



2006: A home at last for Historic Takoma

Historic Takoma took a huge step in 2006 when it purchased the storefront at 7328 Carroll Avenue as its permanent home. Founded in 1979, Historic Takoma had inherited the archives gathered by its predecessor, the Historical Society of Takoma Park. The collection included photographs (as well as boxes of original glass negatives), diaries, oral histories and even an original city ballot box, reaching back to the city's earlier days.

But until this purchase, the collection had spent years in storage and was not readily accessible to the community.

Working with local elected officials, Historic Takoma was able to cover the bulk of the building purchase price of \$485,000 with state and county grants. Some major renovations lie ahead for the storefront at Takoma Junction, which many residents may remember from its Barcelona Nut days. Once finished, there will be museum space for historical displays as well as direct public access to the rich archival legacy. After 27 years, Historic Takoma finally has a permanent home.

Historic Takoma also took advantage of a grant from the Historic Preservation Commission of Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning to replace the aging historical markers at three prominent sites

Thomas-Siegler House

This house, built by Isaac and Amanda Thomas in 1884, was the first home completed in the new suburb of Takoma Park. It is a fine example of early residential development in Montgomery County. The house, carriage house and spacious garden illustrate life as it was in the first years of this sylvan Victorian suburb. Mr. Thomas was Takoma Park's first postmaster, storekeeper and stationmaster. Soon after he died in 1889, Amanda Thomas added a two-story addition to the house on the Cedar Avenue side with a wraparound porch and turret. The Thomas house was originally covered with wood clapboards similar to those on the carriage house.

In 1819 Franklin and Catherine Siegler purchased the property from the Thomas family. Their sons E. Horace Siegler and Eugene Siegler were noted Department of Agriculture scientists. Their botanical interest is reflected in the extensive

landscape of the one-acre property. The grounds are dominated by large white oak trees with an under-growth of magnolia, American holly, laurel, and cherry trees. Prominent among the flowering bushes are Glenn Dale azaleas, developed by famed horticulturist B. Y. Morrison in the 1930s. A Takoma Park resident and friend of the Sieglers, Morrison's experiments with azaleas filled many local Takoma Park gardens. He later became first director of the National Arboretum.

The property was threatened by developers in 1984. Through the efforts of local citizens, the Trust for Public Lands intervened to help the City of Takoma Park purchase the property and preserve the carriage house and landscaped gardens for the enjoyment of the community.

Historic marker erected December 2006 by Historic Takoma, Inc. with financial support from the Historic Preservation Commission of MNCPP-MD.



The house as it first looked before the 1890 addition. The sense of being hidden in the woods remains a feature today.



As part of the addition, the clapboard siding was replaced by stucco. The house survived demolition threats and continues to offer a glimpse of life in early Takoma Park.

around town: the Laurel-Carroll intersection in Old Town, the Thomas-Siegler house on Tulip and Maple, and the Sligo Creek bridge on Carroll Avenue.

Laurel at Carroll

The first structure built on Laurel Avenue was a log cabin erected in 1888 by Benjamin Franklin Gilbert, founder of Takoma Park, to celebrate the presidential campaign of Benjamin Harrison. Standing on the East side of Laurel where it intersects with Carroll, it was used by both political parties for rallies and speeches and later served as a town meeting space, a chapel, a firehouse, a jail and finally as a tool-shed. From 1889 to 1893, the cabin shared space with a 60-foot tower which offered panoramic views of the countryside, before being dismantled as unsafe. The cabin remained until it burned to the ground on Halloween night in 1915, and was soon replaced by several blocks of storefronts.

Takoma Park began in 1883 as a railroad suburb, the first on the Metropolitan branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. It was not long, however, before electric trolley cars also reached out to the community. In 1893, the Brightwood Electrical Railway began running trolleys between downtown and Fourth and Butternut Streets NW (four blocks east, just beyond the railroad tracks). By 1898, a second trolley line chose Carroll and Laurel as its terminus, with a smaller link extending to Glen Sligo Hotel on Sligo Creek and what is now New Hampshire Avenue. Dubbed the Dinky Line, its tracks were later shifted to a turnaround at Carroll Avenue and Sligo Creek, providing a connection to the Adventist Hospital and College.

The streetcar era ended in January 1960. Twenty years later, the Takoma Park Farmer's Market opened its year-round Sunday market on this plaza.

PHOTO: RICHARD SANGER COLLECTION



Long before storefronts lined Laurel Avenue, a log cabin served as a political and community meeting place from 1888 until it burned down in 1915.



The arrival of the trolley line in 1898, seen here looking from Laurel toward Carroll, made this intersection a commercial hub of an expanding Takoma Park.

Erected December 2006 by Historic Takoma Inc. with financial support from the Historic Preservation Commission of MNCPP-MD.

Carroll Avenue Bridges

Three bridges have been built across Sligo Creek at Carroll Avenue. The first bridge, constructed about 1878, was a simple wooden structure located about 150 feet below and slightly east of the present bridge. When the Seventh-day Adventist Church established a hospital and college nearby in 1904, it became apparent that a larger bridge capable of handling increased traffic for the growing community was needed.

Walter Douglas, who engineered the Lion Bridge on Connecticut Avenue, designed and supervised construction of a new reinforced concrete structure. The Adventist Church made a substantial contribution toward the \$10,000 costs. The bridge opened on July 22, 1909, with a speed limit of 8 miles per hour!

The Douglas Bridge served the town until the 1930s, when population growth and ever increasing automobile traffic demanded a larger structure. Governor Albert C. Ritchie and leading state, county and city officials opened the three-lane steel and concrete bridge on September 14, 1932 in a gala celebration attended by over 4,000 people.

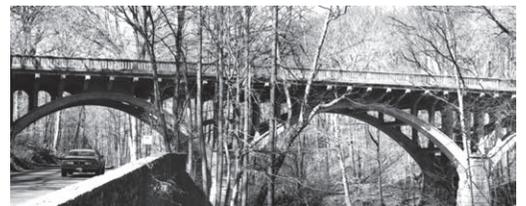
PHOTOS COURTESY HISTORIC TAKOMA ARCHIVES



The first bridge over Sligo Creek was a small wooden structure.



Built in 1909, the second bridge was a much more substantial structure that allowed Carroll Avenue to continue straight across Sligo Creek.



The current three-lane bridge opened in 1932.

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