

# PLACES *from the* PAST:

*The Tradition of Gardez Bien  
in Montgomery County, Maryland*



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fertilizer and proper drainage. Boyd imported Scottish dairy cows, and built a large house and dairy complex complete with tenant houses and store for employees. Also on his property, he built houses for railroad workers. The railroad station and the community that grew around it became known as Boyds.

## SUMMER RESORTS

In search of cooler summer locales, Washington residents flocked to elevated and shaded Montgomery County. In the 1840s, Francis Preston Blair, editor of the *Washington Globe*, became enchanted by a glittering spring east of Rock Creek and established the estate he called Silver Spring. Distinguished Washingtonians who subsequently built summer houses in the area that came to be known as Silver Spring were Crosby Noyes, *Washington Star* editor, and George Washington Riggs, founder of Riggs National Bank. Riggs's house, known today as the **Riggs-Thompson House**, still stands at 711 Pershing Drive.

Later in the century, commuter trains brought summer residents and vacationers to Montgomery County's countryside. The Metropolitan Branch of the B & O began running in 1873. The same year, Methodist church organizers established the Washington Grove Camp Meeting as a summer retreat. Opening for business on the meeting ground in 1881, the Albany Hotel had rooms to house visitors and a dining hall that also served campers. After the close of the last camp meeting in 1924, the hotel fell into disrepair and was torn down.

Further north, in the Ten Mile Creek area near Boyds, farmers expanded houses and speculators built boarding houses to meet the needs of seasonal visitors. Somerset T. Williams built the grand 22-room Burdette hotel known as **High View** (1887). The area's resort business peaked between 1910 and 1915.

Hotels in Rockville offered lodging to salesmen and travelers in the county seat. The **Woodlawn Hotel**, 500 West Montgomery Avenue, was the only Rockville hotel built and operated primarily for the summer resort trade. Built between 1887 and 1890, the 40-room brick hotel (p. 71) was a popular destination for about a decade. In 1909, the building became a private sanitarium, renamed Chestnut Lodge. The structure, located in Rockville's **West Montgomery Avenue Historic District**, remains today a reminder of the heyday of the summer resort hotel.

Many hotels that opened in Montgomery County were financially unsuccessful. Takoma Park developer Benjamin F. Gilbert opened the 160-room North Takoma Hotel in 1892-3, on today's Montgomery College site. In 1908 it became the Bliss Electrical School, but was destroyed by fire the same year, just after it was renovated. The Glen Sligo Hotel of 1900 offered a roller coaster and bowling alleys, yet operated at a loss and was sold in 1902.



Andrea Rebeck, MNCPPC, 1987

*The gambrel roof dairy barn that became the icon of the American farm through much of the 20th century enjoyed its greatest popularity in the 1930s-40s. Francis Windolph built a huge concrete block dairy barn on his Dawsonville farm about 1930.*

*Francis Preston Blair's estate, known as Silver Spring, was established about 1842. The Gothic Revival-influenced house, seen in this 1920s photograph, was razed in 1955. Surviving are the **Acorn Park** gazebo and the Silver Spring itself. Blair's son James Blair subdivided his own house from the estate grounds, which he called the Moorings and is known today as the **Jesup Blair House** and **Local Park**.*



John C. Proctor, Washington Past and Present, 1930  
Courtesy: Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

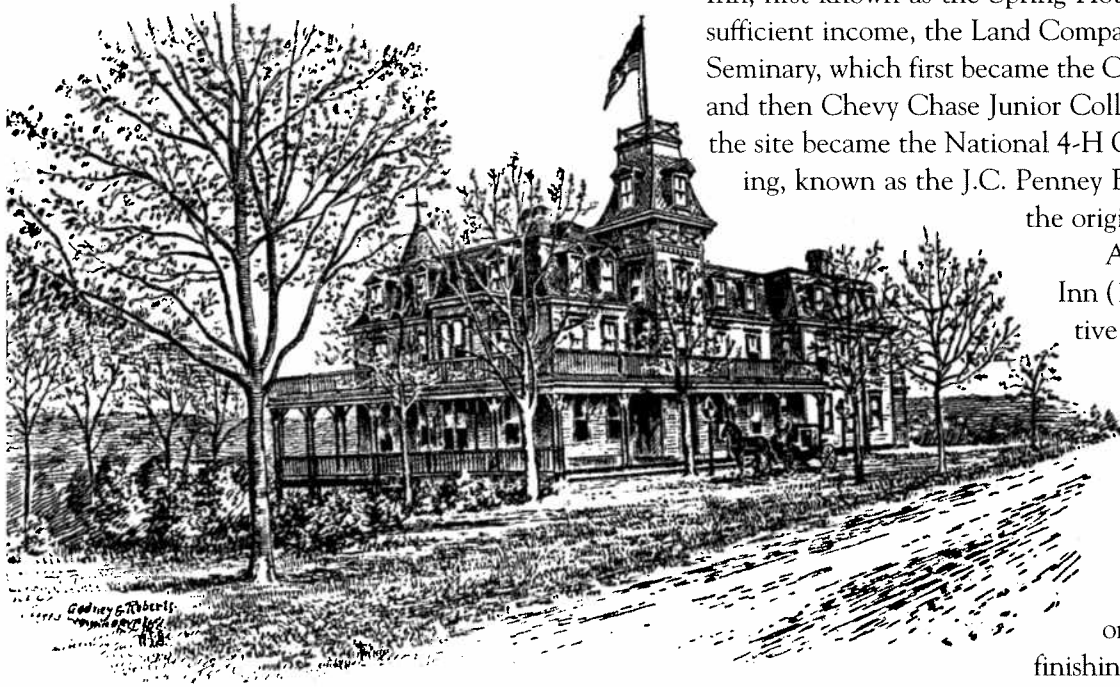
The hotel became a casino and, when protesting residents led the Town of Takoma Park to tear down the streetcar access, owners were forced to close and the hotel was demolished.<sup>50</sup>

In 1893, the Chevy Chase Land Company built the Chevy Chase Inn, first known as the Spring Hotel. When the hotel failed to bring in sufficient income, the Land Company leased the hotel as a Young Ladies Seminary, which first became the Chevy Chase College for Young Ladies, and then Chevy Chase Junior College. After the college closed in 1950, the site became the National 4-H Center Headquarters. The main building, known as the J.C. Penney Building (1976), is a reconstruction of the original hotel structure.

An ornate Stick Style hotel, the Forest Inn (1887), was the centerpiece of a speculative real estate development in Forest Glen. When the hotel proved unsuccessful, John and Vesta Cassedy purchased the site and converted it, in 1894, into a finishing school for young women. The hotel became the centerpiece of the **National Park Seminary** campus. The facility became one of the most popular and exclusive finishing schools in the Washington area.

Envisioning a Potomac River resort reminiscent of the Catskills, the Baltzley brothers built a majestic hotel in 1889 called the Glen Echo Café (p. 38). Designed in a rustic style, the immense, sprawling hotel was constructed of rough-hewn logs from 30,000 trees. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1890, after only one summer season. The following year, however, Glen Echo was chosen for an assembly site for a Chautauqua, part of a national circuit of educational and cultural events. In 1911, a streetcar company transformed the site into **Glen Echo Park**, an amusement park that attracted visitors into the 1960s.

One of the few financially successful hotels was the magnificent Cabin John Hotel. Rosa Bobinger opened a lunchroom to serve co-workers of her husband, Joseph, a stonemason engaged in building the **Cabin John Bridge**. An engineering marvel of its day, it was the largest single-span masonry bridge in the world. In 1873, the Bobingers built a modest lodge, and expanded the operation to eventually create a 40-bedroom hotel with two 100-seat banquet halls, three bars, and numerous smaller halls and shops. The hotel, which reached its peak of popularity from the 1890s to 1910, remained open until 1925 and was destroyed by fire in 1931.<sup>51</sup>



*Cabin John Hotel, early postcard view.*

Somerset T. Williams built a 22-room hotel in 1887, naming it **High View** in honor of its setting on a knoll overlooking Ten Mile Creek Valley. Located in the community of Burdette, just outside Boyds, Williams' inn was also known as the **Burdette Hotel**.



Kimberly Prothro, Traceries

<sup>50</sup>Ellen R. Marsh and Mary Anne O'Boyle. *Takoma Park: Portrait of a Victorian Suburb*. Takoma Park, Md: Historic Takoma, Inc, 1984.

<sup>51</sup>Andrea Price Stevens, "Suburban Summer Resorts, 1870-1910," *The Montgomery County Story*, 24:3 (August 1981).

Though many architectural styles are represented in railroad suburbs, including Second Empire, Stick Style, and Shingle Style, the leading design of early suburban houses was Queen Anne (a discussion of architectural styles follows in Chapter Two). These substantial, turreted, asymmetrical residences dominate the early development of communities such as Kensington, Takoma Park, Somerset, and Garrett Park.

Despite the conveniences inherent in railroad suburbs, decades passed before the subdivisions fully developed. With the intent of preserving open space around their residences, many families purchased two or more lots, with houses straddling lot lines. Many were summer residences for wealthy Washington families. As historian Andrea Rebeck wrote, "Commuting by train proved not to be as convenient as originally proposed...The train schedule, travel time and fares which increased the farther one went from the city line, discouraged moderate and middle income families from building homes too far out on the rail line."<sup>55</sup>

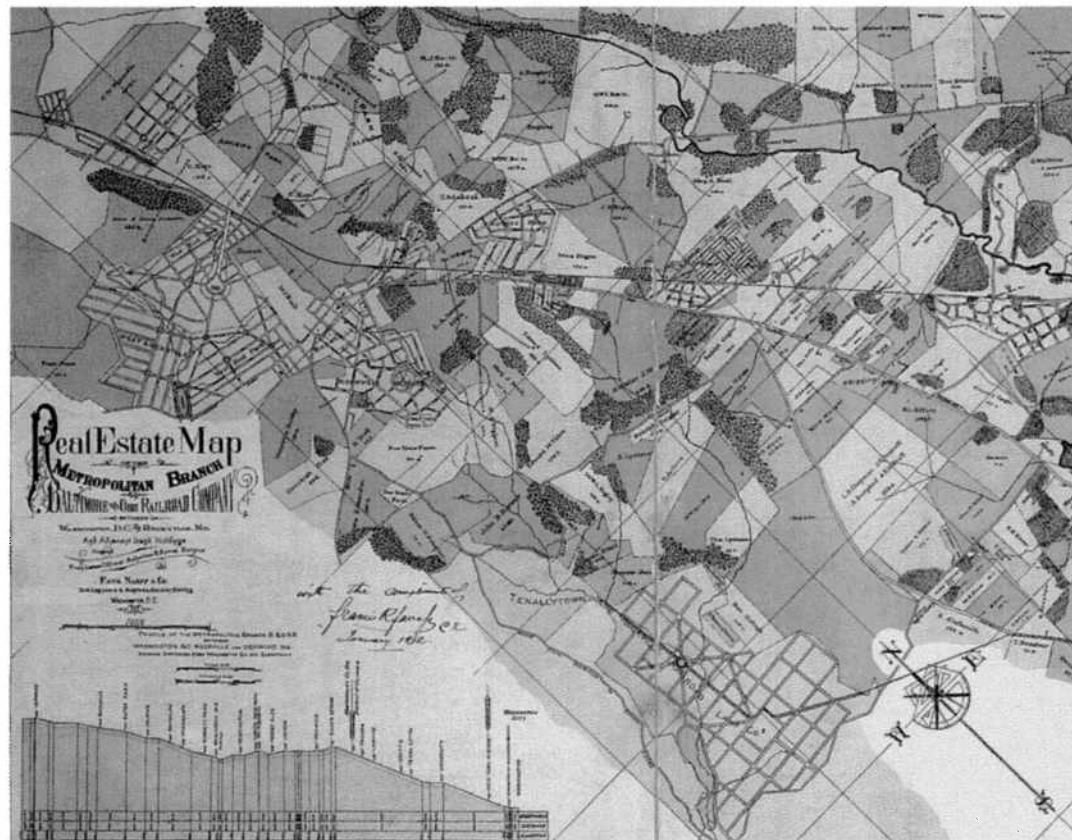
### STREETCAR ERA SUBURBANIZATION

In the late 1890s, Montgomery County real estate speculators began to use streetcar technology and resorts to draw residents to new suburban communities. Chevy Chase was the county's first and most influential streetcar suburb planned and developed between 1892 and 1930. It was the most visionary investment in Montgomery County real estate. Upscale residences in a comprehensively planned environment set the tone for early twentieth century neighborhoods throughout northwest Washington and southern Montgomery County. Architecturally, **Chevy Chase Village** contains the county's highest concentration of outstanding architect-designed suburban houses rendered in post-Victorian styles of the period 1890-1930. Together, the surviving plan and architecture of Chevy Chase Village represents one of the most intact and important examples of suburban planning and architectural expression built in the region before World War II.

Senator Francis G. Newlands of Nevada incorporated the Chevy Chase Land Company in 1890 and arranged for the purchase of land along a proposed streetcar line. From the beginning, Newlands sought to develop a singular



*The Chevy Chase Land Company extended Connecticut Avenue into Montgomery County and established the streetcar line known as Rock Creek Railway. This view of Connecticut Avenue, taken about 1915, looks south from Bradley Lane.*



<sup>55</sup>Andrea Rebeck, p.3.



Chevy Chase Historical Society, Courtesy: Ara Mestrobian

neighborhood of the finest quality. Newlands' comprehensive plan included zoning, architectural design guidelines, landscaping, and infrastructure, including construction of the Rock Creek Railway, trestle bridges over Rock Creek, water and sewer systems, and an electric powerhouse. The \$1,250,000 corporate investment in the infrastructure of the region was a remarkable statement of faith in the growth and progress of the national capital area and created the foundation for regional community building on an unprecedented comprehensive scale. Taken as a whole, the buildings in Chevy Chase Village—sited along the planned, curving street system and landscaped grounds—represent an important cultural expression of American wealth and power in the early twentieth century and reflect in their designs the optimism and comfort considered central to domestic architecture of the post-Victorian American suburb.<sup>56</sup>

In all, Montgomery County had six major streetcar lines with terminals at Takoma Park, Forest Glen, Kensington, Rockville, Great Falls, and Cabin John. To attract riders to streetcar lines, developers created amusement parks at the terminus, such as Takoma Park's Wildwood Park, Chevy Chase Lake, and Glen Echo Park. The Tenallytown and Rockville line (1890) operated Bethesda Park amusement park at its northern terminus that was extended to the Rockville fairgrounds and then, in 1904, to Woodlawn Hotel. The community of **Somerset** was platted in 1890 along this line, which is present day Wisconsin Avenue.

Fava Naeff and Co. Real Estate Map of the Metropolitan Branch of the B & O Railroad, 1890.

<sup>56</sup>For a comprehensive history of Chevy Chase, see Elizabeth Jo Lampl and Kimberly Prothro Williams, *Chevy Chase: A Home Suburb for the Nation's Capital*. Silver Spring, Md: Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Maryland Historical Trust, 1998.



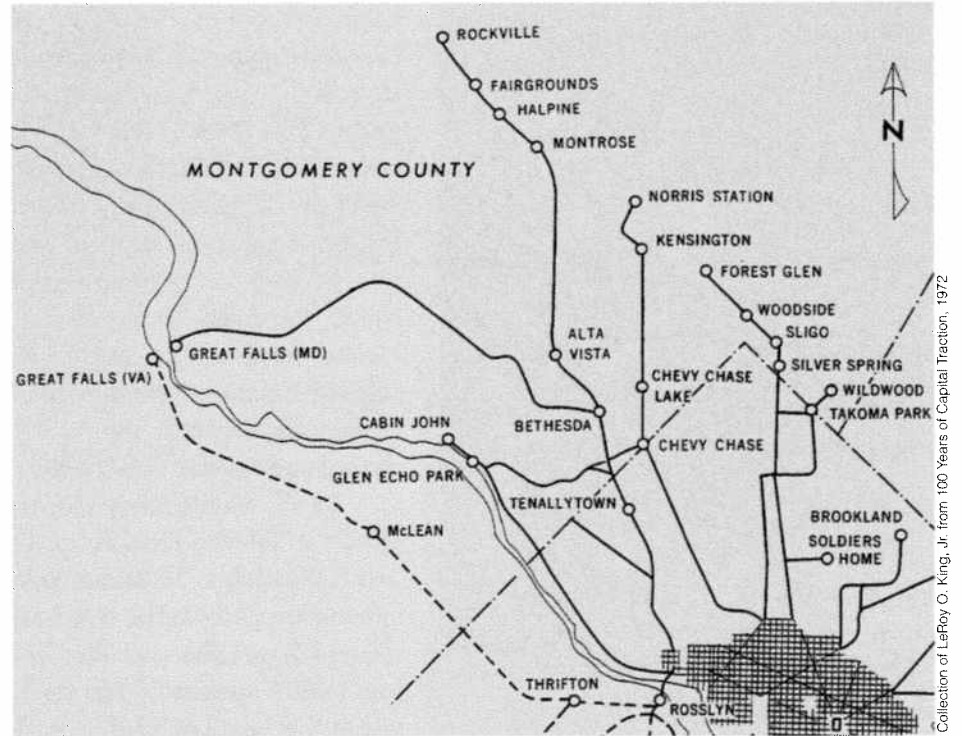
Communities that had been platted in the railroad era blossomed in the streetcar era as Montgomery County's population grew in the 1920s. In Takoma Park, eight subdivisions opened along trolley lines and the population soared, making the community the tenth largest incorporated town in Maryland by 1922. The houses built in this era reflect changing American tastes in architecture, from the elaborate ornamentation of the late 19th century to more practical, simplified designs. Scores of Craftsman style bungalows, with low sloping roofs and exposed rafter tails, came to characterize Takoma Park streetscapes.<sup>57</sup>

#### RECREATION: HUNT & COUNTRY CLUBS, PARKS, & BASEBALL

In the 1920s and 1930s, Montgomery County became a recreational playground for Metropolitan area residents. It was the era of the so-called "white collar invasion" of the county, when Washingtonians with increasing leisure time joined country clubs, converted working farms into horse farms, and went to baseball games.

The image of country living came in part from prominent Washingtonians who had established estates in Montgomery County. In the early 1900s, country estates designed by some of the nation's most accomplished architects graced Rockville Pike and dotted the countryside from North Chevy Chase to North Bethesda and Potomac. One of the earliest of several brick Classical Revival mansions was the **Charles Corby Estate** (c1914), now known as Strathmore Hall. Corby, a bread manufacturer and inventor, hired Charles Barton Keen to enlarge an existing house, creating a grand residence with oak paneling, parquet floors, stone fireplaces, and a two-story music room.

John Russell Pope, one of the nation's premier architects, designed two notable Classical Revival residences in Montgomery County. Pope's **Wilkins Estate** (c1917), near Rockville,



Streetcar Lines connecting Montgomery County and Washington, D.C.

When the facility opened in 1934, **Meadowbrook Stables** was hailed as one of the finest saddle clubs in the East.

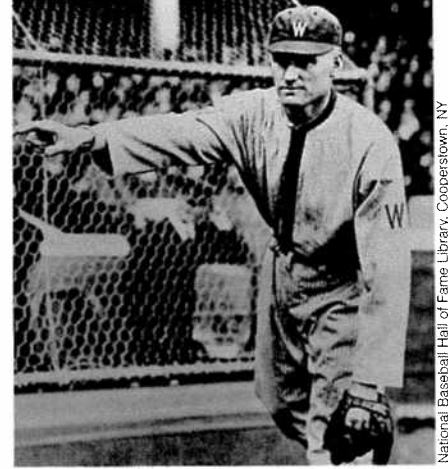


<sup>57</sup>The history of the streetcar is presented at the National Capital Trolley Museum in Wheaton.



Lois Snyderman, 1991

Washington architect John J. Whelan designed the Beaux Arts style **Marwood** (1931). Original owners Samuel K. Martin III, heir to a Chicago fortune, and his wife Jane C. Martin entertained lavishly at Marwood, when they weren't living abroad. The Martins had a theatre installed for the amusement of family and friends.



National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY

Above right: Walter "Big Train" Johnson (1887-1946) was the fastest baseball pitcher in the history of the game when he was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, in 1936.

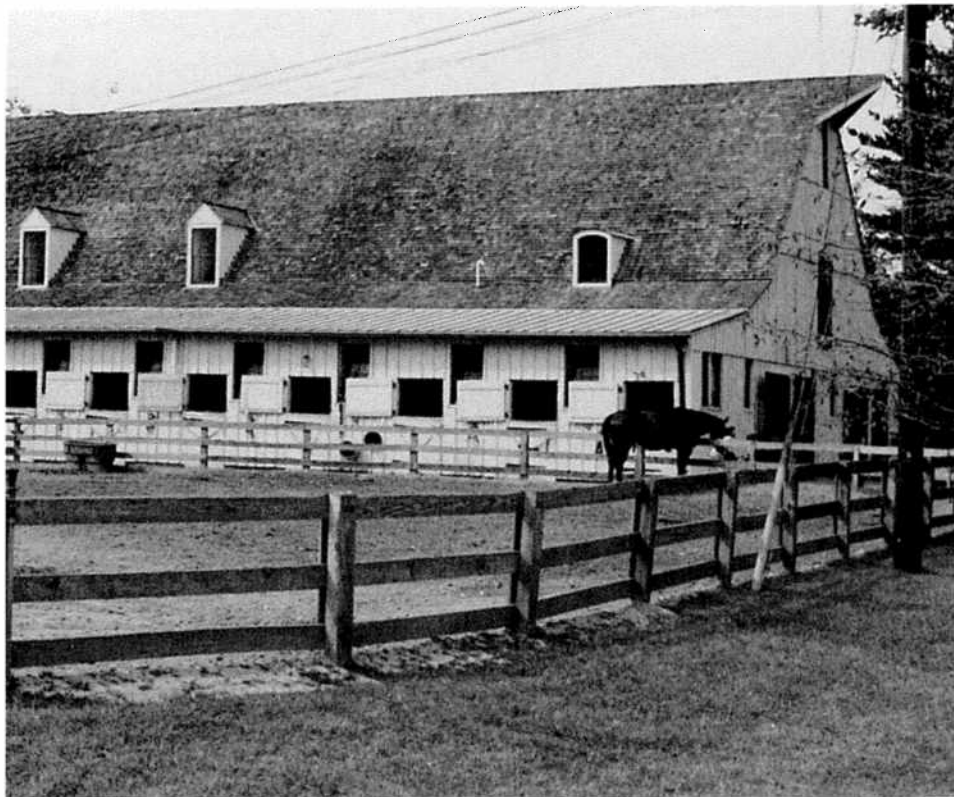
summer home of Washington Post publisher John F. Wilkins, was featured in *The American Architect* magazine. A decade later, Pope designed **Woodend** (1927-8), in North Chevy Chase, for Chester Wells, a naval officer, and Marian Dixon Wells, Australian heiress. Nearby, a protégé of Pope, architect Edward Clarence Dean designed David Fairchild's Arts and Crafts and Japanese-influenced residence known as **In the Woods** (1910).

Wolcott Waggaman used Italian villa imagery in his design of financier Lyman and Elizabeth Kendall's **Kentsdale** residence (1928), built on a 1,000-acre estate in Potomac. On a site overlooking the Potomac River, John J. Whelan designed the monumental **Marwood** (1931) in high-style Beaux Arts style.

Montgomery County was home to two renowned baseball pitchers. Jack Bentley, born in Sandy Spring and owner of **Oakleigh**, played for the New York Giants. Walter "Big Train" Johnson, pitching for the

Washington Senators, owned a farm in Bethesda known today as the **Walter Johnson House**. Bentley and Johnson competed against each other in the 1924 World Series. Johnson ultimately led his team to victory in the game that went to 11 innings. After retiring from his baseball career, Johnson served two terms as a County Commissioner.

The Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission was created in 1927 to manage a system of stream valley parks and oversee development of adjacent land. By 1932, there were 12 golf and country clubs in Montgomery County, which were three-quarters of the total clubs in the Metropolitan area. Accompanying some clubs were residential developments, such as Manor Park (1927) and Kenwood (1928). The Potomac Hunt moved to Montgomery County in 1931 when the Washington Riding and Hunt Club moved its kennels from Northwest Washington to Potomac. Since 1980, the Potomac Hunt has been quartered on Peach Tree Road, near



Clare Lise Cavicchi, M+NCPPC, 1998

Barnesville.<sup>58</sup> Meadowbrook Stables opened in 1934 in Rock Creek Park, Silver Spring, and hosted local, national, and international horse shows and festivities. Hailed as one of the finest saddle clubs in the East, the facility included a large Colonial Revival horse barn, outdoor riding ring, and blacksmith shop.

## DAWN OF THE AUTOMOBILE

At the turn of the 20th century, the automobile was an expensive novelty for the rich. Two decades later, the availability of mass-produced automobiles led to their widespread use. From 1920 to 1930, the number of registered cars in the nation more than tripled. By the end of that decade, one of every five residents in Montgomery County owned a car. The automobile age brought a new set of building types and development patterns. Builders designed roadside architecture to be recognized from behind the windshield of a moving automobile. Developers subdivided tracts of land away from previously settled railroad and streetcar lines.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup>A Washington Hunt traversed downtown Washington after its organization in 1828. The Chevy Chase Hunt evolved from the Dunblane Hunt Club, operating from 1892 until about 1912. The Washington Riding and Hunt Club had organized hunts in Rock Creek Park from the 1920s until the kennels were moved to Potomac in 1931. The name of the hunt changed in 1938 from the Riding and Hunt Club to the Potomac Hunt. Margo McConihe (Ed), "By-days and Bygone Days with the Potomac Hunt," in *History of Potomac*, Potomac Almanac, 1970. Austin H. Kiplinger, "The Potomac Hunt—A Few Facts," in *The How Not to Book of Country Life*, Montevideo, Christmas 1973.

<sup>59</sup>Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985. Andrea Rebeck, "Montgomery County in the Early Twentieth Century," 1987.



A prime example of commercial roadside fantasies popular in the early 20th century, the *Cider Barrel* (c1922) promoted sweet cider in the era of Prohibition, when alcohol was banned. Postcard, c1922.

By the end of the 1920s, one in every five county residents owned an automobile. Photograph, c1926.

