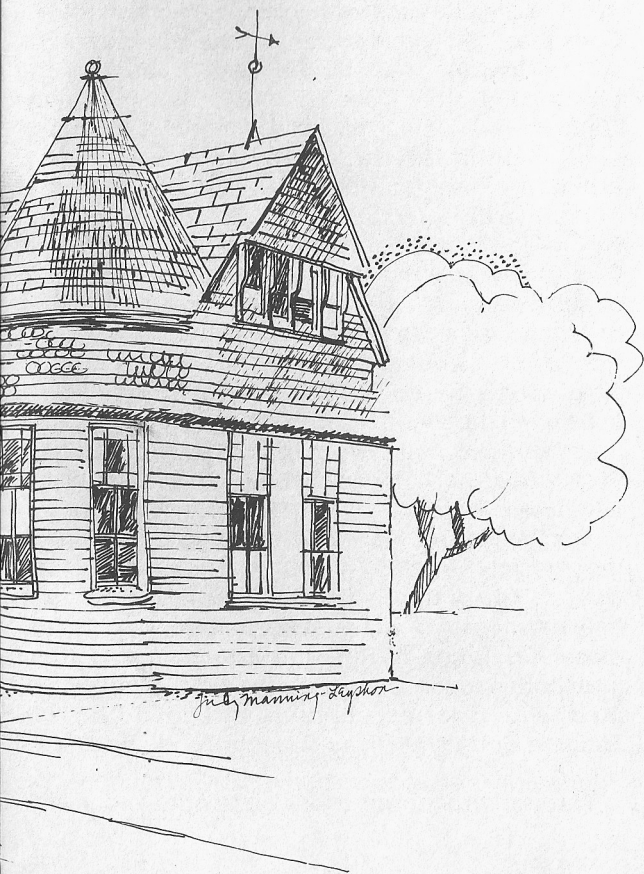


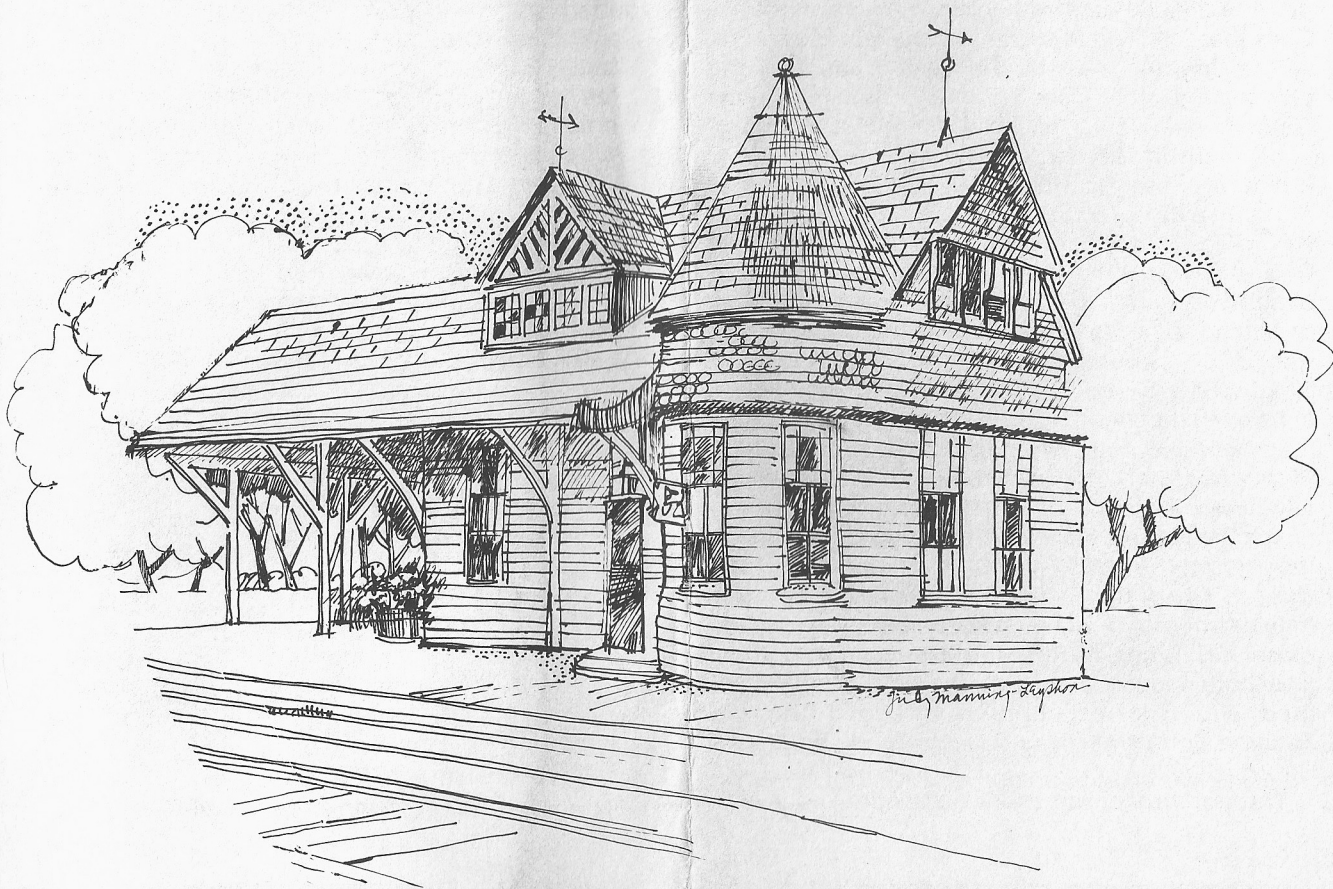
Takoma Park
Walking tour
Number
One



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With the arrival of Metro, Takoma Park has come full circle back to its beginnings as Washington's first commuter suburb. Founded in 1883 by Benjamin F. Gilbert, Takoma Park was the product of the tremendous growth of the nation's capital after the Civil War and the expansion of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

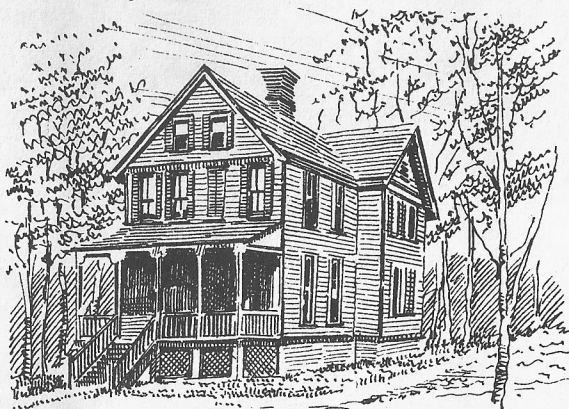
Gilbert purchased about 100 acres of land with tall oaks, streams, and fresh water springs spanning the B&O tracks on the Maryland-District line for \$6,500. He knew that the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O, which had been completed in 1873 from Washington to Point of Rocks, Md., would provide the vital link with jobs and cultural attractions that any town outside the city would require. At the time there were no access roads from the city to this area. The Seventh Street Pike, now Georgia Avenue, came close but ended in wilderness south of the tracks. The town was to grow around the train station, a beloved landmark that burned to the ground in 1968. Houses were built within easy walking distance of the station, and Gilbert saw to it that the more elaborate and more expensive houses were built near the tracks, thus providing advertisement for the "affordable elegance" of Takoma Park.

Although Gilbert disregarded jurisdictional lines when he made his original land purchase, he always hoped that the District section of Takoma Park would be kept within the legal limits of his new town. Takoma, D.C., however, was never annexed. When the town (on the Maryland side) was incorporated in 1890, the District commissioners took charge of the District side. Nevertheless, ties between the two communities have always been close. Churches continue to draw congregations from both sections, and until the 1950's both Maryland and District children attended the old Takoma School at Piney Branch Road and Dahlia Street, NW.

Through brochures, press coverage, and a wide

circle of business and professional friends, Gilbert promoted the new town, especially among the growing numbers of federal workers. Because of the severe housing shortage caused by the growth of Washington after the Civil War, many government workers and their families lived in overcrowded boarding houses. Then, as now, Washington real estate was expensive, and very few could afford a home in the downtown area. In his brochures Gilbert stressed that "all you need is a moderate income" to own a home in Takoma Park. His advertised prices for lots in 1886, for example, were 1 1/4¢ to 5¢ per foot, considerably cheaper than the going rate in Washington of 48¢ per foot.

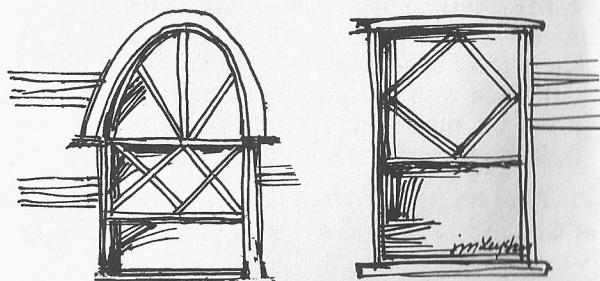
Gilbert also advertised the healthful characteristics of suburban living. At an altitude of 350 feet above sea level, Takoma Park was free of the dreaded malaria and mosquitoes that plagued Washington City. And unlike Washington, Takoma Park had a pure water supply fed by many natural springs. Because of this healthful atmosphere, Gilbert contracted with a well-known Boston physician, R.C. Flower, to build a sanitarium and a resort hotel along the banks of the Sligo. When these plans fell through, Gilbert persuaded the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to move its head-



7315 Piney Branch Road

quarters from Battle Creek, Mich., to Takoma Park and to establish a hospital and college. More than any other religious group in Takoma Park — the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches were the first established — the Adventist Church has continued to exert an influence on the social and economic life of the town. The Washington Adventist Hospital, formerly the Washington Sanitarium, provides health care for the entire Washington metropolitan area, but is regarded by Takoma Park residents as their community hospital.

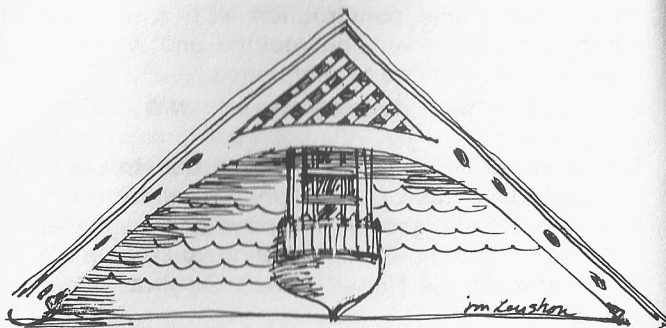
Unlike most real estate developers, Gilbert himself built a home in Takoma Park and took a personal interest in the town. He donated land to build churches and schools and served as mayor. Tradition has it that Gilbert selected the name



window treatments

“Takoma” at the suggestion of a friend and future resident. An Indian word meaning “high up — near heaven,” Takoma perfectly suited Gilbert’s concept of his new home as a healthful retreat from the low-lying, malaria infested downtown area. He named the streets after trees — Holly, Cedar, Chestnut, Butternut, Aspen, and Maple — and later added the “Park” to further emphasize the sylvan atmosphere of the town.

The original subdivision, called Old Takoma on the Maryland side, retains many characteristics of a small town rather than a modern-day suburb. The houses, situated along streets shaded by stately oak trees are mostly Victorian frame



pulpit balcony

houses with a number of early 20th-century bungalows. Almost every house has a front porch. Because of its delightful turn-of-the-century atmosphere and fine domestic architecture, Old Takoma and other sections of Takoma Park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As you walk along these pleasant streets, you will see a variety of building styles, all labeled “Victorian.” The term refers to not one but many architectural styles popular in the United States from the mid-19th century through World War I. In Takoma Park these styles include Queen Anne, Shingle, Stick, Colonial Revival, and Second Empire. There are many common elements, such as stained glass windows, turrets, towers, corner bays, clapboard siding, fish-scale shingles, lattice work, spindled, wrap-around porches, steep, multigabled, or hipped roofs, decorative slate roofs, and tall, medieval-looking chimneys. The Queen Anne house is more elaborate, complex, and asymmetrical than the Shingle and Stick styles. The Shingle house evolved from the Queen Anne and is similar in plan with a shingled exterior surface. The Stick house is characterized by angularity. The “stick” work is a series of right-angled boards applied over the exterior clapboard to symbolize the structural skeleton of the house. Often there is a half-timbered effect in the gables. The Colonial Revival style has a symmetrical plan and reflects a post-centennial interest in colonial

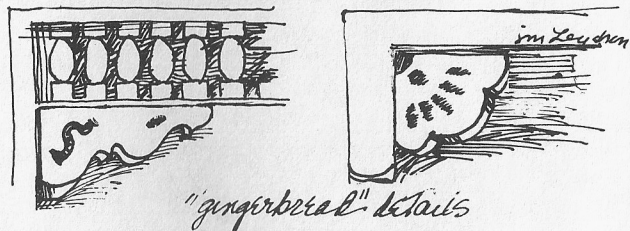
architecture, particularly that of New England. Usually there is a gabled or hipped roof, a one-story porch with columns, and six-over-six double hung windows. The mansard roof — a double-pitched roof with a steep, lower slope — is the outstanding characteristic of the Second Empire style, which derived its name from Napoleon III's grand plan for Paris in the mid-19th century.

In addition to Victorian houses, Takoma Park has many transitional houses and bungalows. The transitional house flourished between 1900 and 1915, and is of clapboard, stucco, brick, or brick with shingle. Square and boxlike, it has one or more bay windows for relief and a large, front porch. The bungalow was built from 1900 until 1925, and is generally a small or medium-size one-story house. The roof space is made usable by a solitary dormer or by windows in gables.

The cost of these early Takoma Park houses was moderate, ranging in price from \$1,000 to \$5,000, although there were a few exceptions. Several "villas," and "cottages," many designed by well-known architects, cost from \$10,000 to \$25,000. At the time eggs were 12¢ a dozen, sirloin steak 24¢ a pound, and chicken 7¢. For the parlor, Sears offered a potted plant for 59¢, a rope portiere for \$3.98, a Turkish leather couch for \$15.65, and an organ for \$37.35.

Over the years change has come to Takoma Park. Gilbert's potable water is no longer pure. Cars have brought pollution and noise. Fortunately, however, the change has been limited. Several years ago the coming of Metro threatened the Old Takoma neighborhood. Major rezoning was proposed that would have meant the destruction and removal of many Victorian and early 20th-century houses and replacement by high rise apartment and office buildings. A community furor prevented this, although a number of fine Victorian homes were destroyed to make room for the Metro parking lot.

On the whole, then, Takoma Park has preserved its architectural heritage. The result is a diversity in housing design and size matched by the diversity of its residents. Takoma Park today continues to attract people, especially young families, who appreciate its old fashioned atmosphere, lovely homes, good schools, and convenient location via Metro to downtown Washington.



1. **208 Cedar Street, NW.** 1897. Queen Anne. Clapboard house with fish-scale shingles, high pitched, overlapping multigabled roof. Wrap-around porch. Five stained glass windows. When the house was under construction, the materials were left outside for over a year to weather.
2. **202 Cedar Street, NW.** 1908. Bungalow. Beveled clapboard. Gambrel roof. Diamond pattern windows. Broad front porch with six doric columns. Original cost was \$3,740. By 1825 the British in India used the term "bungalow" to signify a low house surrounded by a veranda and used as a "rest house" for travelers. This house is typical of that style.
3. **7101 Cedar Avenue.** Ca. 1886. Stick. First owned by Ida Summy, who suggested the name "Takoma" to Gilbert over a game of bridge. Clapboard and shingles. Original slate roof, but porch lattice and brackets missing.
4. **7103-7105 Cedar Avenue.** Ca. 1907. Second Empire. Originally built as apartments, they were recently converted to two townhouses. Mansard roof. Arched windows.

5. 7109 Cedar Avenue. Ca. 1915. Transitional. Clapboard. Bays and front porch. Boxlike and severe when compared with 208 Cedar.

6. 7112 Cedar Avenue. Ca. 1886. Queen Anne. Asbestos shingles conceal original clapboard. Decorative shingles. Note porch trim and third-story pulpit balcony. Complex roof with gables and dormers. Stained glass windows.

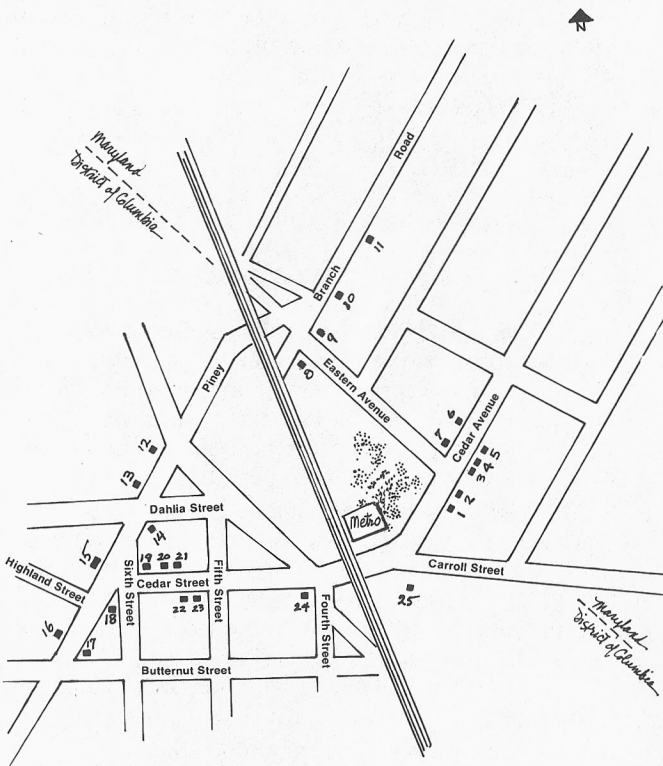
7. 7100 Cedar Avenue. 1890. Shingle. Hipped roof is complex with "eyebrow" dormer. Oval stained glass window. Two-story circular tower and wrap-around porch integrated into the overall design.

8. 7064 Eastern Avenue, NW. 1887. Queen Anne. Known locally as the "Cady House" after the original owners, this is a District of Columbia Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was designed by Leon E. Dessez, a prominent turn-of-the-century architect, who also designed Admiralty House, now the Vice-Presidential residence. Multigabled, irregular massing in plan. Stained glass window. Fish-scale shingles and clapboard. Decorative slate roof and chimneys. Elaborate detail on trim. Wrap-around porch. Three-story tower with third-story porch.

9. 7063 Eastern Avenue. 1885. Colonial Revival. Built by Benjamin Franklin Smith, father-in-law of the present owner. Clapboard and shingles. Originally had a wrap-around porch. Door on Piney Branch Road side came from the Hay-Adams House, designed by Henry Hobson Richardson.

10. 7307 Piney Branch Road. 1884. Stick. Clapboard with original slate roof. Stick work under gable and brackets under eaves. Projecting bay and rear second-story porch. Stained glass windows. Built for Azro J. Cory, one of the earliest Takoma Park residents. Four generations lived in the house until it was boarded up 15 years ago. Now being renovated by present owners.

11. 7315 Piney Branch Road. 1887. Stick. Designed by Leon E. Dessez for Rev. J. Owen Dorsey, a noted Indian ethnologist. The first Episcopal services in Takoma Park were held here in 1892. Asbestos siding conceals original clapboard construction. Bays, wrap-around porch, and decorative slate roof. Double door.



12. 7124 Piney Branch Road, NW. 1905. Colonial Revival.

Stucco and frame construction with wide front porch and slate roof. The roofline and windows suggest a French country influence.

13. 7106 Piney Branch Road, NW. 1910. Bungalow.

Two-story, brick foundation, frame construction. Stucco and shingles. Carved white wood trim with dark upper-story, gables, and overhang suggests a Swiss chalet, another influence on bungalow architecture in the United States. Originally cost \$5,000.

14. Trinity Church and Rectory. Piney Branch Road and Dahlia Street, NW. 1937 and 1941.

The congregation's original church, which was built in 1893, is no longer extant. The present church was designed by Philip H. Frohman, the architect of the National Cathedral. Of native rubble stone, trimmed with cast stone, it is very much like a 13th-century English country church. The rectory was built to resemble the chapter house at the National Cathedral.

15. Takoma School. Piney Branch Road and Cedar Street, NW. 1976. Contemporary.

Replaces the now demolished Takoma School, which had served generations of Takoma children since 1901. The new school has an open plan and was designed in part by the community to meet its particular needs.

16. 6902 Piney Branch Road, NW. 1895. Shingle. Named "Malmesbury" after the English town where the original owners' parents had been born. Steep, gabled roof and large front porch. The details of the house are hidden by asbestos shingles.

17. 611 Butternut Street, NW. 1923. Bungalow. Dashed-on pebble stucco bungalow with a blond brick foundation. Broad porch and massive terra cotta tile roof. The wide eaves and roofline reflect another influence — Japanese — on the bungalow in this country. The original cost for this large, airy house was \$20,000.

18. 600 Cedar Street, NW. 1905. Stick. Angular gable centered in a steeply pitched roof. First- and second-story porches. Ballustrades orig-

inally had pickets. Asbestos shingles conceal original siding. Original cost \$4,000.

19. 535 Cedar Street, NW. 1908. Queen Anne. Front porch contains some elaborate "gingerbread" detail. Spool and spindle work and brackets. Second-floor porch repeats patterns of first floor. Two-story bay window. Main shingled gable on third story.

20. 529 Cedar Street, NW. 1901. Transitional. Clapboard construction. The box-like design is relieved by bay window on second story. Large front porch.

21. 517 Cedar Street, NW. 1893. Colonial Revival. Clapboard with four principal gables filled with fish-scale shingles. Large front porch. The kitchen was originally an outbuilding connected to the house by a covered walkway. The stable has been renovated to serve as a pottery studio.

22. 516 Cedar Street, NW. 1900. Transitional. Broad front porch with doric columns. On the west side of the house is a bay window supported by a brick base with a decorative interconnecting pattern. Slate, hipped roof. Built by a popular Takoma house builder, H.L. Thornton, for \$4,500.

23. Takoma Branch, Public Library of the District of Columbia. Fifth and Cedar Streets, NW. 1911. Georgian Revival.

Area homeowners bought the land for this library, the first branch in the District system. Andrew Carnegie, a boyhood friend of a Takoma resident, contributed \$40,000 to the construction costs. Hipped roof, one massive story with simplified entablature, composed of dentils and frieze and brackets at the roofline.

24. 406 Cedar Street, NW. 1908. Eclectic. This brick apartment building was built by William Watkins for his six daughters and their families. Flat-roofed rectangular form with two octagonal five-windowed bays resembling fortress towers stand at each corner. Three-tiered front porch.

25. 300 Carroll Street, NW. 1902. Queen Anne. Frame house with brick veneer. Wrap-around porch with decorative trim. Two and one-half story. Center gable is offset by turret.