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# Gary & Diana Ditto's Newsletter

Summer 2018

## A Conversation with Mabel Baker

By Antoinette Kranenburg

When we first met at her apartment in old town Kensington, Mrs. Baker was recovering from a broken ankle. Not one to sit idle, she was working on a large jigsaw puzzle, laid out on her coffee table.

Mabel Baker describes herself as a farm girl from Greene County, Virginia, near Charlottesville. She was born in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in 1927, the middle of five children — two boys, two girls, and a baby brother. The family farm was 200 acres, with sixteen cows, and vegetables for sale. The milk was sold to the Monticello Dairy.

In addition to homework, the children had their tasks — hanging out the clothes, tending the oil lamps, later the camping gas lamps. The two older boys helped feed the cows.

Electricity had not arrived yet. The iceman would come by with ice, a huge 150-pound block of ice that would be put in the icebox. The icebox had a pan underneath that would need emptying. There was also a springhouse. A casing collected water, which was piped to a small cabin, where it ran through a big cement trough. The water kept the milk and butter cold, plus anything else that needed to be kept cold.

After President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Rural Electric Administration in 1935, electricity eventually arrived. Mrs. Baker remembers that her father gave permission for the power lines to go through their property.

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– *Mabel Baker continued*

Mabel's father, "a farm boy, who had never been anywhere," was in France in the First World War, after being drafted. Her uncle, her mother's brother, was the first person drafted from Greene County. "Dad was a 'Wagoner,' who took equipment to the front, driving horses and cart."

During the Second World War her dad joined the Minutemen. Her oldest brother joined the Merchant Marine. Her second brother was exempted in order to work on the farm, and then joined the army and went to Japan after the war. Mabel learned how to identify airplanes and had a book showing all the insignia. She remembers thinking that "any plane flying over Greene County had to be lost!"

Mrs. Baker was not yet sixteen when she graduated from high school, so she took postgraduate courses until she turned sixteen and could get a work permit. She moved to Washington in 1943. She worked for the U.S. Department of Treasury in the War Savings Bond Unit, with her aunt, "who mothered her."

From her aunt's house on 44th Street near Brandywine, she would take the streetcar down Wisconsin Avenue to Q Street, then the bus across town to Union Station, to 18th Street and East Capitol Street near Lincoln Park. Having grown up in the country, she felt that the park was tiny. She'd think "poor kids."

Later she worked at the main Treasury building. She remembers watching President Roosevelt's funeral procession. "People were weeping." On her way to work she would meet Harry Truman, and she could see Margaret Truman go to the White House.

By age 19 she was working on Capitol Hill in the office of Congressman John J Delaney of New York. Her cousin Marie was his secretary and took care of her, because she "was still very country." After the Congressman died, she worked for the Judiciary Committee and the Ways and Means Committee, which she remembers as both interesting and grueling. She would attend hearings on multilateral trade agreements, do secretarial work, and attend George Washington University at night.

She and her husband both worked on the Hill and met in a Methodist youth group. They married in 1950 and lived in an apartment near the University of Maryland. After her husband finished his degree, they moved to "a tiny house with two tiny bedrooms" in a new development, Kensington Palisades. According to plan they lived there five years and "saved the G.I. bill for the big house," a brand new split-level house with a deep yard on Leslie Street, a short walk to school. That is where their four children grew up.

The couple joined St. Paul's United Methodist Church in 1952 and became active in peace and social justice activities. After her husband died, the house became too big and Mrs. Baker moved to old town Kensington. She enjoyed living in her spacious, bright apartment, and now the independent living at Kensington Park.

## Mabel Baker and the Friendship Club

Kensington's Friendship Club is about community, fun, food, and friendship. There is no age requirement and the club is not political or religious.

The club's founders, Mabel Baker, Jan Bache, and Imogene Surrey, knew each other through peace and social justice activities at St. Paul's. They were concerned for older neighbors living in apartments near St. Paul's who did not drive. There were few Senior Centers in 1974, and they thought that social activities and a hot lunch would be a good thing.

The club has nurtured longtime friendships. When friends Mabel Baker, Maye Miles, Adda Clark, Marilyn Jenkins, and Ann Pfautz realized they were all born in 1927, they decided to celebrate with a Greatest Eighties Ladies birthday tea party at the Forest Glen Castle. They dressed in vintage furs, hats, and gloves in celebration of 1927, the year of their birth. The event was written up in the Gazette.

Mabel Baker and Maye Miles became friends riding the train to work every day from Forest Glen or Kensington to Union Station. Maye's father-in-law was the postmaster of the Forest Glen Post Office, which was in the Castle at Forest Glen, until it was closed in 1943. The certificate signed by Calvin Coolidge on January 16, 1926, shows Charles W. Miles as postmaster.



Friendship Club meetings take place on the second Tuesday of the month October through May at 11:30 a.m., at Heavener Hall for a potluck lunch followed by entertainment from 1 – 2 p.m. and an excursion in June. For more information and to volunteer, contact club president Erma McWilliams, 301-774-2742 or emcwill436@aol.com.

## Fourth of July Bike Parade

Polish up and decorate your bike, scooter, wagon or stroller for the 23rd Annual Bike Parade on Wednesday, July 4th. All kids and the young at heart are invited! Line up by 9:45 a.m. at St. Paul Park. The Bike Parade starts at 10 a.m. and follows a Kensington Volunteer Fire Department truck through the streets of Kensington.



**Save the date!!**

## **Kensington Model Train Show**

September 8th & 9th, 2018, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Kensington Town Hall



## **Holy Cross Pre-K Expands to 3-Year Olds**

Holy Cross School is expanding its Pre-Kindergarten program to include 3-year olds. The program includes full-day and partial-day options. There are limited openings for the upcoming 2018/2019 school year. Contact the school office at 301-949-1699 to schedule a private tour and visit [www.hcross.org](http://www.hcross.org) for more information.



## **August Picnic in the Park**

Saturday, August 11, 6 - 9 p.m.  
Warner Circle Park

You are invited! KTown Ladies partners with Men's Book Club and Warner Circle Preservation Committee to bring families and friends together for food, beverages, and fun! For updates check KTown Ladies on Facebook.

## **Summer Movie Nights at St. Paul Park**

St. Paul Street and Plyers Mill Road



Bring a blanket and chairs for a family movie night hosted by the Kensington Volunteer Fire Department and the Town of Kensington. 6:00 - 7:45 p.m. The event features the KVFD Safety House, fire demonstrations, and other activities. The movie starts promptly at 8:00 pm.  
Saturday, June 30th, 8 p.m. - *The Incredibles* (PG)  
Saturday, July 28th, 8 p.m. - *A Bug's Life* (G)  
Saturday, August 25th, 8 p.m. - *The Croods* (PG)

Gary and Diana Ditto's Newsletter welcomes ideas and news items from community members. We are grateful to Mabel Baker for sharing her story. The editor is Antoinette Kranenburg of Kensington, assisted by Cherry Wunderlich.

## **KHS Summer Concerts**

Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.  
Howard Avenue Park



Kensington Park Elementary School Chorus started off this summer's concert series on June 2. The concerts are sponsored by the Kensington Historical Society, and held across from the Kensington Train Station Farmer's Market every Saturday throughout the summer!

Coming up:

June 16th GP Jams - Eclectic Folk Pop  
June 23rd Rita Clarke and the Naturals ~ Rhythm & Blues  
June 30th Scrub Pines ~ Traditional Americana

Check [www.kensingtonhistory.org](http://www.kensingtonhistory.org) for schedule updates.

## **Special Events at the Library**

At Kensington Park Library

*Magician Abracadabra Alex* - Thursday, June 21, 2 - 3:45 p.m.

*Family Ukulele Play & Sing Along* - Saturday July 14, 2 - 3 p.m.

At Noyes Library for Young Children:

*Under the Sea: Sharks* - Saturday June 16, 11 - 11:45 a.m.

*Mr. Jon* - Saturday July 21, 11 11:45 a.m. music, fun, dancing

*Montgomery County Fair-See a Farm Animal* -

Saturday July 28, 11 - 11:45 a.m.

*Groovy Nate* - Saturday August 4, 11 - 11:45 a.m. music, puppet skits, movement, and comedy.

*The British Players present*

## **"53rd Old Time Music Hall"**

June 8 - 23, 2018  
Kensington Town Hall  
3710 Mitchell Street

The Old Time Music Hall returns! A Victorian Musical Comedy Review featuring glamorous dancers, a melodious chorus, sensational soloists, and lots of comedy, kept in line by Mr. Chairman, Malcolm Edwards, with their very own Cheeky Chappie, Albert Coia. Celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ending of WWI with British, American, and French songs!

Performances are June 8 - 23, 2018, at 8 p.m. and at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 17, and Saturday, June 16. The ticket price includes wine, beer, soda, and nibbles. Order tickets at [www.britishplayers.org](http://www.britishplayers.org) or call 240-447-9863..

## **KTown Food Truck Night**

1st and 3rd Thursday 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.  
Armory Avenue, behind Safeway

Kensington's Food Truck Night is back every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month through October. Bring the family and enjoy food trucks, music and community. Sponsored by the Kensington Business District Association.





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### The Ditto Group Real Estate Activity



**10217 Summit Avenue  
Kensington/Kensington  
SOLD - \$ 1,175,000**



**4017 Glenridge Street  
Kensington/Chevy Chase View  
Under Contract  
List Price - \$ 1,050,000**



**10005 Kensington Parkway  
Kensington/Kensington  
For Sale - \$ 949,000**



**9510 Riley Road  
Silver Spring/Woodside Hills  
Under Contract  
List Price - \$ 599,000**



**10807 Drumm Avenue  
Kensington/Kensington Heights  
Under Contract  
List Price - \$ 695,000**



**4102 Knowles Avenue  
Kensington - Warners Add to Kens  
SOLD - \$ 661,000**



**3518 Astoria Court  
Kensington/Newport Hills  
Under Contract  
List Price - \$ 539,000**



**9813 East Bexhill Drive  
Kensington/Rock Cr Hills  
SOLD - \$ 845,000**



**10001 Crestwood Road  
Kensington/Parkwood  
SOLD - \$ 735,000**



**2421 Hidden Valley Lane  
Silver Spring/Stonecrest North  
Under Contract  
List Price - \$ 465,000**



**9601 Hillridge Drive  
Kensington/Rock Creek Hills  
Under Contract  
List Price - \$ 1,095,000**



**9900 Georgia Avenue # 417  
Silver Spring  
COMING SOON  
List Price - \$ 275,000**