

Glencarlyn History through the Prism of Race: Key Dates, People and Times of Change

A Disclaimer: This history reflects only my reading of secondary sources on Glencarlyn and Arlington, my knowledge as a teacher of history and my views. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the Glencarlyn Citizens Association.

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An Economy Based on Slavery

- 1742: The 166 acres of which Glencarlyn is a part were bought by John Ball from Lord Fairfax. Ball operated a family farm and a small mill on 4 mile run. No evidence exists in available records that John Ball or the subsequent purchaser, William Carlin, owned slaves. It is possible that John Ball rented enslaved labor to operate his mill. However, in 1760, the Ball farm was surrounded by 3 neighbors who did own slaves: Simon Pearson (7 Corners), John Alexander, (Columbia Pike) and William Hardin, (Arlington Forest/Barcroft).
- 100 years later, in 1860, several of the Carlin men fought for the Confederacy.
- In 1800, an estimated 1000 persons lived in the rural areas of what was then Alexandria, the area to become Arlington. About 650 were White and 350 were enslaved persons, two thirds and one third.

The Beginnings of Black Communities in Arlington

- 1860 and before: A small number of free Black men bought property in Arlington. Those well documented include:
 - 1857, John Jackson, 'free colored' who bought 3 acres in the Bottom, an area just south of Chain Bridge along the river and inland, from William Walker, a White farmer and a founder of Walker Chapel Methodist. Walker also sold 3 acres to George Carter, a free Negro. (The Bottom, Jessica Kaplan, Arlington Historical Magazine, vol. 16, 2018, No. 2.)
- 1854: Levi and Sarah Ann Jones, free Black persons, bought property in what is now Green Valley.

It makes one pause to read that in 1861 Virginia referendum on secession, the overwhelming majority of the voters in

the rural districts that were to become Arlington did not vote for secession from the Union.

- 1865: 12 small Black communities, and some Black settlements of a few families, 13 or less, developed all over the county, after the Civil War and well into the 20th century. They were separate from their White neighbors, but not entirely confined. (p. 421, Residential Patterns in Arlington, VA).
- In 1900, Arlington remained about one third Black.

By 1970, only 4 of these Black settlements remained: Nauck and Arlington View, developed in areas where free Black families already lived in 1865, and Hall's Hill and Butler Holmes, developed by Black purchasers after 1865.

The other 8 communities were bought out and squeezed out by White private developers and in some cases, government use of eminent domain. (See note on Queen City.) Segregation then forced Black families into fewer and fewer Black areas. The effect was to ensure that Arlington growth was White until the late '60's/early 70's when immigration began.

The End of the Civil War in 1865 and the collapse of the Reconstruction in 1878: 1887 to 1940 and WWII.

- 1887: Picture Arlington in 1887, the year when Glencarlyn was developed. The Reconstruction to build a new South with education, free and fair elections, and rights for all, run by Lincoln/Grant Republicans, was abandoned by the nation in 1878, nine years earlier. That new South was abandoned in Virginia, too. In Arlington by 1887, the Democrats, by then the party of the Lost Cause of the Confederacy, were already beginning their campaign to change the Virginia Constitution to deny Blacks the right to vote.

Glencarlyn

- 1887: Glencarlyn developers William W. Curtis and Samuel S. Burdett were some of the very first developers in Arlington. They bought the property from Ann and Andrew Carlin to sell lots, on which individual buyers built over time. They tapped into the convenience of the W and OD rail line from Alexandria to Leesburg with its stop at Carlin Springs. The stop was popularized by a Dance and Picnic Pavilion operated near the spring by the Carlins. The rail line gave potential Glencarlyn residents access to jobs in Alexandria. The nearby Bluemont stop on a line to DC gave access to DC. Furthermore, as there were few paved roads at the time, the rail offered a less dusty ride.

It is not clear that the advertisements for Glencarlyn suggested that this was an all-White neighborhood. But the residents in the area at the time, such as the Carlin family, were in fact White, as were Burdett and Curtis. And since Carlin men fought for the South, they likely would not have welcomed Black homeowners.

Burdett was a Lincoln/Grant Republican, having fought for the Union, so it is not likely that he supported the campaign to deny Black people the vote. He does not seem to have continued as a developer. But the developers who were active in Arlington real estate for the next 30- 40 years were men who saw the future of Virginia and Arlington in supporting the Lost Cause of the Confederacy by containing and controlling Black residents.

Arlington Developers and Growth as a White Suburb

1890-1940. Among prominent investors, developers and lawyers in Arlington in the late 1890's and the early twentieth century were Frank Lyon and George H. Rucker, a lawyer colleague named Crandal Mackey, and businessman William Ball, all White men. In their view, two related problems stood in the way of the expansion of Arlington as a growing and prosperous White community.

- The first problem was that the Virginia Constitution gave Black citizens the right to vote. These developers felt that denying Blacks the vote had many virtues. It would cut down what they saw as election fraud, thus communicating a more stable community to potential buyers. White Southerners since the end of the Civil War,

with or without evidence, alleged election fraud when Blacks and their White Republicans voted. The Arlington Black community was an unlikely candidate for fraud as it had many homeowners and was quite stable.

Lyon and Rucker and Mackey seemed to fear that with the continued right to vote, Black citizens might object to development where it affected Black communities, and Blacks and their White allies might work to claim their share of municipal support, such as schools, and paved roads. Blacks were still about one third of the population but unlike in 1800, now they were free. Furthermore, these men did not want to live near Black people, and they felt certain that prospective White homebuyers would feel the same.

- The second problem was the fact that, according to the developers and some historians, the small community of Rosslyn, at the end of Key Bridge, the nearby Black Jackson City and the two race tracks near the 14th Street bridge had developed a reputation for lawlessness, with many bars, and some prostitution. Horse racing was legal but betting was not, and there was betting. Likely Black employees worked at the Race Tracks.

The actual reality of lawlessness in Rosslyn and Jackson City is hard to assess at this distance. Some of the businesses in the area were owned by Blacks, and the area had some integration. Developers did not want Black businesses, or integration, and therefore the removal of Rosslyn bars and those in Jackson City was "a twofer": move out Blacks and their businesses and change the image of Arlington to a Whiter image. There does seem to be agreement that the view one got from riding the trolley from DC over the Key Bridge to the turnaround in Rosslyn was not very inviting.

Cleaning Up Arlington

These men and their supporters set about to clean up Arlington, according to their vision. They cooperated in a set of actions and they set up a League of Good Citizenship to help out as needed. In order to enforce denying Blacks the vote in a new Constitution, outlaw liquor, and clean up Rosslyn anyway possible, they campaigned to get Mr. Mackey elected to commonwealth's attorney because he supported all of these goals.

Frank Lyon bought a local paper, the Monitor, a vehicle

to campaign to elect Mackey and to build support for the other goals. Frank Lyon was a teetotaler and wanted a dry Arlington.

In 1903 Mackey was elected as the Commonwealth Attorney. The result was contested. Republican petitioners, Black and White, asked for a recount. Among the petitioners who asked for a recount, three of the signers are "Harry W. Gray (Negro) and Thornton H. Gray(Negro), and Louis Delbert(naturalized)." The identifiers are penciled in on Mackey's copy of the petition. The two Gray gentlemen are descendants of Selina Gray, the enslaved house manager of the Lee Plantation whose family settled in Arlington View after 1865, building some of the first housing there. They were among the founding members of the stable, home owning community that is Black Arlington, and they understandably did not support Mackey.

Mackey's election was certified without a recount. This was a first step to keeping growth in Arlington White and segregated.

In 1904, the VA Constitution was changed to add what is in effect a poll tax and other obstacles for voting, designed to deprive Black people of the vote. The management of registration was a local Board of Registrars, backed up by the Commonwealth attorney as needed.

William Ball then headed a Special Grand jury to investigate the Race Tracks, which were indicted for gambling and closed.

As for Jackson City and some parts of Rosslyn, in 1904, Crandal Mackey, the new attorney general himself, and 6 men, League members and others whom he had deputized, got off the railroad train from DC right after it left the 14th Street Bridge going south in to Virginia and "entered the establishments where illegal activities were conducted and broke up the furniture and generally wreaked havoc."

They were armed with axes, sledge hammers, and a sawed off shot-gun. p. 156, CR. Rose, *Arlington County*

To close the saloons, the first try was a referendum to make the County dry. The dry's lost. Frank Lyon published the names of applicants and supporters for saloon licenses to embarrass citizens. He also discovered an obscure law that the saloonkeeper needed to show that he was running

a business where there was sufficient police presence to guarantee public safety. The County had one sheriff, and magisterial districts had one constable. A local judge found that saloons applying for license did not meet the public safety requirement. Saloons were closed.

The Success of Arlington Development

George H. Rucker, Frank Lyons, and other developers went on to very successfully organize White subdivisions in Arlington. Frank Lyon, Lyon Properties developed Lyon Park, 1919 and Lyon Village. Frank Lyon's advertisements for Lyon Park include in the list of amenities "Good White Neighbors".

George Rucker, Rucker Realty, founded in 1906, built a subdivision called Clarendon Addition. He also built Cherrydale, Tara-Leeway Heights, Ballston and the Westover Shopping Centers.

By the 1920's County zoning promoted by Rucker, Lyons and other developers added to the attraction of White developments by requiring and then building paved streets, sewers, public water and electricity. Glencarlyn was included in these improvements over time.

These infrastructure improvements were denied to Black communities until the 1960's. Realtors and County Board members cooperated to support this racist system. Restrictive covenants developed around WWI were another device used to prohibit sales to "Blacks, Jews, and anyone not of the Caucasian race." It seems likely that the earlier Glencarlyn development did not start out with such covenants, but it is possible that covenants were used when they became common.

For Black citizens of Arlington, this period 1890 on to the 1930's was one of ever tightening spaces for housing and schools and businesses, and violence. In 1897 a Black man Joseph McCoy was very publicly lynched from a light pole in downtown Alexandria, and in 1899, a Black 16 year old, Benjamin Thomas, was lynched there too. For residents of Black Arlington View, downtown Alexandria was next door, over the Ridge Road hill and down into town.

The KKK had a resurgence in the USA, and in Arlington, beginning at the turn of the century and culminating in the period after WWI, especially in the areas of Ballston and Cherrydale. Hall's Hill resident Wilma Jones writes

that Black people began leaving Cherrydale in the early 1900's. "The Cherrydale and Ballston areas had a growing Klan membership, and racism was unrestrained. By the 1920's the Ballston Klan had its own Marching Band, and sponsored a Youth Baseball team (that played on a lot in Ballston), owned a site for cross burnings at the current site of the Ballston Quarter. Those Black neighborhoods were becoming uncomfortable places for Black people to live, so they moved to Hall's Hill to feel safer." Page 6, My Hall's Hill Family.

The World That Shaped Glencarlyn

This is the world in which Glencarlyn grew up as a neighborhood: segregation in all areas of life, very sharply defined and limited Black neighborhoods, and very limited contact with Black people.

Glencarlyn lies about a mile south from Ballston and those Klan marches and rallies in the 1920's and 30's. The Black neighborhood of Green Valley where Drew school is located was 2 miles southeast of Glencarlyn, and a world away. Until well after WWII, Green Valley in some areas had no paved roads, sewers, or city water. No library.

1935-36: The Federal Housing Administration began making low interest 30 year guaranteed loans for bank mortgages. Those loans went to White families and then after the war, White GI's got preference. Those loans were made all over North Arlington, and possibly in Glencarlyn and some selected parts of South Arlington such as Ridge Road.

Glencarlyn was in the area considered safe for loans. But Green Valley was not.

1972: When the 1952 Brown vs the Board required desegregation, Arlington schools were segregated. Children from Glencarlyn attended a White school. The Glencarlyn school is now called Campbell. To desegregate secondary schools, Arlington School Board accepted 4 students to Stratford Junior High School in 1957. It was not until 1972 that APS completed desegregation by closing the last Black elementary school, Drew. APS bused the Black Drew students, roughly two to each White elementary school, over the objection of the Drew parents expressed in a court suit. Like all White students in Arlington, the White students at Glencarlyn Elementary did not move.

The world that shaped Glencarlyn was racialized in many ways. It was a binary world: White people, many many White neighborhoods, White businesses and a Black world: Black people, 4 Black neighborhoods and limited Black businesses.

The Civil Rights era removed the legal supports for segregation. Arlington began to provide infrastructure in Black Neighborhoods. Immigrants of color began to move into the Columbia Pike area. However, the great majority of the zip codes that were White in 1970 remained 70-90% White in the 2010 census. Race and racism is an important and useful prism for talking about Glencarlyn and Arlington, past and present.

Notes:

The entire Queen City community of 200 Black Families was cleared out with 30 days notice for Pentagon parking in 1941. The Ballston community of 25 Black families all owned their homes, as did 64% of Black families in Arlington in 1920. After WWII, Ballston families sold to developers who built what has become Ballston.

Sources

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- *Wilma Jones, My Halls Hill Family, 2018*
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- *C.B. Rose, Jr., Arlington County, Virginia, A History, 1975*
- *Notes on Glencarlyn History from Arlington Historical Society sources, Tim Aiken, Glencarlyn, 2020*