

## OLD GLEBE NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE TO HISTORIC SITES

(Numbers keyed to neighborhood map)

*This Guide takes you on a walking tour of our neighborhood from Glebe Road (1) at Walker Chapel (2) to Military Road (13), through Gulf Branch Nature Center (15), along Dittmar Road (17), up 36th St. (23), and around to #26 on the Abingdon cul de sac. It then returns and takes you down 37th Street (25) and along 38th Street (28) to Upland Street (30) and up to Glebe Road (1) – a distance of about 2.6 miles. Learn history while you're exercising!*

1. **Glebe Road** is the name given in the 1930s to a continuation of the mid-18th century road that ran from Alexandria to Falls Church and that passed by the glebe property (16<sup>th</sup> Street) which belonged in colonial times to the Church of England. The northern portion of Glebe Road (the portion that ran through our neighborhood) was known as Little Falls Road because it connected Falls Church to the little falls of the Potomac River.
2. **Old Glebe Road** was built in the 1870s, passing directly over what had been the western side of Fort Ethan Allen. Its name was changed from Glebe Road to Old Glebe Road in 1964, when Glebe Road was rebuilt along its current, more northerly route.
3. **Walker Chapel** was located on this site in 1871 as a branch of Mount Olivet Church (at Glebe Road and 16<sup>th</sup> Street). The first church was to the north of this location, but was replaced in 1903 by a church on the current site. The present church was built in 1960.
4. **Walker Chapel Cemetery** is the burial place of David Walker (1794-1848). His sons, Robert and James, gave the land for Walker Chapel in 1871. There are graves here of many prominent Arlington citizens.
5. **Langston House and Store** was built on this site by Thomas Langston in 1879. For many years the Langstons operated a general store and a stable on the property, and all local mail was delivered there. The store continued to operate until World War II. It was demolished in the 1960s to make way for the present house.
6. **4140 Old Glebe Road**, known as Lilac Cottage, is believed to have been built about 1890 as a honeymoon cottage for the daughter of the minister at Walker Chapel.

7. **Glebe Road Park**, 4211 Old Glebe Road, is the site (near the drinking fountain) of the one-and-a-half-story log home built in 1871 by Robert Walker, who with his brother James gave the land around the family graveyard for Walker Chapel. The house remained in the Walker-Gutshall family until the property was acquired by the County in 1967. The house was demolished by the County in 1978, and some of the logs were transferred to Gulf Branch Nature Center for a small structure. Robert Walker owned a truck farm and was a leader in many civic activities in Arlington. The Park can be reached from either Glebe Road or from the intersection of 38th Street and Tazewell Street. The latter is named for Virginia Governor Littleton Waller Tazewell (1774-1860).
8. **Fort Ethan Allen Park, 4311 Old Glebe Road**, contains the remains of one of the outlying trenches that surrounded Fort Ethan Allen. The land was given to the County for use as a park by its former owners. The County has placed an interpretive sign at the park.
9. **James Madison Community Center** is the former James Madison Elementary School, built in 1939 and expanded in 1959. The school was closed in 1975, and the facility was converted to a community center. The school was built on the site of the earlier Saegmuller Public School, which opened in 1901.
10. **Fort Ethan Allen**, a star-shaped fortification, was built in 1861 as part of the ring of forts constructed by the Union Army to defend the capital city from attack during the Civil War. It had emplacements for 34 guns and was garrisoned by 1,000 men. The fort was visited by President Abraham Lincoln. It was abandoned after the war. Today it is the property of the Arlington Department of Parks and Recreation; the portion of the fort land that is adjacent to Old Glebe Road has been designated an Arlington landmark and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Old Glebe neighborhood obtained a large grant from Arlington's Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee in 2010 to renovate the fort property and to add interpretive signs and features. The renovation effort is expected to be completed during 2012-13.
11. **4452 Old Glebe Road** sits on the site of the mid-19th century home of David Walker.
12. **4464 Old Glebe Road**, at the head of Military Road, was operated for many years as Morris Nursery and still includes a large greenhouse in the back. After the death of Charles Morris in 1955, his widow Edna and her second husband, Walter Keller, continued to operate the nursery as the Keller Nursery until 1987.

13. **Military Road** was built by Union forces under the command of Captain B.S. Alexander in 1861 to connect Fort Ethan Allen with Fort Strong and the other Union forts built as part of the defenses of Washington. Since then, it has been widened and straightened in some areas. Note the remains of the former alignment below the terrace in front of 3832 Military Road and its neighbors in the Fort Ethan Allen subdivision, platted in 1933.
14. **Gulf Branch Nature Center and Natural Area** is a 40-acre preserve through which Gulf Branch and its principal tributary, Hitchcock Spring Branch, run on their way to the Potomac River. Opened to the public in 1966, its mission is to contribute to the community by providing and promoting environmental and cultural programs and experience. Gulf Branch provides habitat to 121 species of birds, 26 species of mammals, 35 types of reptiles and amphibians, and a myriad of insects and other invertebrates. The County put together the preserve by acquiring the John Davis property (1965– the existing fieldstone house was on that property), the Elwood Williams property (1962 and 1968 – the old driveway from that property still exists), and the Gutshall property (1967).
15. **Gulf Branch Nature Center**, a principal focus of the Gulf Branch preserve, is located in a fieldstone house built in the early 20th century. Former residents include Pola Negri, a silent film star who was engaged to Rudolph Valentino at the time of his death in 1926 and rented the house in the 1930s. Its features include an owl house and an exhibit on pre-colonization Native American settlements in the area. Friends of Gulf Branch, a non-profit organization founded in 2008 by local residents, provides funding to the Center – part of an effort to stave off periodic efforts by the County to close it down.
16. **Gaddy’s Pasture**, now known as the “Sanctuary” tract,” was – before its donation to the County in the 1980s – the home and farm of the Gaddy family. Covenants in the deed provide that the land must be maintained in its natural state as a wild-life preserve. The purpose of the natural area is two-fold: to preserve and protect wildlife habitat and to serve as a resource to educate the public about natural resources. On snowy days, it serves as one of the area’s premier sledding hills.
17. **Dittmar Road** became a public right-of-way in 1909 at the request of local resident Gustav Dittmar and his neighbors. It linked many lanes that looped off of Glebe Road, including one to the summer home he had built in 1890 at the site of 4510 Dittmar Road. The house burned down in the 1950s.
18. **White House on N. Upland Street** is an example of late-19th century summer homes once built in the area and later converted to year-round use.

19. **4531 Dittmar Road**, sometimes known as the Old Bradley Property, was built about 1890 by Nathan C. Bradley, whose family owned it until 1928. The front of the house is perpendicular to the street, suggesting that the lanes that became Dittmar Road followed a different path in the 19th century.
20. **4612 Dittmar Road**, built in the Colonial Revival style, contains elements dating back to 1862.
21. **4616 Dittmar Road** was built between 1871 and 1875 and was known as “The Hill” because of its hilltop location. The Hill was initially the summer house for the Nelson family of Washington. Five generations of Nelsons lived there until they sold it in 1969-1970.
22. **Wakefield Street cul-de-sac**. This was the site of the Hitchcock Farmhouse. The farm land (known as Birchland in the 19th century) extended from about 37th Street to the present-day intersection of Little Falls and Glebe Roads. The land was owned by Billy Birch, and – following his 1870 death – the eastern portions of the land were farmed by his daughter Elizabeth Birch Hitchcock. The Hitchcock Spring (a principal source of Hitchcock Spring Branch) was on the property and is mentioned in Birch’s 1870 will.
23. **Hitchcock Spring Branch** runs from 36th Street, behind the houses on 38th Street, and under Dittmar Road – before entering Gulf Branch Nature Center and joining with Gulf Branch to run under Military Road on its way to the Potomac River. Hitchcock Spring Branch was named for the Hitchcock family, which farmed the land on the east side of 38th Street at the end of the 19th century.
24. **3611 Abingdon Street** is the former home of singer Kate Smith (1907-1986, best known for her renditions of “God Bless America”) and the site of the grave of Billy Birch, the owner of Birchland (see #21).
25. **37th Street**, formerly East View Avenue, was platted in 1932 along with Abingdon and Albemarle Streets as Gulf Club Manor.
26. **3804 N. Abingdon** used to have a Glebe Road address. When the Abingdon cul-de-sac was created, the owners built a new facade on the back so that the front of the house would face Abingdon. Built in the 1860s, the house was one of the earliest houses in Arlington, if not the first, with indoor plumbing.
27. **Chesterbrook Road** is one of our early roads – it connected Glebe Road with the historic Kirby Road in Fairfax County.

28. **38th Street.** The stretch of road from Wakefield to Dittmar Road was known as Hitchcock Lane when it was platted in 1932 as part of Country Club Grove. It was renamed in 1934 in connection with Arlington's adoption of its alphanumeric system of street names. The remaining portion of 38th Street (between Wakefield and 37th Street) was platted about 1952 when that area was subdivided.
29. **Holmberg Park** (at the foot of Upland Street) was formerly known as Hitchcock Spring Park. It was maintained for many years until his death by retired Rear Admiral Paul Holmberg (1915-1986), who lived at 3760 Upland St. As a young lieutenant, Holmberg was a hero of the Battle of Midway (1942) – he served as a bomber pilot aboard the U.S.S. Yorktown. The park was renamed Holmberg Park in his honor in 1996.
30. **Upland Street**, formerly known as Forest Avenue, was platted in 1932 as part of Country Club Grove. The development extended from Dittmar to Chesterbrook, between Glebe Road and 38th Street.

### **Return to Glebe Road at Walker Chapel**

\* Last updated in February 2012. Please send additions and corrections to: Old Glebe Civic Association, c/o Rich Samp, 3815 N. Ridgeview Road, or email to [rasamp@verizon.net](mailto:rasamp@verizon.net).

