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Gary Ditto's Newsletter

JANUARY 1993

Sometimes it's hard to say what makes the places we call "home" so special to us. Live in an area long enough and you have a chance to get to know the place and the people in a kind of intimacy that ties hearts to home. People who live in the Kensington area benefit from the easy access to Rock Creek Park as it winds through the District of Columbia on up into Maryland, as you can see from our feature article. This issue of the newsletter celebrates the outsides and insides of the winter side of the place you call home. Consider it an invitation to the dance ...

The Rocks Under Your Feet:

A Tour of Lower Rock Creek Park PART I

One cold winter day last February, a bundled-up group of nature lovers gathers outside the Nature Center at 5200 Glover Road in lower Rock Creek Park (just south of Military Road in the District of Columbia). Hiking staff in hand, the burly, bearded Jim O'Connor welcomes our group to the Natural Heritage Tour offered by the Audubon Naturalist Society. The subject of the tour is geology -- literally, the rocks under our feet.

When asked how long he has led ANS nature tours, O'Connor answers, laughing, "Too long--I could probably do it in my sleep." O'Connor, an urban geologist at UDC, is very familiar with the D.C. area, and says that he knows a little of everything.

The tour begins with one of the bluish-gray stone pillars that hold up the porch of the Nature Center. According to O'Connor, the pillar consists of Potomac bluestone, our local bedrock. This stone is so named because it is blue-grey when freshly cut. It weathers to a silvery color. Some stones of the pillar are stained orange by garnet in the rock. We look for the familiar dark-red gems, but O'Connor explains that the garnet is present in tiny flecks. The garnet contains iron, which dissolves out and rusts, causing the orange stain. O'Connor says that garnet serves as "Nature's meat thermometer," because its presence shows that the rock was created at relatively low temperatures.

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As we leave the Nature Center behind and head southward, Jim O'Connor explains that Rock Creek Park is of geologic interest because it forms the boundary between two geologic regions, the Atlantic Coast Province which consists of sand, gravel, and clay, and the Piedmont Plateau which consists of bluestone. Washington, D.C. is located between the mountainous Shenandoah region and the flat Eastern Shore. Like many port cities, it is located at the "fall line," the point beyond which a river cannot be navigated by ships.

The ground beneath our feet is covered with pebbles. O'Connor categorizes pebbles by size: "You need two hands to lift a boulder; you can hold a cobble in your palm and a pebble between your fingers." Sand, silt, and clay are progressively even smaller. When more accurate measurements are needed, geologists use graduated screens which let smaller pebbles pass through while holding back larger ones.

The shape of the pebbles indicates their source. Oval pebbles probably have been shaped by a river, while oblong pebbles have been shaped by wave action. Furthermore, the type of rock that the pebbles are made of also indicates their source, as does the presence of any fossils. O'Connor identifies our oval pebbles as Potomac River sediment. Five to ten million years ago, the Potomac River covered the District area, including Rock Creek Park, and left these pebbles. The pebbles also contain fossils from the Blue Ridge Mountains, indicating their source in those mountains.

Leaving the pebbles behind, we walk south along a path marked off by logs. At this time of year the forest consists of grey tree trunks rising out of a carpet of dead leaves. There are many fallen trees, some felled by the violent June storm of a couple of years ago. In Rock Creek Park, the dead wood is not cleared but is allowed to decay, thus renewing the soil. Where trees have been uprooted, two different soil colors--light yellow and darker red--are visible. The colors mark the intersection of two geologic regions.

The trail we are walking on is a horse trail, 100 years old. We need to watch our feet because the trail is eroded, carved with small gullies, due to rain and the large volume of hikers. O'Connor explains that trails should be moved every few years to prevent too much erosion. Although this old

trail runs straight downhill, modern trails are designed with meandering curves to help prevent erosion.

As we walk through a small valley, O'Connor says that the plant life of a valley is affected by its compass orientation. In a valley running from east to west, the slopes face north and south. The north-facing slopes receive less light, and hence have less vegetation. Furthermore, the trees growing on the upper slopes of a valley differ from those growing on the valley floor.

Finally, after a long hike downhill, we reach the bike path along Rock Creek. The path runs parallel to Beach Drive. As we pass under a bridge, I notice that the banks are lined with rock. The rock protects the banks, and hence the bridge, from erosion. This rock, Jim explains, is bedrock that was blasted out in digging the Metro stations. "They've got to put all that rock somewhere."

After walking on a little farther, we pause to look out over Rock Creek. On the shores, trees are bent over and twisted from flood damage. In the creek, many large rocks create small rapids, which Jim O'Connor calls "the Great Falls of Rock Creek." Four or five times a year, when Rock Creek floods, there are real white-water rapids. At Jim's suggestion, we hush for several minutes to listen to the murmur of water flowing over the rocks--"real rock music."

Sara Phang

PART II will continue in the next issue of the newsletter.



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 the old neighborhood. Many Natural Heritage Tours and other events are scheduled in the coming months. Call the ANS at (301) 652-9188 for information or to sign up.

26th Annual Holy Redeemer Antiques Show Set for February 25 - 28

It's that time again! The Holy Redeemer Antiques Show returns from Thursday, February 25 to Sunday, February 28. This year, 32 dealers from Connecticut to North Carolina have exhibits.

And it isn't possible to discuss the Antiques Show without mentioning the show stopper: the Quilt Raffle. This year's quilt is the red, white, and blue "Martha Washington Star," created by the quilters of the parish, led by Nola Hefner. Tickets to enter the drawing for the quilt cost \$1 each.

This year's lunch cafe will offer beef barbecue sandwiches, salads, and homemade

desserts. Chefs and servers are members of the Holy Redeemer Parish.

Show admission is \$4.00. Tickets are good for unlimited admission Friday through Sunday. Discount cards worth \$0.50 off the admission fee are available at the church and at the dealers.

Organizers of the 1993 Show are Joan Palmer, Eileen Vaughan, and Kathleen Dolan. For further information, please call Kathleen Dolan at (301) 907-9268.

HOURS:

Thursday, February 25	Preview Gala
Friday, February 26	11 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Saturday, February 27	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Sunday, February 28	12 noon - 5 p.m.

Kensington Parkwood Book Fair February 2 - 6

Does your child have a favorite book she'd love to call her own? Would you like to find a special gift for a birthday or a Valentine's Day treat? Then stop by the Kensington Parkwood Elementary School Book Fair at the school on Saul Road between Franklin Street and Parkwood Drive in Kensington.

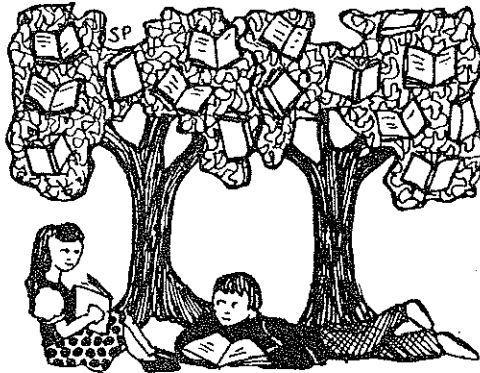
Sponsored by the PTA, the Fair is a fundraiser for the classroom funds and for the school library, music program, and science laboratory.

In addition to the mostly paperback books for young readers, the Fair offers puzzles, posters, and gift sets, as well as some adult books, including books on parenting.

So, remember that special child, parent, grandparent, or friend at the Kensington Parkwood Book Fair:

Tuesday, February 2	6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, February 3	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 4	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. and 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Friday, February 5	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Saturday, February 6	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Monday, February 8	9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Event co-chairs are Lynn Ticehurst and Kay Slocum. For information, please call Lynn Ticehurst at 564-0594.



"Oh, for a book and a shady nook, either in door or out."

John Wilson, 19th century London bookseller

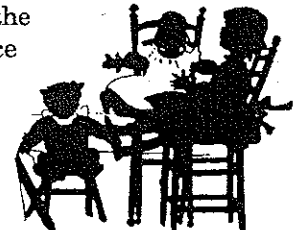
Where Play Is Child's Work: The Parent Resource Center May Be the Place for You!

If you're the parent, grandparent, or caregiver of a toddler, the Parent Education Resource Center at 12518 Greenly Street in Silver Spring is the place to go for indoor fun and learning. The Parent Resource Center is a drop-in program sponsored by the Montgomery County Public Schools Division of Adult Education.

What looks like an indoor playground is actually a happy learning lab for young children, from birth to age 5 -- and for the adults who care about and for them. Paints, playdough, blocks, trucks, and dolls are the learning tools for the pre-schoolers at the Center. A library of books on parenting, a parent educator, and other parents are there to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have about a whole

host of challenges that parents face, from dealing with temper tantrums to teaching your child about sharing.

One of five Parent Resource Centers sponsored by MCPS, the Center, located at the Connecticut Park Adult Education Center, is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and on Thursdays from 3 to 7:30 p.m. Admission is free; however, each family is asked to make a voluntary donation to help support the program. For further information, call the Parent Education Resource Center at 929-2037.



FOR SALE
\$189,900



10122 Crestwood Road
Kensington

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

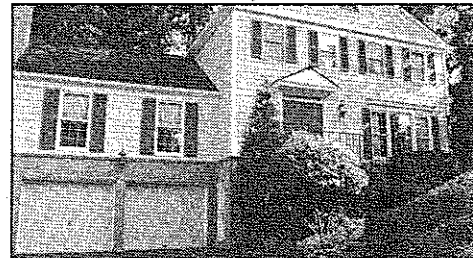
FOR SALE
\$169,000



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
\$475,000



9530 Reach Road
Potomac

Elegant Colonial. Liv.Rm. w/FP.
Sep. Din. Rm. Fam. Rm. 5 BR.

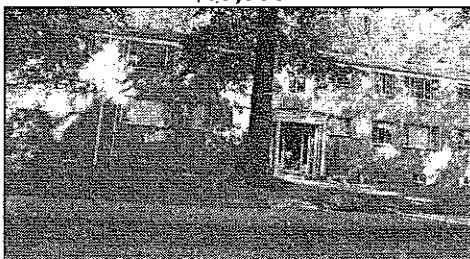
SOLD
\$440,000



10313 Fawcett Street
Kensington

Elegant older home on a beautiful lot.
Handyperson's special for the
old house lover!

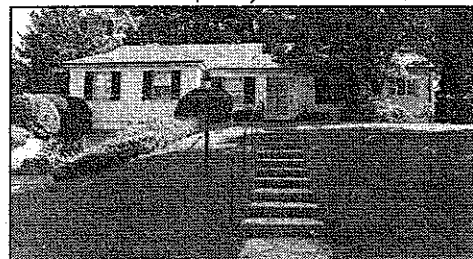
FOR SALE
\$99,900



10412 Montrose Avenue
Bethesda

Perfect 2 BR Condo with refinished
kitchen. Backs to woods.

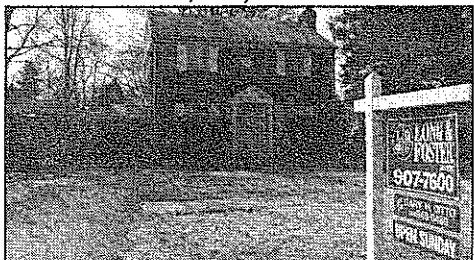
SOLD
\$420,000



3604 Dunlop Street
Chevy Chase

Gracious Rambler w/ spacious yard.
Liv.Rm. FP. Fam. Rm., Rec. Rm.
4 BR, 3 BA.

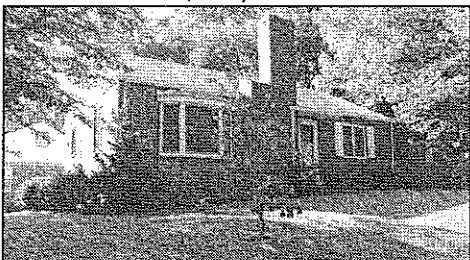
SOLD
\$170,000



4104 Knowles Avenue
Kensington

Well-maintained Colonial.
Liv.Rm. w/ FP. 3 BR. Porch.

SOLD
\$187,000



10203 Greenfield Street
Kensington

Restored Rambler. Liv.Rm. w/ FP.
New Kitchen and 2 new Baths. 3 BR.

SOLD
\$430,000



6207 Verne Street
Bethesda

Five-year-old Colonial in "new"
condition. Liv.Rm. w/ FP. Rec.Rm.
w/FP. Den. 5 BR, 3 1/2 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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