



Spring 1999

# Historic Takoma

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## Major Improvements Planned for Thomas-Siegler Property

**C**harming and historic, the Thomas-Siegler Carriage House Museum and Gardens nonetheless lacks one important modern necessity: sanitation facilities. This deficit limits public access to the museum and the hours that the facility can be open.

Funding now is available to provide water and sewer services to the building and to mitigate a water drainage problem on the property. These funds are available through the Montgomery County Program Open Space, which provides a triple match to local funds for parks and open space creation and development.

The Takoma Park, MD, City Council approved \$6,000 in funds for the property, which is located on Tulip Avenue. The funds were combined with Historic Takoma's contribution of \$2,000 to produce an \$8,000 city POS application to Montgomery County. The county, in turn, is providing \$24,000 in POS matching funds for a grand total of \$32,000. The Museum opened in the Spring of 1997. HTI administers the property under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding with the city.



The Thomas-Siegler Carriage House Museum and Gardens.

## *20th Anniversary Party Set for May 16! Come Celebrate and Welcome our Historic Carriage*

**H**istoric Takoma turns 20 in 1999! Come celebrate our birthday on Sunday, May 16, 1999 between 1:00 and 4:00 PM at the Thomas-Siegler Carriage House Museum on Tulip Avenue. The rain date is May 23.

Planned is a cake and punch reception, along with a great program of turn-of-the-century music and song by the Takoma Singers, our excellent hometown choral society. Local and county officials are invited to attend as well.

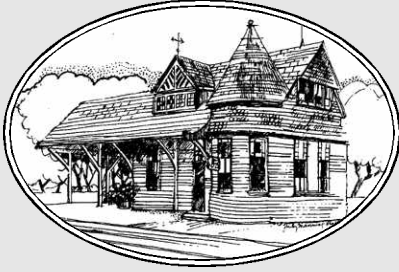
A special feature of the celebration is the unveiling of

the late 19th-century carriage and (wooden) horse lent for a three-year term to the Museum by the Thrasher Carriage Museum in Pennsylvania.

A beautiful blue Essex Trap, the carriage is the sort that probably graced the carriage house when first built in the 1880s. The carriage house, which originally belonged to Isaac Thomas, the city's first postmaster, was used as a stable and hay loft. The building was converted to a museum in 1995. The original house, which is privately owned, is next door.

Please join us for a great celebration!

## HISTORIC TAKOMA NEWSLETTER



Historic Takoma, Inc.  
PO Box 5781  
Takoma, Park, MD 20913  
(301)270-1700, ext. 662

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Patricia Fox

*Historic Takoma Newsletter* is a publication of Historic Takoma, Inc. It is published quarterly for members and friends of the organization.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Volunteers are welcome. Please contact HTI if you want to become more involved in the preservation of your community.

HTI is a membership-based non-profit organization founded in 1979 to promote historic preservation, citizen involvement, and community development in the Takoma community.

Membership is open to the public. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Federal ID No.: 52-114960



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## AROUND TOWN

### Sligo Creek Cabin Demolished

On March 18 workers from the Montgomery County Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission demolished the old log cabin located at Wayne Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway. The destruction was conducted without public notice or soliciting the input of local preservation groups. The cabin was believed to have been built around 1935 by a local boy scout troop. Historic Takoma joined its Montgomery county sister organizations in lodging a strong protest with County officials over the cabin's demise. The cabin was the second loss of an historic structure in Silver Spring in recent months, following the Silver Spring Armory's leveling to make way for a parking garage. These actions by the county serve as a reminder that our historic structures

remain at constant risk and that local preservation groups must be ever vigilant to threats to our heritage. Citizens wishing to voice their protest over the cabin's demolition should contact Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan at 101 Monroe St., Rockville, MD 20850.

### Billboard Bus Shelters

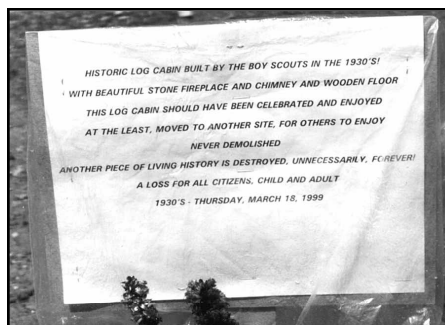
#### Deferred for Historic District

HTI attended a public hearing on March 29 on the question of billboard bus shelters in Takoma Park, which are being proposed in an effort to raise advertising revenue. A total of 58 sites throughout the city were preliminarily selected for these structures by the New York City-based firm of Culver & Associates. Approximately 12 of these sites are in the historic district. HTI related to the city Council that the placement of these billboard shelters in the historic district is very controversial. HTI has received communications from its membership expressing concern over the appearance of these structures and opposing the idea. The placement of these billboard bus shelters in the historic district has been deferred for Phase I of the project, which has been approved by the City Council.

### Economic Development Strategies CAC

HTI is part of a 12-member Citizens Advisory Committee on Economic Development Strategies (CACEDS) that began in January 1999. It consists of citizens, businesses, and a variety of other organizations.

The committee was established by City Resolution No. 1998-62 introduced by Bruce Williams as an advisory panel on development issues to assist the City Council in its development of a Community Economic Development Plan. The committee has been meeting twice a month together with city Administrator Rick Finn and several city staff members in an effort to accomplish this goal.



Above: Site of the demolished boy scout cabin. The former Montgomery Blair High School is in the background. Top: Commemorative message marks the spot.

## United Way Campaign Successful for HTI

HTI received word from officials of the United Way of the National Capital Area that we received nearly \$1,000 in donations during the 1998 United Way and Combined Federal campaigns. The funds will be used to support HTI's many community service activities. We express our sincerest thanks to all who contributed. A list of the individual donors was not available at press time, and will be published in the summer issue of the newsletter.

### HTI Endorses Doug Harbit for HPC

HTI President Lorraine Pearsall sent a letter to Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan endorsing the candidacy of Doug Harbit for a seat on the county's Historic Preservation Commission. Doug has been active in historic preservation issues for many years and is a past president of HTI. He currently co-owns and resides in the Davis Warner Inn, an historically significant and beautifully restored Victorian house that is one of the oldest structures in the Takoma Park area. As the newsletter was going to press, Doug had been interviewed for the position and was waiting for word on his acceptance.

### HTI Incorporates in DC

Historic Takoma became incorporated in the District of Columbia on January 25, 1999, almost 20 years to the day after incorporating in the State of Maryland. As reported in the winter '98/'99 newsletter, this action was taken to facilitate our activities in Takoma, DC by strengthening our standing with the DC government, our sister DC organizations, other groups which operate in DC and, most importantly, our Takoma, DC resident constituency.

HTI was founded on the premise that it would be a bi-jurisdictional organization, representing both Takoma Park, MD and Takoma, DC. In recent years activities mainly have focused on the MD side, due in large measure to a higher level of participation in HTI by MD residents. We are working to enhance our base of support

in DC, and incorporation is one element of that strategy.

### Matching Gift Programs Available

Many Washington area employers sponsor matching gift programs for employee donations to non-profit organizations, such as HTI. When making a donation to HTI (membership dues are considered donations) please check with your employer to see if they have a matching gift program available and, if so, register your donation. In many cases the matching gift is a one-for-one match, so that the monetary value of your contribution to HTI is doubled.

### HTI Assists Local Student

HTI Historian Dorothy Barnes was pleased when Justin Hoy, a student at Friends Community School, asked her to be his mentor for his sixth grade project. Justin decided that the topic would be the history of Takoma Park and the preservation of Victorian houses. Dorothy helped Justin search through the HTI archives for appropriate materials, including photos of old houses and write-ups of Takoma's early years. As this newsletter was going to press, mentor and student were both waiting for the teacher's assessment of Justin's submission. Education about the history of the Takoma community is a primary component of HTI's mission.



Dorothy Barnes, HTI Historian, and Justin Hoy, a local student working on a history of Takoma Park for a school project.

### Budget Approved

The Board of Directors of HTI approved a budget for fiscal year 1999 (1/1/99 to 12/31/99) in the amount of \$36,150. This extraordinarily large budget is caused by the anticipated one-time expenditure of \$11,500 to reproduce our book, *Takoma Park: Portrait of a Victorian Suburb*. Other major expenditures for 1999 include \$2,850 for the Thomas-Siegler Carriage House Museum, \$2,500 for expansion of our Living History Program for the community's fourth graders, and \$2,000 for the HTI newsletter. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the budget should send an SASE to HTI, Budget Request, PO Box 5781, Takoma Park, MD 20913

### Special Recognition

- ★Shirley True
- ★Pat Fox
- ★Gemma Flamberg
- ★Mary Singh

We thank local Re/Max 2000 Realtor, Shirley True, for her generous contribution of \$270, representing 10 HTI memberships for households to whom she sold a house recently in the Takoma community. Shirley's generosity qualifies her for induction into the Benjamin Franklin Gilbert Club, and lifetime membership in HTI.

We thank HTI board member and newsletter editor, Pat Fox, for her efforts in producing this outstanding newsletter. Its high quality has garnered many compliments.

We thank departed HTI board members, Gemma Flamberg and Mary Singh, for their many contributions during their tenure on the board and continue to look forward to working with them on the committee level.

### Welcome New and Renewed Members! (1/99-3/99)

Curtis Kelley & Steve Preister  
Jamie Baylis

Robert L. & Stephanie H. Melvin  
Linda Carlson & Larry Himelfarb

Kathleen M. Stewart & Jonathan L. Griffith

►Continued on page 8

## A Busy Summer of Activities Planned!

Reprinting Scheduled!

### Takoma Park Portrait of a Victorian Suburb



1883-1983

**ORDER EARLY!  
ORDER OFTEN!**

With grant, borrowed, and saved funds, HTI again is publishing its award-winning book that chronicles the development of Takoma Park. To order, just fill out the form below and send to HTI, PO Box 5781, Takoma Park, MD 20913

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**H**TI has a busy summer season planned, beginning with the 20th Anniversary party on May 16, and the arrival of the historic Essex Trap carriage to grace the Thomas-Siegler Carriage House Museum. (See story on page 1.)

In addition, a number of other fun and educational activities are in the works.

### Student Program Planned

The Education Committee is getting ready to conduct its program for fourth graders from the Takoma Park Elementary School. For the third year, HTI volunteers will take up to 10 groups of students on a field trip to the Thomas-Siegler Museum. Each trip begins with a classroom presentation on Takoma Park history, and includes an historical scavenger hunt.

### Dinky Line Tour

Again this year, Clair Garman is conducting a walking tour to trace the tracks of the Dinky Line. In 1900, this trolley ran from 4th and Butternut in the District to the Glen Sligo Hotel and Wildwood Resort in the outskirts of Takoma Park. The three-mile tour starts in the parking lot of the TPSS Co-op at Takoma Junction (Ethan Allen and Carroll Avenues) at 1:30PM and lasts about two hours. There are a few uphill segments but the pace is leisurely. A charge of \$5 is a donation to Historic Takoma.

Tours take place the first Sunday of every month through October: May 2, June 6, July 11, Aug. 1, Sept. 5, and Oct. 3 This tour is great fun: you don't want to miss it! Call: 301-270-2248 to make reservations.

### Open House Planned for DC Members

A get-together for DC members—and especially for DC residents who want to know more about Historic Takoma—is planned for Sunday, June 13 from 2:00 to 5:00PM at the house of board member Pat Fox, 535 Cedar Street, NW, Washington, DC. In addition to meeting new people and enjoying refreshments, there will be information on Historic Takoma and a speaker on historic preservation issues in the District. We invite all DC members and wannabe members to come. For information, call 202-291-0300.

### History Day Celebration

On Sunday July 11, Historic Takoma again will participate in Montgomery County's History Day with a program of walking tours for both kids and adults and an exhibit at the Carriage House. Historic sites all over the county will also be open to visitors. We will send members more up-to-date information on the day's activities as available.

## Historic Takoma REAL ESTATE GUIDE

These outstanding realtors support Historic Takoma by providing a free HTI membership to every household that buys a home in the Takoma community. Our many thanks!

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## THE WAY WE WERE

### Takoma Park After The War: Part One

This is the first installment of an assessment of life in Takoma Park written soon after the end of the Second World War. It comes from our archives and details a way of life that seems familiar in some ways and in others as alien as if from another planet. Some racial and ethnic depictions are shocking, but we present the document as written (with only minor editorial corrections) because, warts and all, it gives us a window into our past. We do not know who the author is or why the document was prepared. The date appears to be about 1946.

Captain John Smith was probably the first man to set foot in this part of the country, landing on the Georgetown side of Rock Creek at its entrance to the Potomac as early as 1607. The first deed including the Takoma Park area was issued by Lord Baltimore to Henry Darnell. His son-in-law, Charles Carroll, received this property on the death of Mr. Darnell and it remained in the Carroll family for many years. An heir, Daniel Carroll, was appointed by President George Washington as one of the Commissioners of the newly formed District of Columbia.

One of the main streets of the town is now named Carroll Avenue in memory of this family. Many of the early settlers were prominent men and women of Washington, holding responsible positions in the federal government.

Title to 100 acres forming the central section of the present community passed to Benjamin Gilbert, and Takoma was established in 1883. It was named Tacoma, the Indian word for "High up near heaven," but spelled with a K to avoid confusion with Tacoma, WA.

The Baltimore and Ohio established railroad transportation through this area in 1873. By 1886 one could make the trip from Takoma Park to Washington and back for \$.05 each way. The original station is still in use today. (Ed. note: The station was destroyed by arson in 1967.)

Takoma Park's slogan, early adopted, was "no malaria, no mosquitoes, pure air, delightful shade, and most abundant supply of pure water." In 1890 it incorporated as a town. Union Chapel, its first church, became affiliated with the Presbyterian denomination in 1893. The whole community at this time was very enthusiastic about the little chapel. As many as 800

people were in attendance at one time at the weekday rallies to raise money for the new church building. Two hotels were in the neighborhood, the Watkins Hotel and the North Takoma Hotel, which were used as summer resorts at one time. Bliss Electrical School bought one of the hotels and was founded in 1893. In 1904 the Seventh Day Adventists purchased property here and this locality became its National Headquarters.

Some landmarks still remaining from the City's early history are a mile post on Maple Avenue that was set up by a Mr. Ellicott who was appointed by President Washington to fix the boundaries of the District of Columbia, and the remains of the Sligo Mill, built by Williams and Carroll immediately after their purchase of 414 acres along the Sligo branch in 1811 and 1812. The mill was first used as a distillery and later to grind corn and wheat. An early account refers to a cave nearby as "Buzzards Rock" in which an escaped slave was secreted and remained for five years. (Ed. note: The mill was located at the corner of New Hampshire and Sligo Creek Parkway.)  
The Lamond Tile Works

was founded when terra cotta tile clay was discovered on the Lamond family land. The old building, which was used as a lookout for an Ohio regiment during the Civil War, stands today and soldiers' names may be seen carved in the woodwork there. The vintage of the building may be judged not only by its ancient appearance but by the use of wooden pegs to join the boards together, rather than nails. The large igloo-shaped clay ovens can still be seen serving their original purpose in the production of terra cotta pipes by the thousands. To the right are the extensive mines stretching over a barren, waste of land. (Ed. note: The Tile Works was located on Whittier Street on the District side of the rail road tracks.)

Takoma Park Today  
The Takoma or Big Spring famed far and near still stands and serves as the table water of many families in the Takoma area, not only in times of drought but every day of the year. If you should happen to stop your car on a hot, dusty summer day to refresh yourself at this spring, you might see one of these families with their wagon or truck loaded with gal-

lon jugs to be filled with the refreshing water whose powers at one time were so well known that it was shipped for sale to larger northern cities. (Ed. note: What remains of the spring can be found in Spring Park at Elm and Poplar Streets.)

Takoma Park, MD is now a community of about 12,000, having boomed about 4,000 since 1940. It is the largest town in Montgomery County and one of the seven largest towns in Maryland. It lies not only in Montgomery County but also in Prince Georges County, the area with the greatest expansion in recent years.

Takoma Park is a community of steep hills and winding streets for the most part; the contour of the land is never uninteresting and beautiful flora can be seen on all sides. Some of the most delightful spots are in the park where Rock Creek joins the Sligo. When first approaching the town from the District side one sees the town square, a lovely little park, clean and neat. Around this park is centered the main business part of the town with Seventh Day Adventist buildings on one side, including their publishing house, theological and conference buildings, and the vegetarian cafeteria. Across the street are the bank, the town office, the chamber of commerce, bakery, barber, drug stores, a ten-cent store, etc. The old section of the community stretches out for some distance from this central square, newer subdivisions appearing every so often. The places of business continue down the main street.

The railroad track constitutes the boundary between the Maryland and District sides of Takoma Park. On the DC side of the tracks are some old, dilapidated-looking structures, others which, although old, are well-kept and comfortable-looking and some new detached two-story middle-class dwellings and several apartment houses. Three



Late 1940's view of Eastern Avenue with Carroll and Willow Avenues in the background. The bank building remains. The triangle of land is where the Seventh Day Adventist Church stands today.

houses in particular were much discussed at one time, but aside from repainting them and probably equipping them with some sanitary conveniences, not much else was done to ease the crowded conditions. These rest along the bank right beneath the tracks. The width of the first one is no larger than that of an ordinary car. On the other side of the tracks some poorer houses are evident, but not of the condition that would be termed slum dwellings.

To walk around Takoma Park is an interesting experience because rarely do you find row houses or even exactly similar detached houses, except in the newer developments. There are no large apartments. Several six-family dwellings look like large stone houses and fit harmoniously with the conservative appearance of the community. In the older sections the houses along any one street vary. There will be several substantial, lovely, spacious old homes, a smaller, less impressive, but nice-looking house, another large old home, one of more modern appearance, and then a few cheaply constructed houses. Most gardens are well-kept and lovely, Takoma being noted for its gardens. There are several slum sections; they are temporary, dilapidated, weather-beaten buildings, have obvious need for carpentry work, and have refuse and wood stacked in the front yard along with lines full of clothes, and untidy, ill-kept yards. Near some houses are small vegetable plots that evidently supplement the family's diet. Some families still use oil for light and have outdoor plumbing.

Most streets in Takoma are narrow and quiet; quite a few lack sidewalks on one side and need repaving. A filtration plant on Sligo Creek provides the water supply. At its peak, it furnishes 6.5 million gallons daily.

#### Political Life

The town's governing unit consists of a mayor and six councilmen elected every two years. This group meets in the fire house in the summer and in the town clerk's office across from the public square in the winter.

The current mayor, Oliver Youngblood, is just completing his third term and is a prominent member of the community. He is President of the Citizens Bank, owner of a well-known hardware store on the District side, former President of the Chamber of Commerce and the Takoma Park Lions Club, and active in church, civic, and fraternal circles. He has been a resident of Montgomery County for 25 years and is congenial. Although holding the most prominent political job in the town, the mayor is regarded by his fellow townsmen as just another citizen.

There is no limit to the number of terms a mayor may serve and the council has never divided along party lines. Their few splits concerned issues not party. The membership is varied, including a lawyer, a plumber, a contractor, and both local and downtown businessmen.

The community is largely indifferent to the local political scene. Although political parties do not usually vote as a block, the Young Men's Democratic Club, with its sponsor, the county boss, Col. E. Brook Lee, most often supports the winning candidate. The Republican party, although usually rather lethargic, can be efficient when energized. (The town used to go Republican in state and national elections.) However, most citizens said that people tend to vote for candidates according to their opinion of their ability, not their political faith. As a rule, the

Democratic element is considered by the town's people as more progressive than the Republicans. The Young Men's Democratic Club sponsored a Library Bill in the Maryland assembly, which gave the Takoma Park library standing and made it tax supported.

About half the vote is by women, which may be due to the active and well-informed League of Women Voters. Largely because of this organization's efforts, women have twice run for the council but have not as yet succeeded in being elected. The colored members of the community exercise their franchise but have not influenced the vote in appreciable ways.

One group that does vote as a block, exerts considerable political influence, and is always represented on the council is the Seventh Day Adventists. They see that other 'gentiles' who appeal to them are given positions of trust and responsibility. This group always votes against the Democratic party, and against liquor and commercialized amusements. They successfully blocked a theater in Takoma Park, MD, which was to be part of a proposed shopping center. This lack of commercialized amusement is a very striking aspect of Takoma Park. The theaters in this area are Takoma in the District, and the Seco and Sligo in Silver Spring. There is no theater in Takoma Park.

Some citizens believe that many businessmen will not

accept a nomination for a position on the council because of the fear of losing some of their business; only those who are secure will accept these posts of responsibility.

#### Municipal Facilities

The Takoma Park Police Force consists of five local policemen and one county policeman. The tiny office and jail is located in the midst of a slum section. Some citizens believe that this mixture of county and local police is not efficient. Just the appearance of the jail itself, remarked one of the town's residents, is enough to deter anyone from a life of crime.

The Justice of the Peace is a part-time position and the county helps the town pay his wages. Court meets in the Silver Spring Court House.

The Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department was formed after a disastrous fire in 1893. It is now a modern, efficient department that answers hundreds of calls a year, most of them covering injuries and gas cases. When the alarm sounds, the cleaner, the plumber, the doctor, the barber, and sometimes his customer, rush to the Fire House ready for action. The building also has a meeting hall, a gym, show cases with town trophies, and a kitchen for the ladies auxiliary, in addition to a dormitory for the firemen. The auxiliary has helped the morale of the men tremendously during bad fires through their cheerful and efficient serving of hot meals and coffee.

The Takoma Park, MD Library is in a cheery, homey little house with 11,000 active books. It is tax supported and much frequented. The librarian told me that the library had gone out of its way to encourage the colored residents of the community to take advantage of the library's resources, but few had responded except the teachers from the school and several children. She thought this was caused by a lack of interest in reading and also by a lack of time for such leisure activities.

**Coming next: Civic Life and Education**



The Takoma Park Train Station, which was destroyed by arson in 1967. The Metro Station occupies this site today. An image of the train station is the logo of Historic Takoma.

► *Continued from page 3*

Katherine P. Mack  
Elizabeth Howland  
John Sandage  
Nancy H. & David M. Weiman  
Deb Gottesman & Jeanne Goldberg  
Maynard & Elaine Mack  
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## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### What's in a Name?

*The names of Takoma, DC's streets today are not the same as when Benjamin Gilbert laid out his first land purchase, even though "Cedar" and "Dahlia" seem in keeping with the Maryland side's "Tulip" and "Poplar." The DC side's street names were changed in the first decade of the century when the city adopted the fourth alphabet. Early names, as found on original sales literature, were:*

- ★Whittier Street—Susquehanna Street
- ★Aspen Street—Tahoe Street
- ★Butternut Street—Umatilla Street
- ★Cedar Street—Vermillion Street
- ★Dahlia Street—Wabash Street
- ★Eastern Avenue—Magnolia Street
- ★Cedar Avenue in Maryland—Oak Street (named to conform with Cedar Street in the District)

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