

HISTORIC ARLINGTON DAY

October 14, 1989, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 Noon

A TOUR OF NORTH HIGHLANDS

led by

Bruce Gregory McCoy

(Arlington Historical Society/Dawson Terrace Research, and
Native of North Highlands)

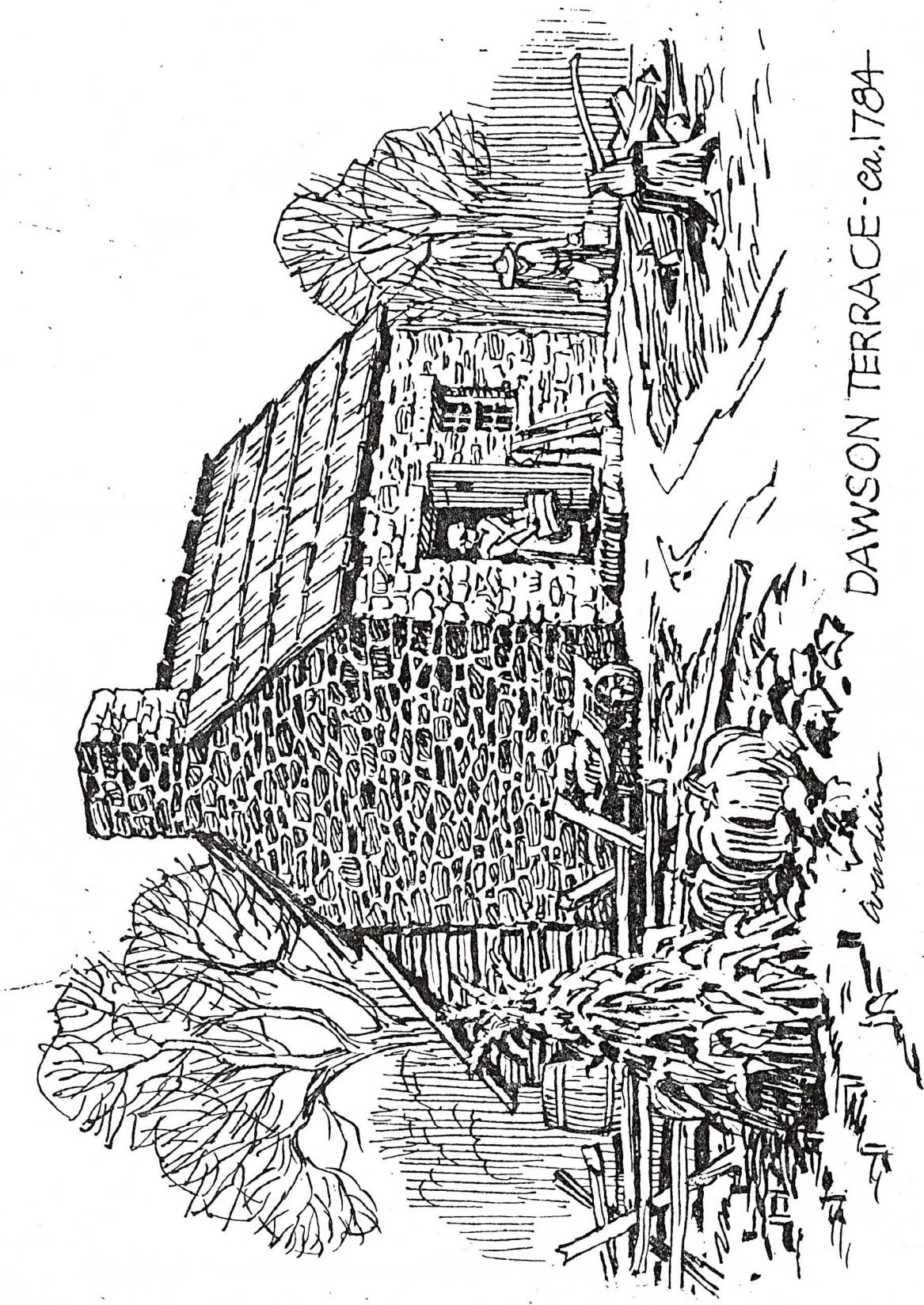
Dorothea E. Abbott

(Arlington Historical Society/Bayeva Castle Research)

Bettie Keiger

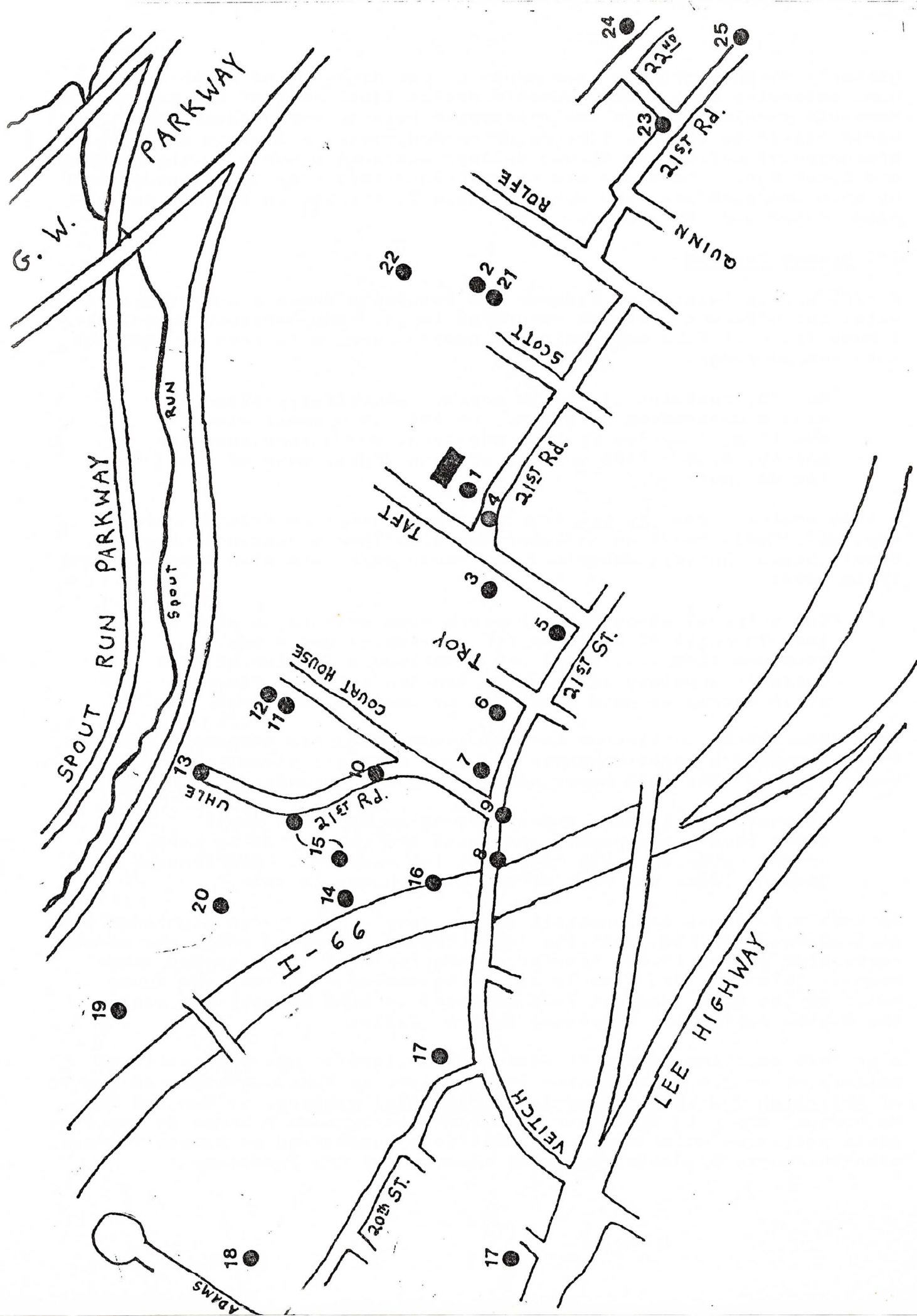
(Former President of North Highlands Citizens Association, and
Long-Time Resident of Mackey's Hill)

Sponsored by The Arlington Historical Society



DAWSON TERRACE - ca. 1784

W. G. Wood



Historic North Highlands lies north of Lee Highway and south of Spout Run, extending west from Deadman's Hollow (just west of the Key Bridge Marriott parking lot) to the depression between North Adams Street and North Cleveland Street. The neighborhood covers a plateau of three promontories defined by stream valleys descending north to the Potomac and Spout Run. There are six entry points (all from Lee Highway) but no main thoroughfare; the central focus is the Dawson Terrace Recreation Center and its grounds.

(1) Dawson Terrace

A 1785 survey located by Eleanor Lee Templeman shows a building on this site, but offers no textual reference to it. The earliest description I have found of [the west half of] Dawson Terrace is from an 1839 lot sale announcement:

"No. 13, contains 81, 3, 05 acres. Beautifully situated, with a commanding prospect. On this is a small stone dwelling, occupied by John Dennison, and a very superior spring, with a fine orchard of good fruit, some of the fields improved."

A 1946 article from The Sun ("Union Troops Rough on Friends Here," Aug. 30, 1946), based on an interview with Thomas Dawson's daughter, Bessie Dawson Bailey, described the house as it was when Dawson bought it in 1859:

"The original stone house had one room downstairs with a lean-to built to the rear for a kitchen, and a small room upstairs [and] now comprises a portion of Mrs. Bailey's spacious living room and the original flooring is in nearly as good condition as when it was first laid."

In a 1958 letter to Eleanor Lee Templeman, Marjorie Chemasero Gould (Thomas Dawson's grand-daughter and Mrs. Bailey's niece) gave a similar description of the 1859 house her grandfather purchased:

"At that time [1859], there were 85 acres and a small stone house, two rooms, one above the other. It is part of the house as it is today, at the west end. He [Thomas Dawson] added the rest of the stone house in 1859."

An 1861 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey map of the North Highlands area shows Dawson Terrace, with the 1860 [frame] extension where the modern recreation center is now located at the north of the expanded stone house. This map also clearly shows the enclosure around the house built by the U.S. Army (at Fort Bennett) to both protect and restrain the Dawson family, as recounted by Mrs. Bailey.

A ca. 1875 painting of the "Ludlow Patton" (artist unknown, National Gallery of Art; a reproduction of this work is found on pages 78 and 79 of Arlington County in Virginia: A Pictorial History, by Nan and Ross Netherton) shows in the upper right-hand background a house on the Virginia palisades which has been positively identified as Dawson Terrace, with the north extension somewhat obscured by the landscape.

Without archeological study at the west end of the building, it is not possible to say definitely that the 1785 structure could have been the same as the 1839-1859 building. The west-end stonework, however, is almost identical to that of the Blacksmith's House on River Road in Montgomery County (Md.), the Broad Run Tollhouse on Route 7 in Fairfax County, and the foundation of the Ball cabin in Glencarlyn, all of which date from circa 1760. The Dawson Terrace east-end stonework, known to date from 1859, is clearly of different cut, placement, and quoining. Considering as well the architectural style, and the similarity to other small 18th-century houses in the relationships of apertures and chimney to cardinal directions, it seems very likely that the west end does date from before 1785.

A 1767 re-survey of the former Going tract, the south line of which roughly followed Spout Run upstream from the river for a mile, neither shows nor refers to a building of any sort in the area, which means either there was nothing on the Dawson Terrace site at that time, or its inclusion was not considered necessary by virtue of its being on a different, though adjoining, tract. This adjoining tract (the former Owsley tract) is referenced in the re-survey and its area is visible on the accompanying map, and I therefore interpret the lack of reference to a building to mean there was not one there. This would place the construction of the west end of Dawson Terrace at some time later than May of 1767 and before the close of 1784.

George Mason IV (of Gunston Hall), the owner of this land during the period of probable construction, actively developed tenant farms on his numerous properties, and his tenant-house requirements ("a sturdy dwelling about 15 feet by 15 feet with a strong chimney") would be satisfied by the original Dawson Terrace building (the interior of which would have measured 14 feet by 15 feet). It is quite likely that the little stone house that stood here in the Revolutionary period was exactly that -- a tenant farmer's home.

Mrs. Bailey told several wonderful stories about the Civil War history of Dawson Terrace. One was of the visit to her father by Robert E. Lee just before Virginia seceded from the Union, the purpose of which visit was to advise Dawson to remain with the Union, which Lee himself was not able to do honorably. Mrs. Bailey was one month old at the time and received much attention from Lee during the visit.

Another story was of one of President Lincoln's visits to the local forts, during which he stopped on the road in front of the house and chatted a moment with the Dawsons, who had been permitted out of the house enclosure for the event.

A more personal story was about two young officers from Fort Strong (George Young and John Chemasero) who had been quarantined in the Dawson house by their commanding officer for some serious illness. Two of the four Dawson daughters were young women "of dating age" at the time and the inevitable results of the close quarters took place at the end of the war: Chemasero's brother Henry married Anne Dawson, Young married Mary Dawson (both weddings were in the parlor of Dawson Terrace),

and John Chemasero married Young's sister Eva. Mrs. Gould, the daughter of Anne Dawson and Henry Chemasero, noted in her letter to Mrs. Templeman that, as of 1955, George Young's initials (etched with a ring, during his courtship of Mary Dawson) were still to be seen on a parlor window in the house -- unfortunately, this window pane has vanished since then.

The site of Dawson Terrace has had fourteen owners: Thomas Owsley (to whom the first patent was issued) from 1696 to 1717; three generations of the Mason family (George III, George IV, and John) from 1717 to 1836; the Bank of the United States, the Boston Company, and Charles and Albert Stuart (dates of transfer among these three parties are not clear) from 1836 to 1859; four generations of the Dawson family (Thomas, his daughter Katherine, his daughter Bessie Dawson Bailey, and his grand-daughter and great-grand-daughter Marjorie Chemasero Gould and Elizabeth Sargent Barry) from 1859 to 1955; and Arlington County from 1955 to today. The only names known to have been given to the house and property are "Rio Vista" (the name Thomas Dawson gave it in 1860) and "Dawson Terrace" (used by Katherine Dawson and Bessie Dawson Bailey after their parents' deaths in the 1890s).

The apparent structural sequence from the original 18th-century house to its "modernization" in 1920 provides a fascinating history of how an existing old building can be preserved while at the same time being accommodated to the needs of its current occupants; this sequence will be discussed during the tour of the house.

(2) Jacobs Spring

This spring, located to the east-northeast of Dawson Terrace, will be visited further along in the tour, but its relationship to the house is indicated at this point, as the location of the house would have been determined by its proximity to the spring. The preference for a building site southwest of the spring (the site of Dawson Terrace) over a site east of the spring (Rock Hill) is evident by the considerably larger area of flat arable land to the southwest.

(3) Dawson Terrace Lane Site

Around 1920, the lane from the house to the public road (Doubleday's Road, later Court House Road) was changed to a route still in use today: Taft Street south from the Dawson Terrace parking lot to 21st St. (the Nazarene Church is on this corner), then west along 21st St. to its intersection with Court House Road. The earlier lane, which would have been in use since the 18th century, ran on a diagonal to the 20th-century "squared off" route, from the corner of 21st Road and Taft St. (the southwest corner of Dawson Terrace's front yard) southwest past the intersection of 21st St. and Court House Road to meet the old mill road (from Wilson Boulevard to the river) at a point now above I-66. Both sides of the lane from the house to Court House Road were cultivated fields during most of the history of Dawson Terrace. The U.S. Army in 1861 incorporated this original lane into the military road system connecting forts Bennett, Strong, Smith, and Morton.

(4) Fort Bennett-Fort Strong Access Road

The slightly angled portion of 21st Road directly in front of Dawson Terrace is all that remains of the road built by the Army from Fort Bennett to the original Dawson lane; the route ran slightly to the northeast of today's 21st Road. This is the road along which President Lincoln would have come when the Dawsons saw him from their front yard.

(5) Nazarene Church and Houses

The First Church of the Nazarene, constructed in the 1940s, devised a creative means of paying off the debt incurred by the church's construction: they built a housing development along the west side of the last block of Taft St. and on both sides of the last block of Troy St. These houses were constructed a few at a time, sold at profit, and the profit split between paying off a portion of the church construction debt and the initial cost of building several more houses. The lots immediately west of the church were the last to be built on, and in my childhood they were used as a playground and the site of many lively church bazaars. In 1949, one of the first kindergartens in Arlington was established as a cooperative by this neighborhood, and used the basement of this church for its operations.

(6) Dawson Terrace Lane and Fort Smith Access Road

Roughly at the intersection of today's Troy St. and 21st St., a road built by the Army in 1863 went off from the old Dawson lane to the northwest to Fort Smith on the other side of the Spout Run valley. A remaining portion of this road will be visited shortly.

(7) Early Barn Site

The house now standing at 2101 N. Court House Road is built directly over the stone foundations of the original Dawson Terrace barn, and follows the same alignment. Mrs. Bailey indicated that this barn was on the site when her father bought the property in 1859; it seems therefore that at least the foundations of the barn would have been built at the same time as the original portion of Dawson Terrace, though it is likely that the frame superstructure would have been renovated or rebuilt along the way. A ramp to the main floor once existed at the east side of the barn, strongly suggesting that there was also a basement door, probably on the north side. If such were the case, this would probably have been a dairy barn, with fodder storage above and cattle stalls below; this in turn would suggest that the field area east of the house lane (from which the ramp ran) may have been for winter feed grass, and the area north of the barn (and west of the lane) for summer grazing. Mrs. Bailey recalled that in 1861 the invading U.S. Army took away all the field fencing (for firewood?), killed her father's cattle (presumably for food) and burned down this barn, which was never rebuilt after the war. The foundations were still visible until the present house was constructed, reputedly within the old foundations.

(8) Fort Bennett-Fort Strong Access Road

Following almost the same alignment as the Veitch Street bridge over I-66 but lying slightly to the south, a U.S. Army road ran from the entrance to the Dawson lane at the mill road on west to Fort Strong. By thus building on both ends of the Dawson lane, the Army linked forts Bennett and Strong.

(9) Doubleday's Road, Parklane, Clifton, and Hillcrest

Along with the construction in the late 1890s of the handsome "Doubleday Mansion" (which he named "The Cedars") across Spout Run, Col. Charles Doubleday petitioned the County to run a road from Lee Highway north to the old Fort Bennett-Fort Smith road (to be visited shortly) to serve as access to his home. Until being renamed "Court House Road" in the early 1930s, this road was known as "Doubleday's Road," and along it developed a turn-of-the-century neighborhood, with its own railroad stop (railroad site to be discussed later). Different sections of this little neighborhood had different names: "Clifton," "Parklane," and "Hillcrest." Parklane was completely destroyed, as was Doubleday's Road, in the construction of I-66; Hillcrest was vacated and torn down in 1988 for the soon-to-be-constructed "new" Hillcrest townhouse development. Only a few houses remain of Clifton, behind Bergmann's Laundry.

"The Kate Smith Steps": Directly across Court House Road from the barn site, a flight of stone steps can be seen going up from the road to a former house site. The house that stood here from the turn of the century until 1988 was the home of Mrs. Catherine (Gault) Inscoe, whose grandmother (a close friend of an Arlington aunt of Kate Smith's) used to own the house. When Mrs. Inscoe and Kate were both little, the Smiths used to visit the aunt here during vacations, and they often would all come over to visit the Gaults at this house. Mrs. Inscoe recalled that Kate was a very shy girl who didn't like to play with the other children; she would sit alone on these front steps and sing to herself.

(10) Fort Bennett-Fort Smith Access Road

North 21st Road, running northwest down the hill, is on the bed of an 1863 Army-built road connecting Dawson's lane with the old mill road running down to the bridge site over Spout Run. This was the "short-cut" from Fort Bennett to Fort Smith (on the crest of the ridge on the far side of Spout Run). Lincoln's party would have used this route on its way to Fort Smith. Thirty-five years later, Col. Doubleday used this road to get to his home and, at the same time, the houses of Hillcrest were being built along it on both sides.

(11) Thomas Dawson's Gold Mine

Mrs. Bailey really fired our imaginations when we were little by telling us about her father's "gold mine." My brother and I used to dig around in the old crater here, looking for nuggets, but we never found

anything. When told about the current lack of gold in the mine, she laughed and said that her father had found only a few bits of gold in there, near the surface, but had kept on digging and sifting "like a crazy man" until, never having found any more, he finally gave up on it. Judging by Mrs. Bailey's humorous account, it seems that the "mine affair" was ever after a source of family laughter at the expense of the gold-crazed Thomas Dawson. Actually, there was a little "gold-rush" in this area in the last century, mentioned in various records, so Dawson was not the only local farmer with gold fever.

(12) Native-American Campsite

A few yards above the gold mine to the northwest, on the crest of the hill, an American University archeological team in 1988 found the remains of a Native-American site which they determined to be from the end of the Late Archaic period or the beginning of the Early Woodland period (about 2,000 to 4,000 years ago). A concentration of quartz and quartzite flakes were found, leftovers from production of projectile points and cutting tools. The little band that camped here probably used this site several times each year, for several weeks at a time, as a home base for daily hunting sorties. They would then have moved on, as the wildlife became aware of their presence and left the immediate area. It is an outstanding site by the standards of any period, commanding two streams (Spout Run to the north, and a feeder stream to the west) which would not only have provided the water these men and women needed but would also have attracted a number of thirsty animals. The hilltop location would have brought fresh breezes, prevented rainwater from collecting in the site and would have afforded a splendid view of the stream valleys below.

(13) The Mill Road and the Spout Run Bridges

The last section of Uhle St. before Spout Run lies over the bed of a road which ran from the Georgetown-Falls Church Road (Wilson Blvd.), beginning under today's Rhodes St., down to a gristmill built by John Mason ca. 1800 on the north bank of Spout Run at its junction with the Potomac. The mill processed locally-grown grains which would have been brought down this road and sold at the mill. After milling, the flours were then loaded on barges at the mill's dock and ferried to the markets in Georgetown and Alexandria. The mill ceased operations in 1836 when Mason declared bankruptcy. Its road, however, continued to be used through the Civil War and on into the early part of this century -- it shows on Civil War maps, and the Dawsons, the Jewells (Mrs. Dawson's family, whose farm on the ridge north of Spout Run was destroyed in the construction of Fort Smith), and the Baileys used to use it to go visiting in Georgetown by boat.

The original route of this old road has been obliterated by part of Colonial Village, by the construction of Clifton and the Washington & Old Dominion rail bed (to be discussed shortly), and by the Arlington-bound lane of Spout Run Parkway; all that remains is this short block and the first block of Rhodes St. from Wilson Blvd. in Colonial Village.

Since ca. 1800, if not earlier, there has been a long succession of bridges over Spout Run, at this point, as the natural south slope of the Spout Run valley was far too steep to descend to the river, and so the only slightly less precarious north slope was used for the roadbed. The last Spout Run bridge, the second of two bridges known as "Doubleday Bridge," was built in 1912 and collapsed in 1970 after being struck by a car. Before 1898 (when the "first" Doubleday Bridge was built), the bridges at this site were considerably lower and shorter, as the original road beneath this portion of Uhle St. at its bridging point lies approximately 15 feet under later fill.

"The Ghost and Jeane Dixon": In the mid-1960s, there was a grand party, at which both Jeane Dixon and my parents were guests, at the house that once stood next to the Dawson mine and the old campsite. My father and Jeane took a breather from the party by walking along this stretch of Uhle Street, when all of a sudden Jeane stopped short and told my father that there was an anguished spirit standing just down-slope from them. My father saw no one standing where Jeane had indicated, nor did Jeane have any more to say about the specter as she rapidly walked away up the street, visibly agitated. My father recalled that before he purchased that property in 1941, he had been told that a man had driven off the road in that same area and was killed when his car crashed into the stream below. Did Jeane simply research newspaper articles on the neighborhood before coming to that party, or is there a ghost here, from that car accident or from some other forgotten event in the road's long history?

(14) Washington and Old Dominion Rosslyn-Thrifton Rail Spur

Around the turn of the century, a rail line was opened from Rosslyn to Great Falls, with a connecting spur from Thrifton to Bluemont Junction. In my childhood, the trains (which rumbled along right next to my parents' vegetable garden) carried both passengers and freight. The high retaining wall at the end of the field here contains an earthen-fill "bridge" constructed in ca. 1900 by the rail company to carry the rails over what was originally a small stream valley. The small volume of water in this stream allowed the company to contain the stream in piping and fill in the valley at a lower cost than constructing a bona fide bridge. After W&OD closed down operations, the rails were removed and a hiking/biking path took their place. This path was destroyed when I-66 was constructed over it along the old railway route. The cement retaining wall now seen at the end of the field was built along with I-66; before that, it was a wooded slope.

(15) Junction of Civil War Military Roads and Small Rifle Trench Site

To comprehend the Civil-War period use of this immediate area, one must imagine the original natural topography, which before ca. 1900 would have been the stream valley curving back to the southwest through the artificial walled fill that now blocks the valley. Remembering that the section of Uhle Street just visited was already here long before the Civil War, going on up the hill to the south (toward Lee Highway), another road must be envisioned, coming down through the lowest part of

the retaining wall, about halfway along the wall's length, joining up with the older road just west of the entrance to the former McCoy driveway. This road was built by the Army in 1863 to link Fort Strong (on the crest of the hill beyond the retaining wall) with Fort Smith (across Spout Run, at the top of the ridge). At the same time, 21st Road was laid out by the Army from Dawson's lane (as already indicated) at the top of the hill east of here down to this same junction point with the old mill road, connecting Fort Bennett with Fort Smith.

All troop movements among Fort Smith, Fort Bennett, and the Aqueduct Bridge to Washington used this intersection, as did Lincoln's party (coming down 21st Road) when going to inspect Fort Smith. Movements between Fort Strong and Fort Smith would have used both the stream valley road to this junction and the old Jewell spring road across Spout Run valley about half a mile west of here (which would have been Lincoln's route from Fort Smith to Fort Strong). If ever there was a Civil War traffic jam, it would have happened here!

High up along the original east slope of the blocked-off stream valley, the Army constructed a small rifle trench in 1861, the purpose of which was to guard this little valley and the road junction. Many years ago, Mrs. Templeman and my father spent a long afternoon picking through the undergrowth along the slope, trying in vain to locate this trench. I later discovered that the slope containing the trench had been cut away by at least 15 feet during the construction of the railway, almost sixty years before their search, but they had apparently enjoyed the hike so much anyway that my father told me later that it was just as well that they didn't know they were wasting their time.

"The Sled Run": Of no historical importance whatsoever except in the memory of this neighborhood was a sled run graded by my father at the south end of this field. From the top of the steep slope, one could sled non-stop all the way across Doubleday Bridge. A bonfire was always lighted on the hilltop on snowy nights and a great crowd of neighbors of all ages would gather and line up for a spectacular high-speed race through the icy darkness. These events were great equalizers; the children of G. Grant Mason, Jr., who lived in Doubleday Mansion, would come over to line up with considerably humbler folk, among them "Pee Wee," the neighborhood handyman, and on one occasion, our very nervous and reluctant housekeeper.

"The House of The German Spy": The only house still standing in this immediate area, at the top of the hill just east of the little field, belonged in the early 1940s to a lady whose name no one remembers. She didn't live there very long, for it came out that she was a spy working for the government of Nazi Germany. A U.S. government vehicle arrived at her house one day and took her away and no one ever saw or heard of her again.

"The Monkey House": On the corner of 21st Road and Uhle Street, there used to be a small house owned by an artist named Jules Eboli. Eboli was a charming and slightly eccentric man; one of his eccentricities was his fondness for spider monkeys, with several of which he shared

his house. There were always a couple of monkeys scurrying around on the screened porch; from time to time either he let them loose on the neighborhood or they escaped on their own, and we kids used to love running around following the monkeys as they went swinging through the trees. Eboli was very sociable, and used to walk around the neighborhood, visiting as he went, and he never failed to carry a monkey along on his shoulder, to the delight of everyone. The first money I ever earned was a nickel from Eboli's mother, for carrying the mail up the front steps for her; while she read the mail, I played tag with the monkeys on the porch.

"The McCoy Azalea Garden": Shortly after my parents built their house on this hill in 1941, a friend of my mother's (Katherine Gibbs, the architect of several of the Route 50 apartment buildings from the 1940s and early 1950s), suggested placing azaleas among the trees on the hillside. The idea caught on with my parents, and the azalea garden developed over the years until the whole hill at the curve of the driveway was filled with color every spring. In the late 1950s, my father nailed a wooden "Welcome to Stroll" sign on a tree near the driveway entrance, and from that year on hundreds of people wandered all over our property every spring. An Arlington County "Earth Day" was held here, as well as weddings, school easter-egg hunts, various civic gatherings, and neighborhood picnics. Many paintings were made of the garden, and photographs of it have been published in at least two gardening books. We certainly enjoyed the many acquaintances we made by opening the garden to the public; Justice Blackmun, Margaret Chase Smith, Edmund Muskie, and Perle Mesta were among the regular visitors every spring, as were a lot of good neighbors.

After my parents sold this property, the new owner began transferring the many hundreds of plants to his own home in another part of Arlington, where they are now being enjoyed by a new group of neighbors.

(16) Sites of WSOD Railbed and the Old Mill Road

From the Veitch St. bridge, it is easy to discern the route of the WSOD railbed, constructed in ca.1900, as I-66 was laid out directly over it.

The bed of the old mill road leading down to the Spout Run bridge site, however, has been excavated away and is difficult to imagine with today's landscape; southwest of the bridge, it ran more or less along (but above) part of the route of I-66 and the WSOD railbed, cutting off to pass through the east turret of the new apartment building on Lee Highway and then on through part of Colonial Village. On the other side of the bridge, it cut north at about the bridge point, to descend the hill to Spout Run.

(17) Fort Strong Access Roads and Vanished Farm Site

The Veitch St. bridge more or less follows the alignment of the 1861 Army road from Fort Bennett, the middle portion of which was the Dawson lane (which ended approximately at the northeast end of the bridge, just visited). After the bridge, the road turned west to Fort Strong.

The wooded park area between Veitch St. and I-66 just west of the bridge contains the route of the road from Fort Smith to Fort Strong (already discussed), running along the southeast (Veitch St. side) of the little stream valley. These roads, from Fort Bennett and from Fort Strong, came together approximately at the Veitch St. entrance to the Potomac Towers parking lot. (The park area itself was a gift to the County from Preston Caruthers, George Snell, and my parents.)

The High View Terrace neighborhood just north of Veitch St. and the area of Potomac Towers and its parking lot were once a farm (owner unknown), laid out sometime after 1839 and destroyed in the construction of Fort Strong in 1861. The house was located near the intersection of Vance St. and Lee Highway.

The south-to-north line of Veitch St. here follows the west boundary of the Dawson tract; Fort Strong was not on Dawson land, though I have often heard it said that it was.

(18) Sites of Fort Strong, Its Spring, and "Altha Hall"

Fort Strong (named Fort DeKalb until the end of 1863) was situated between the south wing of the Potomac Towers apartment building and Adams St.; the construction of the apartment building in 1959 destroyed the remains of the fort. The southern end of the building's main parking lot lies over fill dumped into the head of the small stream valley (already visited on the other side of the I-66 retaining wall). The stream, now running through a buried pipe, emanates from a natural spring near the end of the south wing of the apartment building, which spring provided the water supply for the fort. Anne Webb ("Fort Strong on Arlington Heights," Arlington Historical Magazine) referred to an incident during the war in which a local anti-Union fellow was caught trying to poison the water of this spring (Regimental Papers of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery).

As previously indicated, Fort Strong (constructed in August and September of 1861) served as a hospital, and for the last year of the war was also a prisoner-of-war camp, holding 150 prisoners. Although no skirmishes happened here, there was frequent artillery practice (Bessie Dawson Bailey, born in early 1861, reported that her earliest memories were of the thunderous artillery practices from Fort Strong). The fort was garrisoned until 1869; in March of that year the ordnance was removed and the fort decommissioned and abandoned (data from Anne Webb).

Immediately to the northeast of Fort Strong (about at the center of the Potomac Towers building) Andrew Adgate Lipscomb II built a Southern Greek-revival mansion, which he named "Ruthcomb Hall," in 1886-1889. Lipscomb was well-connected in Washington and hosted many important politicians at his home here, among them Senators John Sherman (brother of William Tecumseh), Leland Stanford (for whom Stanford University was named), and George Hearst (father of William Randolph), and on April 29, 1890, the entire Supreme Court (Arlington Heritage, Templeman). The property was sold to Thaddeus Tyssowski in 1905, who renamed it "Altha Hall" (or "Alcohol," as it was called by almost every child in

the neighborhood when I was a little boy); Tyssowski's son became Chairman of the Board of Directors of Woodward & Lothrop (his wife was Catherine Woodward). It was a magnificent house, and when it was destroyed for the construction of Potomac Towers in 1959, a large group of sad neighbors stood by to wish it farewell.

(19) Possible Decomposition Pit Associated With Fort Strong

We neighborhood boys used to play "fort" in this declivity, until one day in the early 1970s the bottom gave way and exposed a straight-sided well-like pit approximately 10 feet deep. As a security measure, my father re-capped the hole with railroad ties and dirt; he recalled that the former cap was of rough boards, which had simply rotted away. The pit has intrigued me for years, because its depth, circumference, and straight vertical sides are beyond the ability or need of either playing children or a homeowner building a well or midden (there was a small house nearby from the 1920s until the late 1940s).

I am fairly certain that this pit was constructed by the Army in connection with Fort Strong; as its location would have been outside and downslope of the fortified area, at some distance from the fort itself, it may have been a midden for the decomposition of organic refuse such as food and human body parts (keeping in mind that the fort contained a hospital). After being deposited in the pit, such refuse would probably have been slaked with lime and covered with a layer of earth. Considering the number of men occupying the fort during the war (Webb quotes a computation of 477 men to fully staff the fort, which does not take into account the inmates of the hospital nor the 150 prisoners of war), one decomposition pit would not have been sufficient; if this pit was used for this purpose, it was only the latest of several such pits.

(20) Long Fort Strong Rifle Trench

This rifle trench was built by the Army in 1861, to guard the Spout Run valley and the bridge site across it. It was originally about twice the length it is today, extending southwest toward Fort Strong, but was severed in ca.1900 when the railway company cut a valley for the railbed. The relatively flat area just southeast of the trench was part of the tent encampment area (which continued back from here to the fort). A similar trench ran along the opposite slope of Spout Run valley, manned by Fort Smith; most of the Fort Smith trench was destroyed in the construction of Spout Run Parkway.

"Encroachment of Over-Urbanization": This trench is situated in an ever-shrinking island of natural and historic space. Not unlike Bessie Dawson Bailey's earliest memories of Fort Strong artillery thunder, among my early memories are the dynamite explosions from the construction of Spout Run Parkway. When I was fifteen, the peony fields and apple orchard surrounding Altha Hall and Fort Strong came down with those structures and a high-rise building went up in their place. More recently, the secluded wooded path on the old railbed gave way to I-66. A month ago, the forested hillside on which I grew up was excavated away to make room for a townhouse development; a fawn was seen grazing

on this slope less than two years ago, and the now-vanished trees and topsoil held a number of bird and squirrel nests and the dens of rabbits, possums and raccoons. Land-use change is not in itself abnormal; construction of my father's house required the felling of some trees, the railroad destroyed one Civil War trench and part of another, the Army deforested these hills during the Civil War, and the farmers at Dawson Terrace expanded their fields at the expense of the virgin woods and the wildlife that lived there. It is the scale and impact intensity of modern technologically-aided development that is way out of balance to the ability of nature to recover and to the strength of fragile history to survive. These little islands of Arlington's natural and historic roots reveal the human scale that has made this county a particularly desirable place for human habitation, more than just a handy motel for the city across the river.

(21) Jacobs' Spring

The 1839 lot sale announcement quoted on the first page of this guide referred to this water source as "... a very superior spring ...," the announcement's highest praise of any of the springs of the 21 lots comprising the area along the Potomac from Rosslyn to Pimmit Run; the closest competitor was the spring on the [later] Cruitt site in Lyon Village, referred to as "... a very fine spring." In the days before piped water, the presence of a good spring raised a property's value considerably, so this land was expensive even 150 years ago.

This spring provided all of the drinking, cooking, laundry, and bathing water for Dawson Terrace's inhabitants for over 135 years (from before 1785 until 1920, when the "modern" extension brought running water into the house). No doubt before that it served the same functions for the native Necostins and their predecessors, making the hilltops on either side of this little valley favored camping sites. Mrs. Templeman (Arlington Heritage) referred to Bessie Dawson Bailey's story of this spot as a favorite resting place for the soldiers passing between the forts during the Civil War, who enjoyed both the cool water and the shade of the same adjacent poplar tree seen here today. According to Mrs. Bailey, on one occasion the soldiers were eating walnuts here, and left enough behind on the ground to give rise to several walnut trees now standing around the spring.

This spring, along with the oldest portion of Dawson Terrace, is a very old site indeed for Arlington; both places preserve the memories of more than two centuries of human activity and are, to my mind, rather special because of it.

(22) Jacobs' Castle ("Bayeva") -- text by Dorothea E. Abbott

Millions of people have dreamed of building a castle, but Dr. J. Bay Jacobs and his wife Eva actually built one in Arlington, Virginia. Sometime after the Jacobs returned from a European vacation in the mid 1930s the idea to build their own castle resembling one they liked in Bavaria became a reality.

Dr. Jacobs told me during one of several telephone conversations that the choice of location for the site of the castle was very important to him. Dr. Jacobs, a noted obstetrician and gynecologist, was on the staff of Georgetown and Arlington hospitals. His wife, Eva, searched for suitable land that would be an equal distance between both hospitals. Mrs. Jacobs was most fortunate in finding the "Spring Lot" of the former Thomas B. Dawson tract for sale. It was just what the doctor ordered. Bessie Bailey, one of the Dawson heirs, sold 2.3 acres to Dr. Jacobs on December 22, 1936.

Mr. Frank Segretti of Segretti Brothers, the stonemason who was hired to build the castle, relates how Mrs. Jacobs sat on a tree stump in the rain and sketched her plan for the three-story castle including a turret. Mr. Segretti said that the stone for the "Bay-Eva" castle came from the Stoneyhurst Quarries on River Road in Bethesda, Maryland. It took the Segretti Brothers three months to build the castle.

Dr. Jacobs also had Mr. Segretti restore the old spring house on the property. The oblong brick structure with a locked door and metal roof was in bad condition. Mr. Segretti designed a hexagonal-shaped spring house using the left-over stone from the castle. The roof was covered in slate. A raised cement flooring surrounds a small overflow pool that contains outlets for a run-off. A brick arch is over the spring. Slate steps lead down to the spring house from the driveway.

During the Civil War soldiers camped near the spring. They cut down many of the trees for firewood. Mrs. Bailey told Dr. Jacobs the story of how her father prevailed upon the soldiers to spare a poplar tree which shaded the spring because it would keep the water cool. This tree still stands today guarding the spring. An historic plaque has been placed on the tree by the Notable Tree Committee under the Community Beautification Division, a citizens group, of Arlington County.

From 1940 to 1956 Dr. Jacobs purchased contiguous parcels of land with existing buildings. In 1983 he made a gift of the castle and the estate to The American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Foundation, reserving as grantor a life estate interest therein. Following his death in 1988 the Foundation sold the castle and 5.5 acres to the Truland Corporation.

(Researched by Dorothea E. Abbott)

[23] Mackey's Hill (formerly Rock Hill) -- text by Bettie Keiger

The oldest house in this area is at 1716 N. 22nd St., built in 1895. The next oldest is at 1720 N. 22nd St. and was built in 1900. The home of Crandal Mackey, at 1711 N. 22nd St., has been demolished. Captain Mackey served three terms of four years as Attorney for the Commonwealth of Arlington County, and is credited with clearing out gambling dens from St. Asaph's, near Alexandria, along the river through Rosslyn in 1904.

Once there was a large settlement of German families in this area.

Duke Ellington came to the house at 2126 N. Rolfe St. when a pianist, Mrs. Webb, lived there. Arthur Cotton Moore designed the townhouse development on Rolfe Street called Dundree Hill.

On Lee Highway, there was the Consumer Brewery, later the Arlington Brewery, the Arlington Bottling Company and the Rosslyn Packing Company. At 22nd St. and N. Oak St. is the Truland Corporation, an electrical contracting firm.

(Researched by Bettie Keiger)

(24) Site of the "Rock Hill Hotel"

It was recently learned, from studying an old map, that just down 22nd St. from the Mackey house was a turn-of-the-century hotel, called the "Rock Hill Hotel." At this point, nothing is known about this place; considering the raunchy lifestyle of Rosslyn at that time, it is hoped that research will reveal some juicy stories about the hotel. Keeping in mind, however, its location next to Mackey's house, the truth may be quite tame. It seems appropriate that the Truland Company's development plans at this site include a hotel -- perhaps the Rock Spring hotel will come to life again.

(25) Site of Fort Bennett

Less than half the size of Fort Strong, and with only one-third of Fort Strong's artillery power, Fort Bennett was in reality a lookout post for Fort Corcoran, covering both Deadman's Hollow and the stream valley through which Lee Highway now runs. Fort Corcoran (constructed to guard the approaches to the Aqueduct Bridge, at the site of today's Key Bridge) and Fort Bennett were built at the very outset of the Civil War. After the first battle of Manassas (a Confederate victory), the U.S. Army began construction of the "Arlington Line" of forts defending the northern capital, which line of forts was some distance back from the first forts, relegating the latter to support roles. Fort Strong and Fort Smith were in the new line, and their troops would have moved back to Forts Bennett and Corcoran only in a last-ditch retreat defense in the event of successful Confederate assault from west Arlington.

I have not located the decommission date for Fort Bennett, but I know that its flagpole was still flying the national flag in the 1870s, both from the painting "Ludlow Patton" (mentioned on page 1) and from ca. 1870s surveys in which this flagpole was a reference point.

The remains of Fort Bennett were destroyed in the construction of the Fort Bennett Apartment complex in the 1940s.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to North Highlands. If you have any questions or need further information on the neighborhood, please contact either the North Highlands Citizens Association, or Bruce Gregory McCoy at 525-7290.