



How General Carroll's estate became Takoma Junction.

In the first half of the 1900s, trolley cars traveled up and down Carroll Avenue, linking Old Town with the Adventist sanatorium and college on Sligo Creek. When the trolley crossed Ethan Allen Avenue and negotiated a sharp left turn, the conductor called out, "Halfway." The nickname stuck for the block of stores there.

And so it remained for decades after the last trolley car. In the early 1980s, the city finally turned its attention to reviving the Carroll Avenue corridor. As a result, the Carroll-Ethan Allen intersection acquired its now familiar title: Takoma Junction.

Except for the arrival of the Takoma Park Silver Spring Coop in 1998, however, no major revival has yet materialized. New businesses like last month's opening of Pajama Squid and Bikram Yoga replace old ones. Historic Takoma did purchase the long-vacant Barcelona Nuts building last year to renovate as a headquarters. And construction of the replacement fire station is imminent. But none of these events promise major changes.

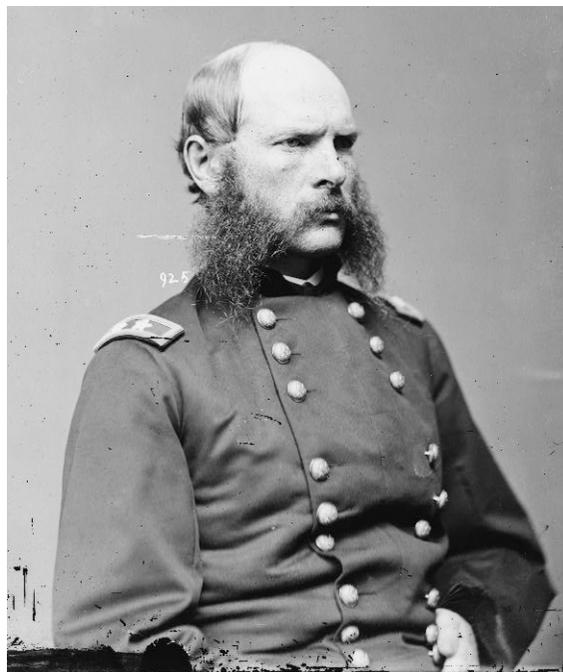
The storefronts between Grant and Sherman have changed little since the first two-story structures were built in 1927. For decades, businesses have reflected a similar mix of services.

Takoma Framers owner Mark Howard, for example, is the third generation of framers to operate out of the two-story brick rowhouse at mid-block.

His father Alden and uncle Otis purchased the business in 1948 for \$34,000 from the original owners, Willard and Katherine Atherton.

They had worked with Alden on various projects over the years when they suggested he take over their shop. Alden agreed. In 2000, he turned things over to Mark.

As part of the original sale, the Athertons included a copy of Plat Map 325 dated 1927, showing the first time the block was divided into plots. The document -- titled "The H.H. Votaw Subdivision of the GSS Carroll Addition" -- provides a window into the earliest days of "Halfway."



The lands surrounding Takoma Junction were once the domain of General Samuel Sprigg Carroll, a Civil War hero, whose plantation house once filled Manor Circle.

The house stood until 1960, when it was demolished and replaced by an apartment building.



The Carroll Manor House. Courtesy, Dr. Ron Graybill.

little fanfare, the Dinky line (as locals referred to the trolley) gave up the Ethan Allen detour and was re-routed straight up Carroll to Sligo Creek.

Meanwhile the Adventists became the next occupants of General Carroll's manor house. Church leader Ellen White used the house as her temporary headquarters while overseeing the building of the Seminary College. It also served as a boys dormitory the first year until a new one was completed on the campus. Perhaps this accounts for the Adventist interest in the surrounding property.

In any case, Heber Votaw, the "Votaw" in the plat map, was an Adventist. He was provost at the College and, incidentally, married to President Warren Harding's sister Carolyn.

Not only did he lend his name to the subdivision, but he served as witness for the 1927 transaction that carved up the block into plots. The impetus for the commercial expansion was the revised trolley route. A similar pattern had already created Old Town at Laurel and Carroll.

Before long the "Halfway" block was filled with retail: first the Atherton framing shop, then a beauty salon, electrical store, and grocery stores.

Shoppers had a choice. Piggly Wiggly at mid-block (later sold to Barcelona Nuts) offered the novelty of letting the customer walk along the shelves to pick up merchandise rather than have the shopkeeper fetch each item.

Sanitary Grocery occupied the Grant corner but eventually changed its name to

GSS Carroll was General Samuel Sprigg Carroll, one of a long line of Carrolls dating back to colonial Maryland. This land was part of the Carroll family holdings and predates the arrival of B.F. Gilbert in 1883.

General Carroll was a red-haired battle-grizzled veteran of the Civil War whose valiant efforts at Gettysburg helped secure a Northern victory.

At war's end, he returned to the family lands in Montgomery County and built a three-story wooden plantation house on Manor Circle. The intersection was then known as Sandy Spring Road and Ethan Allen, but his presence there prompted a renaming of the road in his honor.

Gilbert's arrival with a vision to create a sylvan suburb sparked a spate of development. When General Carroll died in 1893, the family retained the house but sold off most of the surrounding land as the "SS Carroll Addition" to the expanding town.

General Carroll's daughter was responsible for naming the streets after Civil War Generals. As a result, Sherman, Grant, Sheridan, Hancock and, ironically, Lee, now share honors with Revolutionary War General Ethan Allen.

By 1898, the corner acquired a new

landmark when the city erected a 164-foot water tower as part of upgrading the water system. The tower stood until 1919, when it was deemed unsafe and torn down.

Two years after the water tower went up, the Baltimore and Washington Transit Company bought right-of-way to bring trolleys up Carroll Avenue from Old Town. The idea was to create a summer resort on the bank of Sligo Creek and have the trolley transport the patrons.

The initial trolley route followed Carroll to Ethan Allen, then took a right for a block before making a left turn and heading downhill through the woods to Sligo Creek (approximately where Heather intersects today).

Wildwood Resort and its associated Glen Sligo Hotel sought to attract families with its combination of boating, dancing and "family oriented" vaudeville. But its heyday was short-lived. The enterprise ran into financial difficulty, and folded barely three years later. The transit company needed a new destination for its trolley.

The Seventh-day Adventists conveniently provided one. In 1904, they opened a college on Carroll Avenue overlooking Sligo Creek, and the sanatorium followed three years later. With

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This streetscape of Carroll Avenue at the Junction was created by an itinerant artist, identified by his initials "RC" in the right corner. It captures the storefronts as they appeared in 1978.



Mark Howard of Takoma Framers with the miniature streetscape shown on opposite page.

Safeway and moved into an expanded new building across the street (currently home to the Co-op).

Connor's Drugs took over the space before giving way to High's Dairy, and eventually TJs Market.

Mark Howard has a unique record of the streetscape circa 1978. An itinerant painter used a foot-long piece of moulding as the canvas for miniature representation of the storefronts.

Long-vanished stores have left their mark on the collective memories of residents. Mark, for example, remembers going into Barcelona Nuts, selecting his favorite varieties, and having them ground into fresh "peanut" butter on the spot.

On the Sherman end of the block a small shop offered parkerhouse-style rolls

known as Jim's Butter Gems. For many residents, the name itself conjures up fond recollections of the buttery layers waiting to be pulled apart and savored. The only thing Jim sold, they were worth the trip to the Halfway stores just to purchase a handful.

Our tale continues next month with a look at the rest of the intersection, including the fire station, the stories behind the wall murals and the ongoing debates over the future of the Junction.

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Function at the Junction



Starting May 16, Friday nights bring music to the Junction as local musicians turn the lot next to the Co-op into an impromptu stage. First up is Ruthie and the Wranglers, part of the local Azalea City Recordings collective. See calendar, starting on page 48 for more details.

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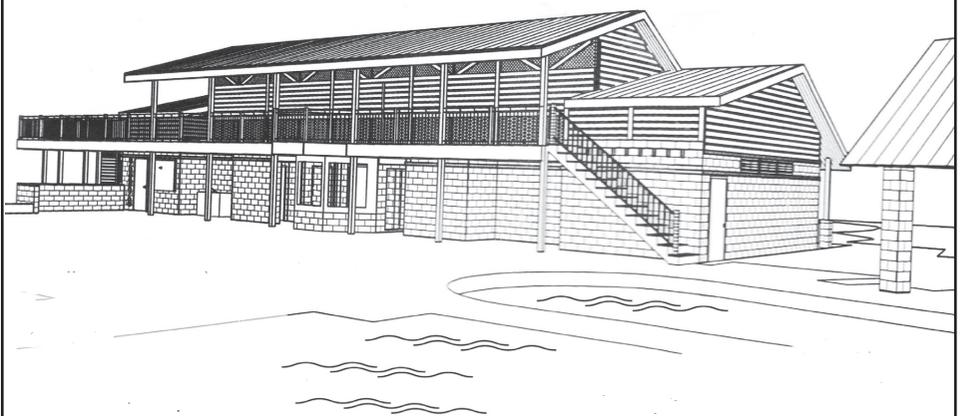
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