

HISTORY AND GROWTH OF FAIRLINGTON SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

The Fairlington School community is bordered by Alexandria on three sides and by Shirley Highway on the other. The school is one of 40 now making up the Arlington County School system.

White Deer, Chief of the Powhatan Indian tribe followed the buffalo migration trail to the West, through the Four Mile Run Valley along Leesburg Pike. This is the first record we have of the Fairlington area.

Land in the valley and on the heights, a part of the estate of Lord Fairfax, was passed to a Mr. Stratfield on January 21, 1705. All of South Fairlington and North Fairlington south of Columbus Street lies within the original ten-mile square set aside in 1789 to form the District of Columbia. The Virginia portion was returned to the Commonwealth in 1846.

Later, the land passed to Colonel John Carlyle, a Scottish merchant prominent in affairs of Alexandria, and remained in the hands of his descendants well into the nineteenth century. In 1870, "Morven", as the estate was then named, was acquired by Courtland Smith, whose heirs possessed it until 1926. It was then known as Hampton Farm, and Mr. Smith raised thoroughbred horses upon it.

After 1926 the land was broken up into small holdings, and for a time a portion was used as a small air field. The land lay fallow until December 7, 1941, the terrible day of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Defense Home Corporation was then established to meet the need for housing defense personnel called into Washington. It operated on money borrowed from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. George Basset Williams, Executive Vice President of the Defense Homes Corporation, along with the architects, designed the project in the Williamsburg tradition.

On May 15, 1943, the first residents moved into the community. Fairlington School opened the following January. Since the top personnel in the government lived in the houses, the children were from high middle-class and well-educated parents. The parents had high educational expectations for their children and were consistently interested in their achievement in school. Many of the officers were sent to war, and on some days a number of children received word of their fathers' deaths in any given class. There were sixteen classrooms, a library, a multipurpose room, kitchen, clinic, and office in the school. The rooms were overflowing with children, and classes had to be held in double sessions. Miss Grace Hall was the first principal of the six-grade school.

During the first several years, the children who lived in the South Fairlington community walked home for lunch, and the bus children brought their lunch, eating in the classroom under the homeroom teacher's supervision. The first and second grade children were on double

sessions and therefore ate at home before or after coming to school. In the first few years, the first and second grade classes were very large in spite of double sessions. Some first grade teachers had an average of one hundred children per day. During these years the enrollment was also very transient.

By the end of the first three years the basement was made into two classrooms, and two classes were also held in the Auditorium. During the years 1951-1954, 5½ year old children were allowed to come. In 1956 one classroom was remodeled for the hard-of-hearing. A teacher was hired to work with these children, who were members of regular classrooms. Three years later these students were transferred to another school where all hard-of-hearing were based. There were also two special education classes held in the school from 1954 to 1962. They were later transferred to George Mason Center. In 1968 Fairlington was remodeled with a larger library, teachers' room, multipurpose room and kitchen.

Fairlington had children riding buses from Arna Valley and Shirley Park in 1958. In September, 1963 kindergarten youngsters were transferred from Oakridge to Fairlington. In 1970 the Fairlington kindergartens were transferred to Drew. In 1971 when all Arlington schools became integrated, Fairlington no longer received children from Arna Valley and Shirley Park and the kindergarten came back to Fairlington.

In 1972-1973 Fairlington has decreased in enrollment, because of the fact that Fairmac Corporation, the owners of the Fairlington Apartments, have made them into condominium homes for sale rather than rental. With the time needed for remodeling, many places have been vacant, and this will continue until the homes are completed for occupancy.

The future of Fairlington School will be determined by the needs of the new members of the Fairlington Condominium Community.

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