

THE HISTORY OF HILLMEAD

Hillmead, located in the area now known as Bethesda, was once part of a large farm owned by the Huddleson family. The farm house was built on the highest part of the land in the vicinity now marked by Swansea Street with the outbuildings to the north. During the Huddleson ownership a working gold mine existed on the farm. Ann Whiteman, (Tom Whiteman's mother) a descendant of the Huddleson family and a Hillmead resident, has a small gold nugget from the mine.

The area from Wilson Lane to Potomac, MD was known as Bradley Hills. The Bradleys owned a large farm near the corner of Bradley Boulevard and River Road. The land records of this period showed tracts of land with some very odd names. Hillmead was known as Grubby Thicket, Magruder's, Beall's Honesty and then, just plain Honesty.

Thomas P. Bones and his partner, Harry Wardman (who built the Sheraton park Hotel, formerly known as Wardman Park) purchased the Hillmead property in August 1922. The Bones family used 23 acres for their summer home. It was a very handsome estate with a duck pond, swimming pool and giant trees. In 1936, when the Scharf Family moved to Stoney Spring, only three other families (the Greens, and Wolfs and the Bones) lived here. The bridge on Valley Road which crosses Booze Creek, was of wood and so weak that the fire chief refused

to let his trucks cross it. As a result, George Scharf dammed his spring in

order to form a small pond with which to fight the fire if necessary,

In 1946, the Cooley Brothers started the Hillmead development with twenty houses on Ridge Rd. , Ridge Pl, and Greentree Rd. Between 1947 and 1956, approximately 225 additional homes were built by the Cooley Brothers. In the beginning, Greentree Rd. was just a country lane. Between the Guernseys on Ayrilawn Dairy Farm and the cows on the Bones' property, the early settlers in Hillmead were certain that they had moved to the country and were true pioneers! Since the houses always were completed ahead of the roads, moving-in was an acrobatic exercise. The record probably went to the movers who carried a piano for a block on planks over a sea of mud! By April 1954, however, Hillmead had developed sufficiently so that residents became entitled to door-to-door mail delivery.

The first collection box for outgoing mail soon was constructed at the intersection of Ridge and Valley Roads. The Hillmead Citizens Association was established officially in June 1949 "to stimulate interest in and to devise ways and means for the promotion of the civic community and general welfare of Hillmead and of Montgomery County." The Association has championed such notable issues as the institution of door-to-door postal service in 1954; the construction of a local park in Hillmead from 1953 to 1976; the fight to keep open Bradley Hills Elementary School from 1975 to 1976,



and again from 1981 to 1982; and the battle to keep Hillmead within the Walt Whitman school district from 1977 to 1979.

Hillmead has been a great place to live for over 50 years. We are fortunate to come together at neighborhood events several times a year, from the family picnic around the Memorial Day Weekend, to the Halloween Parade, to the Winter Holiday Party. It is at these events that you will find longtime residents of over 30 and 40 years greeting residents who just moved in. The names and faces may have changed over the years, but the feeling is always the same: "Welcome to Hillmead!"

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Thank you to all the Hillmead Residents who contributed and compiled this information.