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Gary Ditto's Newsletter

MAY 1993

The Rocks Under Your Feet:

A Tour of Lower Rock Creek Park

PART II

We're taking up where we left off in January: at the second half of last year's winter walk through Rock Creek Park, courtesy of Jim O'Connor and the Audubon Naturalist Society. In Part I, O'Connor, an urban geologist at UDC, explained the geologic interest of the park as the boundary between two geologic regions, the Atlantic Coast Province made up of sand, gravel, and clay, and the Piedmont Plateau's bluestone.

O'Connor explains that the way rock cleaves, or splits, is essential to geology. Potomac bluestone cleaves along flat faces, resulting in flat-surfaced, oblong boulders, such as those in Rock Creek. These surfaces determine the flow of water in the creek. Flat-surfaced rock, in addition, makes good building stone. As we walk along the creek, O'Connor points out small potholes in the boulders. Unlike street potholes, these are shallow round holes which are produced by the whirling action of water.

We cross Rock Creek at Rapids Bridge, a brown-timbered arch above the little rapids. The river is low this year because there has been little rainfall or snow, Jim says. Now we are walking along Beach Drive, which is closed for the weekend for joggers, bicyclers, and rollerbladers who dash by our slower party. I am beginning to feel the cold, and wish that I'd brought some gloves. The advantage of a winter tour, Jim says, is that you can see the whole geology, which is obscured by vegetation in spring and summer.

As we walk along Beach Drive we pass various landmarks, such as the picturesque Boulder Bridge, which is made entirely of large, round, mossy boulders. There also used to be a Cobble Bridge and a Pebble Bridge, but only Boulder Bridge, which is almost 100 years old, has been historically preserved.

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We pass the former site of Blagden's Mill, which was one of twenty-six mills in the Rock Creek area in the early 1800's. Finally we reach Pierce Mill, the only survivor of those twenty-six mills. Pierce Mill, built in the 1820's, functioned until 1897, and was restored in the 1930's and again in the 1960's. Now it is open to visitors, and so we hurry inside to warm our hands at the old-fashioned potbellied stove.

After a twenty-minute break to warm up and eat our bag lunches, we begin the return lap of the tour by walking along the side of Broad Branch Road. We cross a little concrete bridge over a tiny creek called Soapstone Creek. A trail runs along the creek to Soapstone Valley Park, which is near Connecticut Avenue. Jim O'Connor explains that the park and creek are named for a soapstone deposit once used by Native American carvers. Soapstone, a combination of talc and serpentine, is soft and easily carved. You can still find a few pieces of soapstone in Soapstone Creek if you look, Jim says.

Broad Branch is Jim O'Connor's favorite local small river. Filled with irregular Potomac bluestone boulders, Broad Branch has miniature white-water rapids, little waterfalls, and crystal-clear pools. There is, however, no place to park beside Broad Branch, so Jim cautions anyone wishing to explore it. We keep to the side of the road, walking on dead leaves and undergrowth beside large boulders, which serve as a guardrail. These boulders, Jim explains, are quarry waste, because they contain neat cylindrical holes right through them. These holes are drill holes cut to test the quality of the stone for building purposes. Rejected for building, these stones have been used to mark the roadside.

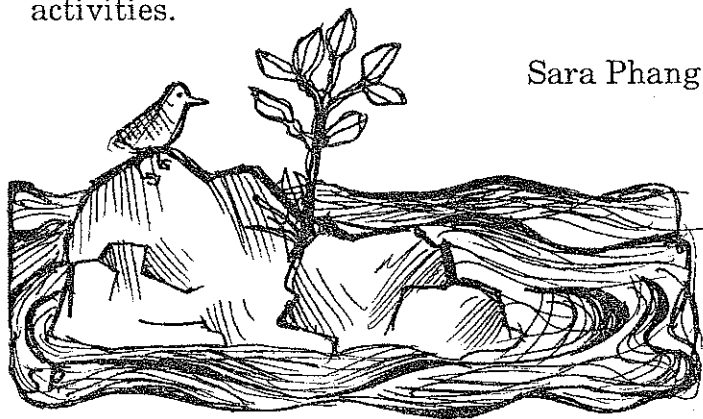
Shortly, we come upon the quarry itself, which dates from the early part of this century. Flat, vertical stone walls cut into the hillside indicate the quarry, which was

cut rather than blasted. For a long time the quarry was the subject of court battles. The quarry owners wanted the building value of the stone, even after the land belonged to the park. Now the quarry site is used as a climbing site for amateur rock climbers.

Finally we reach the last leg of the tour, a steep walk uphill. At the roadside, storm drains drain into large pipes that exit just down the hill. When it rains, the storm water carries soil away with it, causing erosion gullies to form. Some of these gullies are quite large, undermining tree roots. Erosion is a chronic problem in Rock Creek Park, because the Park Service lacks money to build special erosion-preventing drains. Such drains channel water into a concrete-lined holding pit. In the pit, water can slowly trickle into the ground, instead of rushing downhill and taking soil with it.

Back at the Nature Center, we say goodbye to Jim O'Connor, and thank him for the fun and informative tour. He will offer similar nature tours later this spring and summer; call the Audubon Naturalist Society for general information on programs and activities.

Sara Phang



Many thanks to Jim O'Connor and the Audubon Naturalist Society, located on Jones Mill Road in Chevy Chase, for this unique opportunity to get to know more about the neighborhood. Many other events are scheduled in the coming months. Call the ANS at (301)652-9188 for information.

Montgomery County's 1993 Women's Fair Women in the 90's: Choices & Challenges

Plan to attend the 1992 Women's Fair on Saturday, May 15, 1993 at the Rockville Campus of Montgomery College. Workshops cover a wide range of topics, including family and workplace issues, personal development, health, and financial planning. The Fair, which also features an exhibit hall, runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This year's keynote speaker is Susan Nayfield, M.D., Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, National Cancer Institute. The fee is \$12; the fee is lower for students and individuals over 60. On-site registration will be held from 8-9 a.m. in the PE Building. For additional information, call Dawn Stiles at (301) 977-3425.

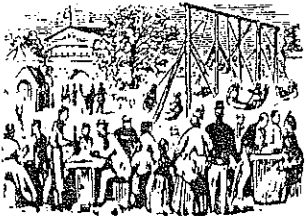
**JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER:
The Kensington Park Library
May Look Closed,
But It's Not Forgotten**



It seems like 10 years, but it's only been 7 months, says Marie Roche of the closing of the Kensington Park Library. Marie, the former head librarian at Kensington Park, is a member of CISOKO, Citizens in Support of Keeping Kensington Park Library Open. Since the library closed at the end of last September for a much-needed renovation, local citizens have rallied in support to ensure the library's scheduled reopening in Fall 1994. The activity of the construction contractor is noticeable to passersby and the library advisory committee has already been consulted on the selection of new carpeting. All in all, everyone is happy to know that the renovation is underway. However, the coming year will be critical to the library's re-opening. Funds for library staff have been cut. At a time when the county budget is tight and library hours across the county are dwindling, CISOKO members have been rallying citizen support to work to ensure that Kensington Park Library staffing funds will be in the operating budget in time for the planned re-opening. In the events surrounding the Chevy Chase Library renovation, the county has already shown a willingness to delay reopening a library for an indeterminate time, a tactic library users of all ages find hard to justify.

CISOKO needs your membership. Mail your individual (\$8), family (\$12), or student/senior citizen (\$5) memberships or donations to CISOKO, c/o Alvin Rivera, 4302 Star Lane, Rockville, MD 20852. For further information call (301) 770-1437.

**Mark Your Calendar For the Country Fair
at Circle Manor Nursing Home
Carroll Place in Old Kensington
Saturday, May 8, 1993
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**



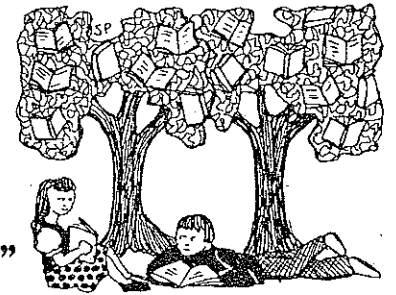
Circle Manor's annual celebration of National Nursing Home Week will feature crafts and antiques, a parade, quilt raffle, picnic, and cakewalk. Slurp on your favorite sno cone, check out the goings-on at the dunk tank, and listen to barbershop melodies. For more information about a Saturday filled with fun for the whole family, call Juanell or Learah in the Activities Department at (301) 949-0230.

**"Men and Women
How They Do Carry On!"**

An evening with Sandra Harris, storyteller, will be held in the main auditorium of Cedar Lane Unitarian Church at 9601 Cedar Lane on Friday, June 4 at 7:30 p.m. With musical accompaniment by Maury Merkin, she will tell stories from life, literature, and the folk tradition, suitable for ages 15 to 105.

The event will benefit UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which helps women living in poverty in the developing world to help themselves, and the Cedar Lane Women's Social Issues Task Force. Admission is \$5 at the door.

**AROUND
THE
WORLD
"IN THE WOODS"**

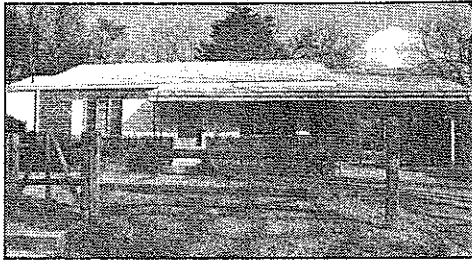


Almost a century ago, a man named David Fairchild brought plants from all over the world to the new home he built in the wild countryside of Chevy Chase at the spot where Connecticut Avenue dead ended. A renowned botanist, Fairchild's pioneering efforts in horticulture have benefited the famed cherry tree plantings at the Tidal Basin (Fairchild seedlings replenished the famous Japanese gift trees felled by disease) as well as the yards of countless homes in Montgomery County and Northwest D.C. -- Fairchild Japanese maple tree seedlings are a traditional Mothers' Day gift from students of Outdoor Nursery School.

Over 40 years ago, the Fairchild home, on Spring Valley Road, became the home for Outdoor Nursery School, a pre-school adventure for the 75 students who each year explore the "how and why" of the world, inside and outside "In the Woods," the name David Fairchild gave his Arts and Crafts style home.

This May 16 from 1 to 5 p.m., the alumni, teachers, and friends of Outdoor Nursery School will be celebrating the school's 60th anniversary. The school has marked the occasion with a year-long fundraising drive to raise \$20,000 for the new, specially designed playground equipment and to renovate some of the outbuildings. The Sunday "Birthday Party" is a chance for "Outdoor alums" from all around the world to enjoy a happy time for all ages. There'll be clowns, music, a mime, food, mural painting, reptiles, birds, and most important of all, good friends. For more information, call the school at (301) 656-8871.

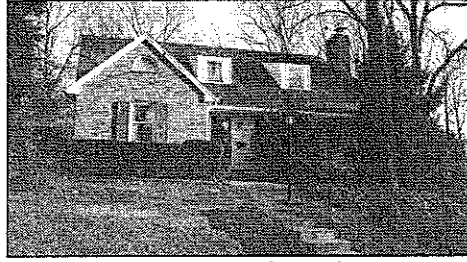
FOR SALE
\$174,950



4509 Puller Drive
Kensington

Lovely Ranch with first floor
Family Room w/FP. 2 BR, 2 BA.

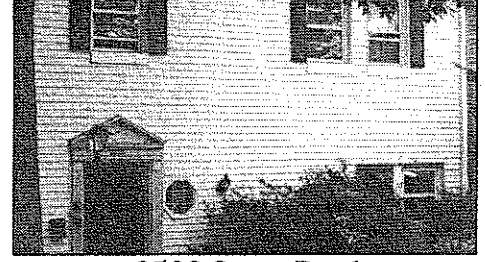
FOR SALE
\$392,000



10107 Bexhill Drive
Kensington

Elegant Family Home. Liv.Rm.
w/FP. Din.Rm. TS Kit. Rec.Rm.
New Sun Rm. 4 BR, 3 BA. Den.

FOR SALE
\$104,000



8533 Geren Road
Silver Spring

Townhouse in excellent condition.
Liv. Rm. Din Rm. 2 BR.
Backs to parkland.

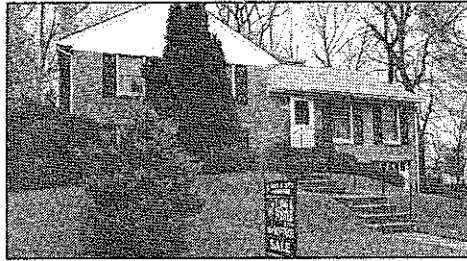
SOLD
\$169,000



9304 Warren Street
Silver Spring

Handyperson's special.
Large 100-year-old Victorian.
in need of TLC. 6 BR, 2 1/2 BA.

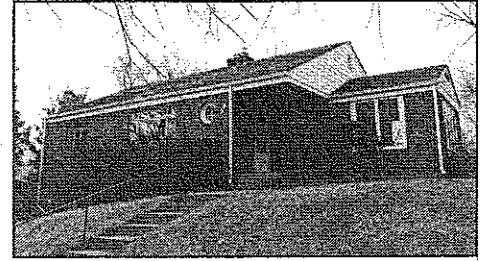
FOR SALE
\$359,000



4104 Dewmar Court
Kensington

Well-kept Split Level w/ spectacular
glass/cedar addition. 4 BR. 3 BA.

SOLD
\$214,000



4501 Woodfield Road
Kensington

Restored Rambler, all in "Like New"
condition. Liv.Rm.w/FP.
Sun Rm. w/new windows.
3 BR. 1 1/2 BA. 1-Car Garage.

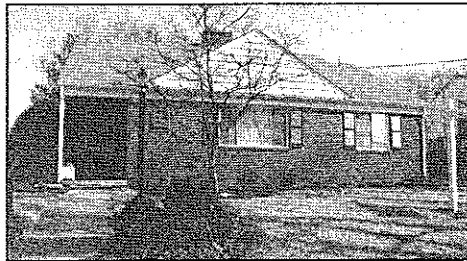
SOLD
\$182,000



10122 Crestwood Road
Kensington

Charming Cape Cod. New Roof.
Porch. 3 BR. Liv.Rm. w/ FP.

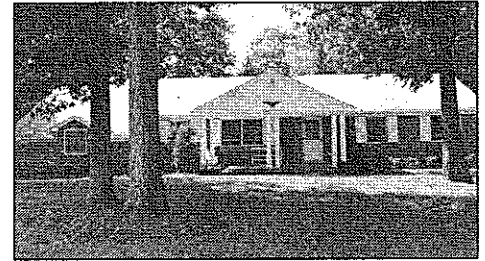
UNDER CONTRACT



4407 Franklin Street
Kensington

Expanded Rambler in excellent
condition. Liv.Rm. w/FP. Mod. Kit.
Rec.Rm. w/FP. 4 BR. 3 BA.

SOLD
\$289,000



9116 Seven Locks Road
Bethesda

Beautiful Rambler on Corner Lot.
Liv.Rm. Sep. Din.Rm. TS Kit.
Rec.Rm. Den. 4 BR, 3 BA.
2-Car Garage.

Each home pictured in this newsletter is a Gary Ditto listing or, as noted, a Gary Ditto sale.

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