

The Early Years

From Half a Century of Club Life: 1899-1949 by Anna H. Farrell

Woman's Club of Kensington

Summer 2001

(A special thank you to the Woman's Club of Kensington for sharing this glimpse into Kensington's early years.)

In 1899 the town of Kensington had no paved roads, no electric lights, no telephones, no street signs or house numbers -many wells, pumps, and windmills-for there was no Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission with its underground system of water and sewers; no buses nor private automobiles, but the B&O railroad served it well. And it had the Kensington trolley-car, a distinctive asset in transportation at that time....

The households of all the residents were conducted in a similar manner; the men went to Washington to office or school or store; came home and made gardens and kept chickens; and there was even a cow or two in town-and horses and buggies.

The women were the house keepers and home makers and there they stayed-for at that time a woman's place was in the home. They lived quiet, uneventful lives, had time to visit with their neighbors, and, when occasion required it, dressed themselves in their best, put on white gloves, and made some formal calls-generally to welcome a newcomer to town....

Kensington was just a peaceful sleepy town of nice contented people who enjoyed the quiet life thoroughly-that is-they were-until Mrs. Eliza Bennett Hartshorn came to town to live and began to tell the women how their sisters in the West were forming clubs and in some places even voting!

...and so it follows that on the 20th of October in 1899 we see a group of lovely young women, slim waisted and modestly gowned, with high shoes (probably buttoned) which of course could not be seen, for skirts touched the ground and covered also two or more beruffled petticoats....

Article continues in the Fall 2001 issue.