<sup>235</sup> While many of the feed stores that served Montgomery County communities have vanished, Gaithersburg Farmers' Supply still stands as an important physical remnant of the region's agricultural economy that persisted into the mid-twentieth century.

In December 1944, the Standard Oil property across Railroad Street from the Odd Fellows Hall was sold to Oscar L. Evans, who established an ice cream factory in the brick building on the lot. By 1948, Evans sold the property, along with his machines and equipment, to Burtis Slaybaugh and Kenneth Reck.<sup>236</sup> Their company, Rex, Inc., soon had a small retail operation that was popular with Washington Grove residents. Building on their success, the partners built an annex and opened a restaurant.

### Residential Development

While the early municipal period saw a gradual decrease in property abandonment and lots being listed for tax sale, deferred home maintenance, which had started during the Depression, continued to cause concern.<sup>237</sup> In 1941, for example, two adjacent houses on Fourth Avenue that had not been occupied for several years were found to be "an actual and definitive menace to the health of the community" and were nearly condemned.<sup>238</sup> (The houses were ultimately preserved and, in the 1960s, were combined to

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<sup>235</sup> Gail Littlefield and Judy Christensen, draft Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, "Gaithersburg Farmers' Supply, Wayne Feed, Sunshine Feed, Thomas I. Fulks Store," no date. Copy provided courtesy Gail Littlefield, Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission.

<sup>236</sup> Montgomery County Land Records, Deed Book 1136, page 312.

<sup>237</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 37-38.

<sup>238</sup> Irving McCathran to Kate M. Purdum and Mary E. Murphy, May 21, 1941, Clare Kelly House History files, WGA.

become what is now 404 Fourth Avenue.) According to oral tradition, some houses in the Grove still retained canvas elements through the 1940s.<sup>239</sup>

In an effort to increase municipal revenues and attract families to the community, the town began to sell off platted but unoccupied lots. As a result, Washington Grove experienced a boomlet of home improvements and new construction during the early municipal period. Nationally, Minimal Traditional dwellings were built in great numbers, and this trend was evident in Washington Grove, continuing the community's tradition of modest, one- or one-and-a-half-story, residential construction.

### *Minimal Traditional*

Minimal Traditional-style houses are generally small, one- to one-and-a-half-story residences featuring spare, distilled forms and elements of older architectural styles. (Figure 28) They are typically compact in footprint, with square or rectangular massing. Front doors feature a small stoop or entry porch. Cladding is commonly wood or asbestos shingle siding. Roofs tend to be either side- or cross-gabled, with close eaves and rake and a low-to-moderate pitch. One of the most common subtypes of the Minimal Traditional style is the gable-and-wing form, which features a side-gabled



Figure 28: A Minimal Traditional-style house in Phoenix, Arizona, built in 1940. (Reproduced from Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, second edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 590.)

rectangular or square block with a low-pitched, front-facing gable at one end. The gabled end bay typically projects just slightly from the wall plane. Another subtype is the side-gabled form known as the Cape Cod for its similarity in form to the New England folk house. This subtype is typically square or rectangular with a side-gable roof, which sometimes features dormers. Variations could also include hipped roofs and second stories.<sup>240</sup> The World War II Cottage is a variation on the Minimal Traditional style. These houses were typically a single story, simple in form, and covered by a hipped roof.<sup>241</sup>

The Minimal Traditional style was developed largely out of necessity. During the Great Depression, banks collapsed, mortgages piled up, and many Americans lost their means to purchase new homes, bringing the housing construction industry to a virtual standstill. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was

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<sup>239</sup> Washington Grove Round Table Discussion, August 31, 2018, recording available in WGA.

<sup>240</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 587.

<sup>241</sup> "WWII Era Cottage," Docomomo WEWA, available at [http://docomomo-wewa.org/styles\\_detail.php?id=41](http://docomomo-wewa.org/styles_detail.php?id=41), accessed December 6, 2018.

established in 1934 under the New Deal programs of President Franklin Roosevelt to set standards for construction and insure loans banks made for home building. The FHA also produced their own technical bulletins on house design that proved influential. In fact, a number of these house plans were published in journals and pattern books in the 1930s and 1940s, promoting an economical take on the traditional house.<sup>242</sup>

The FHA's technical bulletin in 1940 was called *Principles for Planning Small Houses*, which laid out a number of recommendations for an economical, efficient home. Many of the basic forms and variations of what became the Minimal Traditional style were illustrated in the pamphlet. The FHA recommended simple compositions with limited variation in form. Unnecessary gables, dormers, and breaks in the roofline were to be avoided. Instead of adding ornamentation, character and variation could be achieved through the spacing and grouping of windows, the use of materials, and the design of minor details.<sup>243</sup> "Porches, bay windows, and platform steps," the bulletin states, "are useful as a means of making small houses more livable without adding greatly to their costs."<sup>244</sup> Efficient floor plans that maximized available space were advised, as higher building costs increased the difficulty in qualifying for FHA loan insurance.<sup>245</sup>

During World War II, relocating workers for proximity to defense-related factories created an immediate and pressing need for small houses that could be built quickly. Builder-developers constructed nearly 2.3 million homes, most in the Minimal Traditional style, for war and defense purposes between 1940 and 1945.<sup>246</sup> Such small houses were also a response to the wartime reduction in the supply of building materials.<sup>247</sup> When World War II ended in 1945, the Minimal Traditional house again proved to be the solution to a pressing national need. Housing accommodation had to be provided for the 10 million returning soldiers and their families. Approximately 5.1 million new homes, many in the Minimal Traditional style, were built between 1946 and 1949.<sup>248</sup> Because these houses continued to be promoted by the FHA, developers could get faster approval of loans for construction to start. Much of the postwar construction in emerging suburban communities like Levittown, New York, consisted of mass-produced Minimal Traditional-style houses.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 589.

<sup>243</sup> U.S. Federal Housing Administration, *Principles for Planning Small Houses* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 37-40.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>245</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 589.

<sup>246</sup> Joseph B. Mason, *History of Housing in the U.S., 1930-1980* (Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company, 1982), 31-44.

<sup>247</sup> Clark, *The American Family Home, 1800-1960*, 193.

<sup>248</sup> Mason, *History of Housing in the U.S., 1930-1980* 48-49.

<sup>249</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 589.

Many Minimal Traditional-style houses were built in Washington Grove during this period and after World War II. (Figure 29) Examples can be found on Washington Grove Lane, Ridge Road, and Pine Street. Examples of World War II Cottages are located at 108 Maple Avenue, built in 1941, and 401 Brown Street. The latter, built in 1943, has a rectangular form under a moderately pitched, hip roof. These houses are representative of an important period of Washington Grove's development, when the new municipal government supported residential growth that responded to the needs of American families. In their simplicity of form and affordability, these houses represented a continuity in design from the camp meeting era.



Figure 29: A Minimal Traditional-style house at 326 Ridge Road. (Robinson & Associates, 2018)

## E. THE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD (1946-1969)

### Post-World War II Suburbanization

The decades that followed World War II witnessed a transformation in American life brought by suburbanization. A strong economy, low inflation, and federal subsidies made conditions ripe for Americans to own their own homes in the suburbs. Suburban living was a desirable alternative for many middle class families who were contending with crowded urban conditions and rising rental costs, and relocation was accessible to many through the help of federal housing and loan programs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics conducted a survey of homebuilding in 1946-47 that revealed that suburbs accounted for 62 percent of construction in the metropolitan regions studied.

Following the national trend, Washington, D.C., suburbs in Maryland and Virginia grew exponentially after the war. In 1953, for the first time, less than half of the metropolitan region's population lived in the city proper.<sup>250</sup> In the postwar era, Washington suburbs extended to areas considered remote in the nineteenth century. By the early 1950s, Montgomery County, in particular, emerged as the "bedroom of Washington," in the words of the president of the county council.<sup>251</sup> The county's population nearly doubled between 1946 and 1950 and more than doubled between 1950 and 1960. New transportation options, particularly after the creation of the Interstate Highway System in 1956, facilitated the commuter lifestyle. By the mid-1950s, Washington was connected to Montgomery County suburbs via Interstate

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<sup>250</sup> Zachary Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>251</sup> Stella B. Werner testimony, U.S. House of Representatives, *District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia Mass Transit Compact: Hearings before House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee No. 3, on H.J. Res. 402, 86th Cong., 1st sess., 1959.*

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270, a new highway that supplanted the old U.S. Route 240.<sup>252</sup> (Figure 30) Additionally, a bypass was built around Rockville in 1951, and the Capital Beltway opened in 1964.

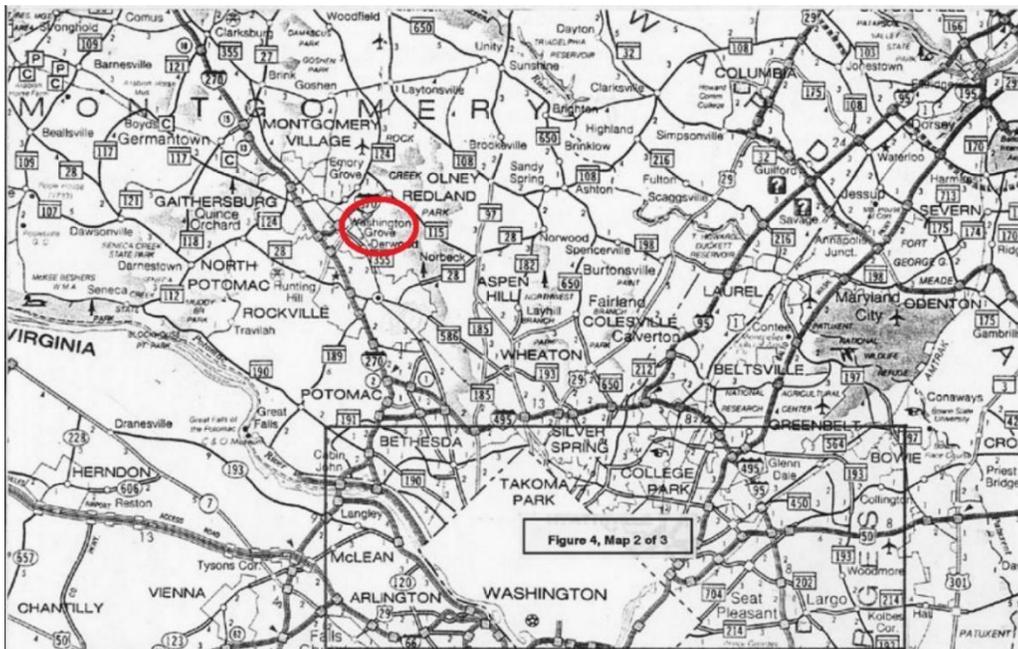


Figure 30: Interstate 270 runs immediately west of Washington Grove. It was one among the many new highways built in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan region after World War II. (State Highway Map, Maryland Department of Transportation, reproduced from KCI Technologies, Inc., "Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology: I-495/I-95 Capital Beltway Corridor Transportation Study, prepared for Maryland Department of Transportation (November 1999), B-28.)

The Washington suburbs were unique in that most of their residents were new to the region. County and city residents returning from the war accounted for only a small percentage of the incoming population. New county residents not only commuted into Washington, but also took advantage of expanding opportunity in Montgomery County itself. As the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations oversaw a decentralization of the federal government. A government concentrated in a central city, officials reasoned, made it more vulnerable to nuclear attack.<sup>253</sup> Federal agencies moved to the suburbs beginning in the 1950s. The Atomic Energy Commission was established in Germantown in 1955, and the National Bureau of Standards moved to Gaithersburg in 1960. Industry also expanded in the county. IBM, for instance, opened a systems development center in Bethesda and established its division headquarters in Rockville. Interstate 270, in particular, became a major corridor for industrial growth.

<sup>252</sup> Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1776-1976* (Rockville, MD: Montgomery County Government, 1976), 351.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

Locally, the major planning institution was the Montgomery County Council, while the Montgomery County Planning Board served as its primary adviser.<sup>254</sup> County residents took an active role in planning discussions and organized their own advocacy groups. Most influential among these was the Montgomery County Citizens Planning Association (MCCPA), which began in 1950, but achieved its current name in 1958.<sup>255</sup> Regional-level planning was carried out by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, which coordinated among Washington, D.C., and Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

### Regional Trends in Postwar Residential Architecture

Locally, mass-produced residential developments appeared in Virginia and Maryland to accommodate the region's growing number of new residents. Among the first postwar subdivisions in Montgomery County was Veirs Mill Village in Rockville. Started in 1947, the development included 1,105 identical Cape Cod houses on a 328-acre tract of former farmland.<sup>256</sup> Several pioneering communities, such as Hollin Hills in Alexandria, Virginia, were developed as showcases of modern residential architecture. Hollin Hills was a collaboration between the developer Robert Davenport and architect Charles Goodman (1902-1992). In planning roadways and siting houses, the developer and architect prioritized the preservation of the wooded, rolling character of the natural landscape. Houses were oriented to optimize views and maintain privacy. Building materials included recycled brick, stained vertical wood siding, and floor-to-ceiling window units. More common during the postwar period, however, were suburban developments filled with the ubiquitous ranch house.

### *Ranch*

The ranch house became the most popular American housing form during this period.<sup>257</sup> The name is derived from the Spanish word *rancho*, or small farm.<sup>258</sup> *Ranchos* were land grants given by the Spanish monarchy to settlers in colonial California in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. *Rancho* dwellings were adobe-walled, single-story, stylistically unornamented, and comprised of simple geometric shapes. The houses often had rambling L- or U-shaped plans to conform to uneven site conditions or to define a courtyard.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Lucile Harrigan and Alexander von Hoffman, "Forty Years of Fighting Sprawl: Montgomery County, Maryland, and Growth Control Planning in the Metropolitan Region of Washington, D.C." (Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University, October 2002), 1.

<sup>255</sup> Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 225.

<sup>256</sup> Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern: Modern Architecture in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1979* (Silver Spring, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2015), 42.

<sup>257</sup> Thomas C. Hubka, "The American Ranch House: Traditional Design Method in Modern Popular Culture," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 34.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> Barbara L. Allen, "The Ranch-Style House in America: A Cultural and Environmental Discourse," *Journal of Architectural Education* 49, no. 3 (February 1996): 156.

By the early 1930s, California-based builder Cliff May (1909-1989) began designing houses based on *ranch* dwellings. May created rambling houses that often featured L-shaped plans and courtyards. They typically had masonry walls and tile roofs, although he offered a more affordable model with wall board and shingle roofs. His houses became sought after in California, inspiring others across the state and, eventually, the country to adopt the style. By the end of the 1930s, the term *ranch house* appeared frequently to describe the houses.<sup>260</sup> For his efforts, May became known as the “father” of the ranch house.<sup>261</sup>

Developer and builder William Levitt originally built Minimal Traditional-style houses in his suburban communities. After sales of his homes had flattened by the late 1940s, Levitt conducted market research that suggested women were more concerned about interior amenities, while men were allegedly more likely to buy based on exterior appearance. In a bid to appeal to men, Levitt ordered the exteriors of his new houses to be refashioned as ranch houses, as the male population was especially drawn to the Western genre of films and books.<sup>262</sup> As Barbara Allen writes, “The West, like the ranch house and the suburb, functioned as a symbol of freedom and of the pioneer spirit. It offered an escape from the complexities of urban and industrial society.”<sup>263</sup> As Levittown became a model suburban community for the nation, other developers followed suit, and the suburban ranch house soon became popular throughout the country. Contractors, however, simplified the rambling house form of Cliff May, while keeping the characteristic long, low lines and outdoor orientation.<sup>264</sup> Historian Kenneth Jackson writes that Americans were drawn to ranch houses because their departure from traditional residential architecture presented “newness.”<sup>265</sup> A survey conducted by the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1945 reported that only 14 percent of Americans were interested in renting or living in a “used” house.<sup>266</sup> Whatever the reason for its popularity, the ranch house soon became seen as an integral part of the suburban ideal in the United States.

The “newness” of the ranch house was partly derived from its embrace of modern architecture. Modernists saw older housing models as inflexible and unsuitable for modern life. The modern houses designed by the movement’s foremost intellectual leaders, including Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, were reduced to pure form, emphasizing lines, planes, and geometries. Technological advances were celebrated in the choice of building materials, including steel, reinforced and precast concrete, and large expanses of plate glass. Most ranch houses were never as austere as the typical modernist house, but

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<sup>260</sup> Roger Clouser, “The Ranch House in America” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1984), 51.

<sup>261</sup> Allen, “The Ranch-Style House in America: A Cultural and Environmental Discourse,” 160.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 161.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 162.

<sup>264</sup> Joseph Giovanni, “The Man Behind the Ranch House,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1986.

<sup>265</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 240.

<sup>266</sup> *Urban Housing Survey: The Saturday Evening Post, Ladies' Home Journal, Country Gentleman* (Philadelphia: Curtis Publishing Company, 1945).

some of the movement's general principles became part of standard ranch design. Ranch house architecture, particularly in the earlier models, embraced modernism's simplicity – a single roof covered the entire structure, a clear form was expressed by the rectangular massing, and ornament was minimized. The openness of the interior plan, with public rooms that seamlessly flowed into one another, was also a hallmark of modernist design.

A typical ranch house followed a three-part plan, with spaces for living, sleeping, and the automobile. Unlike pre-World War II American houses, ranches had no hall, no parlor, and no stairs.<sup>267</sup> One of the most radical innovations of the style was the space devoted to the automobile. Although garages and carports had been built throughout the twentieth century, they were often either detached from the house, integrated into the basement, or connected to the house, but located on a side elevation. It was in the ranch house that space for automobiles (either garages or carports) became a primary feature of the building's footprint and took a prominent spot at the front of the house. Soon, even the path to the front door, an enduring landscape feature of American lawns, was bent toward the garage and driveway.<sup>268</sup>

As the ranch house gained in popularity, builders incorporated architectural details associated with particular historical styles. Colonial Revival ranches might have cupolas, dentil courses, or a modest entry porch; Spanish ranches were clad in stucco and had terracotta tile roofs; Neoclassical ranches, a less common variation, had pedimented front porches supported by columns.<sup>269</sup> (Figure 31)

A variation on the ranch form was the split-level, which emerged in the 1950s and continued its popularity into the 1970s. The split-level form generally consisted of separate, staggered levels separated by a partial flight of stairs. The bi-level split



Figure 31: The ranch form was expressed in a variety of styles, but the low, horizontal massing remained a signature feature. (Reproduced from P. Mulvin, ed., *One-Story Homes* (Home Planners, Inc.: Tucson, AZ, 1996), 202.)

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<sup>267</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 240.

<sup>268</sup> Hubka, "The American Ranch House: Traditional Design Method in Modern Popular Culture," 35-37.

<sup>269</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 695-96.

consisted of two floors of living space and an intermediate-level landing between them. The tri-level split consisted of a two-story mass intercepted at mid-height by another mass.<sup>270</sup>



Figure 32: A ranch house at 513 Washington Grove Lane, Washington Grove. (Robinson & Associates, 2018)

Ranch houses began to be built in Washington Grove by the early 1950s. 513 Washington Grove Lane is a ranch house built in 1965. (Figure 32) Typical of the style, it has a long, low profile and an asymmetrical elevation. The house has a cross-gable roof with a broad, brick, center chimney. The front gable is faced with siding, while the rest of the house is clad with brick veneer. The house features two bay windows comprised of fixed panes flanked by double-hung sash windows. At the south end of the front façade is an integrated garage.

### Postwar Growth in Washington Grove and Home Rule

The period after World War II was a time of intense residential building and remodeling at Washington Grove. With many empty lots and many lots with dilapidated houses, the town was eager for new development that would enhance its appeal to homebuyers and increase its tax base. Long-time residents and newcomers alike worked to revitalize the town by renovating older cottages and building new houses that reflected modern tastes and demands. Home Rule in Maryland gave Washington Grove the power to exercise its own planning and zoning regulations. Finally, the town's plans to fill itself out could be realized.

Washington Grove attracted individuals seeking a closeness to nature and a connection to the past, a combination not available in many postwar planned communities often characterized by standardized houses set in denuded landscapes. Classified ads for new and older homes for sale in Washington Grove appealed to "tree lovers," and emphasized the Grove's reputation as a "town within a forest" that was "convenient to transportation, yet out of the hubbub."<sup>271</sup> New residents included government officials, professionals, and scholars who worked in Washington, D.C., or in nearby federal facilities.

The houses constructed during the post-World War II period in Washington Grove followed national trends in residential building. Although earlier styles continued to be built, new styles and forms such as the ranch house made their appearance. Architecture of the period emphasized clean lines, functional plans, modern materials and building techniques, and the integration of interior and exterior space. Stylistically, some homes featured traditional detailing, while others demonstrated the influence of modernism. The use of prefabricated materials, developed for wartime mobilization but adapted for

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid, 613.

<sup>271</sup> Classified Ads, *Washington Post*, March 15, 1959, and May 30, 1959.

postwar building, was also evident. In the immediate postwar period, for example, local builder Constantine Eisinger, of the Eisinger Mill and Lumber Company, based in Bethesda, Maryland, constructed two prefabricated houses in Washington Grove. The houses, at 104 and 106 Pine Avenue, were built using prefabricated Cemesto wall panels.<sup>272</sup> Cemesto, an insulating board surfaced on both sides with cement and asbestos, was manufactured by the Celotex Company. Postwar-era houses in Washington Grove were constructed by merchant-builders using standardized plans, sometimes in pairs or groups, or custom designed by architects.<sup>273</sup>

As the town made decisions about new areas for residential growth, blocks of land became available for development. Lots were also sold by individuals.<sup>274</sup> One area of new residential development was the eastern end of Center Street between Maple Avenue and Ridge Road. In 1949, a Dutch Colonial Revival-style house was constructed at 410 Center Street, and six new homes followed within the next half dozen years. 409 Center Street, built circa 1953-54, is a Cape Cod cottage with Colonial Revival detailing. 301 Maple Avenue, which faces south toward Center Street, is a one-story ranch house built in 1955. It had a low pitched, gable roof with a broad, brick center chimney. Later, Contemporary-style additions were added to the west and east facades. The houses built on the north side of Center Street, such as the Cape Cod cottage at 409 Center, were located within the historic “Laundry Reserve,” which had been platted for residential development in the late nineteenth century but had, up until then, remained undeveloped.

The deep, narrow lots that historically characterized the division of land in the Cottage Department were not planned for the low horizontal massing of modern domestic forms. In some cases, such as the pair of ranch houses at 201 and 203 Maple Road, the houses were oriented perpendicular to the roadway, rather than facing it and featured side entrances that could be accessed from either the pedestrian walkway or from the roadway. Other times, building lots were consolidated and subdivided into new configurations that could better accommodate modern forms. In 1955, for example, Lots 6 and 7 of Block 3 were replatted to create two lots that fronted Center Street.<sup>275</sup> The one-story, brick veneer, ranch houses built on the lots in 1958 were nearly mirror images of each other (11 and 13 Center Street). The incorporation of the garage in the main block of the house, with its opening on the front façade, as well as the placement of the driveway in the front yard, represents an important shift in residential planning and design at Washington Grove, where for decades automobiles were relegated to vehicular-only roads, garages stood at the back of building lots, and houses were oriented to face the pedestrian walkways.

To support new residential development, the town carried out road improvements. Miller Drive was established in 1946, and the northern end of Hickory Road was graded and paved with gravel, among other projects.<sup>276</sup> In the early 1950s, the town began the process of widening its 25-foot-wide vehicular

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<sup>272</sup> Kelly, *Montgomery Modern*, 219.

<sup>273</sup> Notes on Washington Grove Architectural Significance, 1937-69, courtesy Clare Lise Kelly, November 4, 2018.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> Montgomery County, Circuit Court Land Records, Plat No. 4031, February 1955.

<sup>276</sup> Town Council Meeting Minutes, 1946, WGA, Box D-4, File DT.00D4.06.

roads to make them safer and allow for on-street parking. When public land was involved, the process was easy, but other roads, such as Chestnut, proved more difficult due to preexisting structures and fence lines. By 1945, the Humpback Bridge, which crossed the B&O Railroad tracks just outside the town limits, had become dilapidated. In response to complaints from Washington Grove residents, the railroad replaced the nineteenth-century structure with a new bridge in the same location. The new bridge was a three span, timber bridge with a humpback shape.<sup>277</sup>

The town also turned its attention to its public buildings and facilities. In 1951, a gabled porch was added to the front façade of the assembly hall to shelter the entrance and create a place to hang the historic camp meeting bell used to summon participants to services. (The bell originally hung from a tree, then was moved to the belfry of the tabernacle.) A few years later, in 1955, when the Washington Grove United Methodist Church was completed, the assembly hall was repurposed as municipal offices. (The building was officially dedicated as the town hall in 1973.) New public facilities from this period include the town maintenance building, which was constructed in Woodward Park in 1955.

Due to a combination of factors, Maple Lake, the swimming pond in the West Woods, was not maintained during most of the 1930s and 1940s. By 1953, however, the town had chartered a Lake Committee to guide the restoration and revitalization of the site. The redesigned lake, inaugurated in 1955, featured an island and a dock. Later improvements included a bridge to the island (1962) and a perimeter fence (1973). During the winter months, the lake was used for ice skating.

The passage of Home Rule in Maryland in 1954 gave counties and towns the power to modify their own charters – the basic laws that described their powers, procedures, and services. An amendment to Home Rule, passed in 1955, gave municipalities power over planning and zoning. Washington Grove established a Planning Commission that drafted ordinances prohibiting multi-family dwellings and prepared a zoning map that included two residential zones, a forest reserve, and a local commercial zone. The town adopted its first Code of Ordinances under Home Rule in 1964, which included sections on zoning, building, and land use. Through the 1950s and 1960s, the Planning Commission worked with the town council to identify and sell miscellaneous parcels of land owned by the town, condemn blighted properties, and guide new development. Throughout this period, the town leveraged its independent planning and zoning authority to carefully preserve and protect the architectural resources and natural features that characterized its early history while promoting responsible growth and compatible new design.

### The Auditorium Controversy

In the decades after Chautauqua activities ceased at Washington Grove, the auditorium in Woodward Park was used to show movies and stage theatrical performances, as a meeting place for social clubs, for dances, and as a gymnasium for indoor sports, such as basketball and shuffleboard.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> AD Marble & Company, Maryland Historical Trust Determination of Eligibility Form, “Washington Grove Humpback Bridge (M: 21-220),” 2009, and Town of Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission, 2014 Montgomery County Historic Preservation Awards Nomination Form, “Washington Grove Hump Back Bridge,” 2014.

<sup>278</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 18.

In 1948, a group of Grove residents formed a theatrical troupe called the Banbury Players that staged three one-act plays in the auditorium over the course of the year. Eager to try a short professional season the following year, the group, then known as the Washington Grove Summer Theatre, proposed a four-week season to the town council. The council approved the proposal, on the condition that “the organization shall be responsible for retaining control over the use of the Auditorium.”<sup>279</sup> Following further discussions with the town council about how the group could comply with this condition, a spokesman for the troupe reported that “the group was anxious to carry out the established segregation policy of the town...although no definitive plan for enforcing a policy of exclusion had been formed.”<sup>280</sup> After several months of wrangling with the town council and wordsmithing the proviso in the theater permission, the Washington Grove Summer Theatre withdrew its proposal, stating that it “could not and would not attempt a policy of segregation by exclusion of negroes from attendance,” and the matter was dropped.<sup>281</sup>

Another proposal to the town council for a theater in 1962 dealt the final blow to the auditorium. This time, the proposal came from a Washington theater producer who proposed to upgrade the auditorium, which had become a burden to maintain and was a target for vandalism, and use it for theater productions for twelve weeks over the summer. The town was evenly split over the issue. On one side, some residents desired the availability of theater and other artistic pursuits in Washington Grove and saw it as a way to save the auditorium. Others saw it as a commercial venture which would bring unwanted traffic into town and tie up the auditorium. The theater proposal was put to vote at the annual town meeting of 1962, where it lost by a single vote.<sup>282</sup> Although many Grove residents supported petitions to save the auditorium, without viable options for its use, the building was demolished in 1963. Soon after the building was razed, its site was redeveloped as part of a new “recreation center” with playground equipment and a multi-purpose, all-weather court. In addition, an all-weather tennis court was built north of the existing clay tennis courts.

### Community Activism

As a result of postwar growth, Americans across the country were becoming alarmed at how development was disrupting the social and physical fabric of towns and cities. Many older buildings and neighborhoods were being destroyed under the auspices of federally funded urban redevelopment and renewal in the 1950s.<sup>283</sup> Americans responded by organizing protests against highways, pushing for the protection of natural resources, and supporting historic preservation efforts. The expansion of the Washington

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, 80-81.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, 82. Such a policy would be prohibited with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, 175-77.

<sup>283</sup> David Hamer, *History in Urban Places: The Historic Districts of the United States* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 15.

metropolitan area had a major impact on Montgomery County. Rural areas were rezoned for high-density residential, commercial, and light industrial uses, despite an inadequate distribution of schools, hospitals, recreational areas, and basic amenities, such as grocery stores. In the postwar period, Washington Grove became known as a community of activists skeptical of unchecked development, supportive of environmental causes, and protective of its historic resources and the way of life they represented.

The residents of Washington Grove advocated for strategic regional growth and emerged as forceful opponents of rezoning and highway construction. In 1957, Washington Grove's mayor, George A. Pughe, wrote a letter to U.S. Senator Alan Bible, Chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Metropolitan Area Planning, to encourage greater cooperation among regional planning agencies. He wrote, "We recognize that the transition of the adjacent areas must take place as the metropolitan area expands. We do not resist growth. But we do believe that as a community we should have an opportunity to participate in the planning and decisions regarding adjacent areas that will directly affect our own community."<sup>284</sup>

When the Montgomery County Planning Board proposed rezoning eleven acres of Oakmont Avenue, which bordered the town to the south, from rural residential to light industrial, the town opposed the plan, fearing that it could lead to rezoning a larger portion of the area. A proposal in 1959 for the western quadrant of nearby Redland, a town south of Washington Grove, to be redeveloped with 25,000 new housing units similarly provoked opposition. The town also fought the rezoning and development of 388 acres along Snouffer's School Road, which lay to the town's north – a plan that included the construction of the Montgomery County Airpark and an adjacent light industrial park.<sup>285</sup> Although opposition to development and rezoning continued, the town lacked the clout to halt the plans. Such changes erased the pastoral settings that existed in the area well into the 1960s. As the result of a development-friendly county council in power from 1962 to 1966, thousands of acres of Montgomery County were rezoned for higher-density use.<sup>286</sup> A high-rise complex was proposed west of the West Woods in 1965. The town staunchly opposed the plans. Although the full scope of the proposal was not implemented, a housing development of closely spaced modular units was constructed.<sup>287</sup> (Figure 33)



*Figure 33: Washington Grove residents watch from Maple Lake as a new housing development is constructed just beyond the West Woods. (Washington Grove Archives)*

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<sup>284</sup> Letter from Mayor George A. Pughe to Senator Alan Bible, November 19, 1957, WGA, Box H-2.

<sup>285</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 146-49.

<sup>286</sup> MacMaster and Hiebert, *A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1776-1976*, 360.

<sup>287</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 200.

Washington Grove also protested the construction of an Intercounty Connector that would join Interstate 270 with the Washington-Baltimore Parkway.<sup>288</sup> The connector was intended to relieve east-west traffic pressure between the two major roads and was originally part of an Outer Beltway proposed in 1950 to connect the planned Capital Beltway with Virginia and Maryland. Throughout the planning process, Washington Grove residents were, according to the *Washington Post*, among its most vocal opponents. They raised concerns about noise and air pollution, the road's effects on streams and woodlands, and the impacts of having to live so close to a busy highway. Concerns from area residents, a prolonged debate over the route, and opposition from members of county and state governments delayed the project until it was finally built in the early twenty-first century.<sup>289</sup>

Protests against the Intercounty Connector reflected a larger national trend in the 1960s and 1970s when a wave of anti-freeway protests emerged in opposition to the highways that were cut through older urban neighborhoods and disrupted rural communities. In the 1960s, as historian Raymond Mohl has documented, many Americans began to focus on the negative consequences of highway construction, rather than on the advantages of high-speed, modern roads. Pitted against state and federal highway administrators, grassroots activists staged demonstrations and took legal actions to halt construction. By the mid-1960s, protests had stalled interstate highway projects in nearly a dozen major U.S. cities.<sup>290</sup>

Unchecked development and reports from scientists on the impact of human beings on the natural world inspired the modern environmental movement that took shape in the early 1960s. Whereas the conservation movement of the early twentieth century had focused on the efficient management of natural resources, the environmental movement pressed for a broader, more aggressive agenda that emphasized environmental quality and ecology.<sup>291</sup> The environmentalists of the 1960s, for instance, pushed for new protections for forests, arguing that the forest should be seen as an "environment for home, work, and play rather than as a source of commodities."<sup>292</sup> Protection of natural resources was prioritized in the policies of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. In response to growing public concern, Congress passed a host of environmental protections, including the Wilderness Act (1964), the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (1964), the Clean Air Act (1967), the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968), the National Trails System Act (1968), and the National Environmental Policy Act (1969).

Washington Grove residents in the 1960s and 1970s were powerful advocates of protecting their natural resources. As early as 1962, a group of residents that included Mayor Don McCathran pushed for formal dedication of the West Woods as a wildlife preserve to protect it from future development.<sup>293</sup> The shift

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<sup>288</sup> The eastern terminus was also later shortened to Interstate 95. See R.H. Melton, "U.S. Urges Shortening of Connector Road," *Washington Post*, October 7, 1983.

<sup>289</sup> Paul Hodge, "Plans for I-370 Get a Mixed Reception," *Washington Post*, April 7, 1982.

<sup>290</sup> Raymond A. Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 5 (July 2004): 674-76.

<sup>291</sup> Samuel P. Hays, "The Environmental Movement," *Journal of Forest History* 25, no. 4 (October 1981): 219.

<sup>292</sup> Hays, "The Environmental Movement," 219.

<sup>293</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 192.

from thinking of the woods as a *reserve* to a *preserve* reflected the conclusion that their value would not be determined from timber sales.<sup>294</sup> The West Woods was officially designated a forest preserve in 1964. Despite this, in 1971, a state forester studied the East and West Woods and determined that mature tulip poplars in the West Woods could sell for \$2,000. The town's Forestry Committee agreed only to cut dead trees. When it was discovered that live trees had also been marked for cutting, a groundswell of opposition developed. Protests from angry residents at a town council meeting stopped the timber harvest and ultimately led to the resignation of Mayor Al Christie. The incident led to the establishment of a Forestry Policy Committee, which authored studies that led to a forestry policy section included in the town's Master Plan.<sup>295</sup> The town's forests became recognized not only for their aesthetic and recreational value, but as protection from noise and a buffer against nearby development.<sup>296</sup>

#### **F. CURRENT PERIOD (1970-Present)**

The idealistic traditions of camp meetings continue to motivate the town's residents to preserve Washington Grove's culture and setting through active participation in town and community planning issues.

##### Preservation Efforts

In the late 1970s, Washington Grove's Planning Commission initiated two important efforts to protect the town's natural and cultural resources. First, in March 1977, the commission prepared a report to the mayor and town council recommending that the entire town be nominated for designation as an "area of critical state concern." Recent state legislation aimed at promoting balanced growth gave authorization to the Maryland Department of State Planning to work with local jurisdictions to identify areas that were of such significance that future use or development was of concern to the entire state.<sup>297</sup> The Planning Commission's report cited threats by adjacent development and the possibility of state or county condemnation for rights-of-way through the town's woods. While the commission's report did not result in designation by the state, a separate effort to nominate the town to the National Register of Historic Places succeeded. The commission identified several areas of significance to address in the nomination: town planning and design; cultural history, with emphasis on the camp meeting; Chautauqua, and recreational clubs; and architecture.<sup>298</sup> Fieldwork began in the spring of 1978, and the Town of Washington Grove was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district in 1980.

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<sup>294</sup> Wendy Harris, News Dispatches from Other Centuries, "Our Woods and Walkways: Are They Historic? (Part Two)."

<sup>295</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 221-22.

<sup>296</sup> "Report to the Washington Grove Town Council from the Forestry Committee," January 9, 1973, WGA, Box L-7.

<sup>297</sup> Memorandum, "Areas of Critical State Concern," 1977, WGA, Box L-7.

<sup>298</sup> Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, January 25, 1978, courtesy Wendy Harris, Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission.

The 1980 National Register designation has been of great value to the town. When McCathran Hall was in disrepair and needed additional space for municipal government functions, Washington Grove's National Register status enabled it to obtain in 1991 a \$100,000 state grant conditioned upon a perpetual preservation easement on the building's exterior and surroundings. The Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission, established in 2001, uses the National Register documentation to guide and inform decisions and policies, helping to protect the historic integrity of the district.

Over the years, town officials and residents have successfully capitalized on Washington Grove's historic status to preserve and protect its historic resources, spaces, and viewshed corridors and to protect against overreaching development. When development was proposed for the open land east of Ridge Road, which was part of the original tract purchased for the camp meeting and has been historically associated with Washington Grove's agricultural setting, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission required the developer to negotiate with the town to agree on a plan that would both preserve the town's historic context and meet their development goals. When the state proposed a design for the Intercounty Connector expressway within sight of the town, the visual and acoustical impacts of the design alternatives on the historic district were required to be examined and mitigated. Though the construction of the expressway did go forward, berms and plantings were required to minimize the impacts. In 2013, Washington Grove was listed on Preservation Maryland's "Endangered Maryland" list of the state's most threatened historic resources. Proposed zoning changes and incompatible high-density development along the town's borders that threatened the historic district's integrity were cited as the justification.

The 2014 Humpback Bridge rehabilitation project is a successful example of a positive collaboration between the town and CSX Transportation to preserve the historic railroad structure. CSX Transportation's 2009 National Gateway project required that the historic bridge be modified to allow sufficient clearance for two stacked rail containers. Town activists held discussions with CSX about options to obtain the extra 20 inches of clearance while preserving the historic features of the bridge. Initially, it appeared that there was no solution short of demolition. CSX, however, developed a successful engineering and preservation solution that used single spans of rolled steel beams with an arched shape that provided the required clearance while retaining the bridge's distinctive humpback shape.

#### Conflict over the Commercial Corner

One of the defining events of Washington Grove's current past was its successful lawsuit against The Southland Corporation, an international conglomerate and parent company of the 7-Eleven chain of convenience stores. In 1971, Bobby Lee, then owner of the old general store and the Odd Fellows Hall, which comprised the town's commercial corner, requested a permit to redevelop the lots. His plan proposed demolishing the store and replacing it with a modern shopping center that would be anchored on the south by the Odd Fellows Hall and on the north by a 7-Eleven convenience store.<sup>299</sup> The plans were

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<sup>299</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 256.

approved, and the project was completed in 1973.<sup>300</sup> To integrate the Odd Fellows Hall with the new construction, the front façade of the molded concrete block building was faced with brick veneer and given a faux Mansard roof. The 7-Eleven was a one-story, brick veneer building with large, plate-glass windows fronting Washington Grove Lane. Its low-pitched, cross-gable roof was embellished with Colonial Revival elements, including a roof balustrade and weathervane.<sup>301</sup> Among the new tenants of the shopping center was the U.S. Post Office, which relocated from the late nineteenth-century commercial building at 17030 Oakmont Avenue (today Hershey's Restaurant) to the Odd Fellows Hall.

As one of the only convenience stores in the area, the 7-Eleven offered lottery tickets, pinball machines, video games, and movie rentals, attracting heavy foot and automobile traffic from all directions, but primarily along Washington Grove Lane and through the town's adjacent streets and avenues. This brought complaints of litter, petty crime, and car break-ins. Young African Americans walking from nearby Emory Grove, which had been recently subjected to an urban renewal demolition project, bore the brunt of the accusations. By 1975, the store was operating twenty-four hours a day, and the commercial corner had become an epicenter for "noise, loitering, vandalism, and other illegal activities."<sup>302</sup> As the years passed, the issue became more acute and battles over town control escalated. The 7-Eleven was declared a public nuisance, and the issue was frequently and passionately discussed at town meetings, special meetings, and conferences between town officials, the police, and neighboring communities. Citizens committees were formed to document the frequency and severity of problems with litter, loitering, noise, and crime and to establish a legal defense fund to cover anticipated legal fees. Finally, the town took action in 1983 when it added an article to its ordinances that regulated commercial activity, required business licenses, limited business hours, and required deposits on beverage containers. This, in effect, declared certain previously valid uses of the commercial corner to be non-conforming, resulting in a two-year legal battle with Southland. This was a formidable task for the small municipality and its cadre of activists and was viewed by many as a "David vs. Goliath" confrontation. Washington Grove's annual budget was less than \$150,000, and Southland was an international corporation that had recorded \$1 billion in sales in 1971.<sup>303</sup> The town faced years of legal battles and potential ruin. The case was proceeding to trial, when, in 1985, a settlement was reached in the town's favor. Southland agreed to immediately reduce its hours of operation and to relocate within five years. In turn, the town agreed to issue a business license to Southland and agreed not to enforce its beverage container deposit requirement.<sup>304</sup> The settlement left the 1983 ordinance amendment intact, demonstrating the town's ability to respond effectively to conditions that threatened the community life, welfare, and safety of its residents. A key

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<sup>300</sup> "The Commercial Corner: Assessment and Recommendations," Report by the Planning Commission to the Mayor and Council of the Town of Washington Grove, March 14, 1983, WGA.

<sup>301</sup> The balustrade and weathervane were lost in a recent roof repair.

<sup>302</sup> Edwards, *Washington Grove, 1937-1977*, 301.

<sup>303</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, Rajni Madan, "Southland Corporation," accessed August 6, 2018, available at <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/dhs02>.

<sup>304</sup> Press Release, July 8, 1985, WGA, Box Q-8.

player in the settlement was Grove resident Barbara Hawk, who joined the town council in 1979 and was elected the first female mayor in 1983. Hawk was a fearless advocate for Washington Grove during its long and bitter battle to protect the town's character and safety, and was a key player in the successful settlement of the Southland dispute.

### Town Growth

Over the past thirty years, more or less, the annexation of land into the town's corporate limits has been used as a tool to control and coordinate with Montgomery County and adjacent jurisdictions the physical development of areas near the town's boundaries. In 1987, the town annexed a 1-acre parcel of land along Washington Grove Lane known as "Stewart's Addition," which was laid out as Daylily Lane and subdivided into four residential lots. In 1994, the town acquired 2.88 acres of land east of Ridge Road (formerly the site of a Victorian-era frame residence, a post-and-beam barn, and mature oak trees), which was platted as an extension of Brown Street and subdivided. Between 1992 and 2000, roughly 16.5 acres of land along Ridge Road were annexed by the town in order to "protect within the Washington Grove community the historic rustic rural nature of the road and the character of these properties."<sup>305</sup> In 2007, the town annexed a 2-acre parcel at 17050 Railroad Street adjacent to Aitchison Crossing. This is the location of a two-story, concrete-block house built in 1908 and contemporary to many cottages built in Washington Grove. The town's development plan for the parcel allows for the addition of three additional houses that would face a pedestrian extension of Maple Avenue and requires compatible porches and detached garages. The town also annexed individual houses along Ridge Road and Washington Grove Lane as they became interested. Most recently, the town acquired a 12-acre meadow along Ridge Road that once was part of the original boundaries of Washington Grove. The meadow's open space and small-scale features reinforce the interpretation of Washington Grove within the context of Montgomery County's agricultural heritage and preserve the rural, open vistas that historically formed the setting of Washington Grove. For these reasons, in 2002, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission designated the meadow a Heritage Resource within its Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan.

Washington Grove's 2009 Master Plan highlights the need to preserve the town's historic character and focuses on threats to its borders "in the form of ever encroaching urbanization" and internal threats "in the form of diminished communal contribution and physical integrity."<sup>306</sup> An example of the latter threat involved the historic street signs. In 2017, it was proposed that the town replace its deteriorating historic wood street signs with modern metal ones for better visibility by emergency vehicles and for ease of maintenance. The town council considered testimony from residents about their appreciation for the unique sense of place the historic street signs represented and from the Historic Preservation Commission about the history, significance, and potential rehabilitated of the street signs. A town resident came forward and organized a group of volunteers to rehabilitate or replace in-kind the deteriorated signs, maintaining their character-defining features and using reflective paint for the lettering. The historic

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<sup>305</sup> Washington Grove Planning Commission, "2009 Master Plan, Town of Washington Grove, Maryland," 2009, 10.

<sup>306</sup> Washington Grove Planning Commission, "Town of Washington Grove, Maryland, 2009 Master Plan," 2009, 5.

street sign rehabilitation project was a successful demonstration of the town’s volunteer “communal contribution” heritage.<sup>307</sup>

### *Residential Development*

Washington Grove is home to a number of houses built after the 1970s. Many are located on parcels of land annexed by the town in the last decades of the twentieth century

American residential architecture underwent further developments in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Never fully abandoned, historical styles of architecture saw renewed interest as national trends shifted away from modernism and towards postmodernism. While postmodern architecture at times resulted in exaggerated interpretations that played on historical styles or in highly experimental displays of form, most American home building charted safer courses.

“Millennium Mansion” describes massive-scale houses built beginning in the 1980s that employ historical features in occasionally dramatic fashion.<sup>308</sup> They tend to populate large subdivisions. Millennium Mansion-style houses have high-pitched roofs, complex massing, and tall entry vestibules. The New Traditional style utilizes a more sober incorporation of historical features. Houses designed in this style sometimes loyally adhere to historical precedent, while others apply historical features to non-historical forms. These houses often have integrated garages. The styles it references included Colonial Revival, Tudor, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance.<sup>309</sup>

The house at 340 Ridge Road, built in 2002, is an example of New Traditional Colonial Revival. (Figure 34) While its massing is not typical of traditional Colonial Revival, the house incorporates certain historical elements that would have been found on earlier houses. The main entrance is flanked by sidelights and fluted pilasters and crowned by an entablature. Decorative features include moldings, some with keystones, above the front windows and the garage doors. In Washington Grove, several New Traditional-style houses are located on Ridge Road and Brown Street, and one house that evokes the Millennium Mansion style stands along Ridge Road.



Figure 34: A New Traditional-style house at 340 Ridge Road, Washington Grove. (Robinson and Associates, 2018)

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<sup>307</sup> Information provided by Gail Littlefield, Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission, April 2019.

<sup>308</sup> Millennium Mansion and New Traditional are terms used by Virginia Savage McAlester in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, second edition (New York: Knopf, 2013).

<sup>309</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 708-716.

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