CENTENNIAL
OF A
STREETCAR SUBURB

MOUNT RAINIER
MARYLAND

1910 100 YEARS 2010
INTRODUCTION (Web Version)

It is a great honor to present Mount Rainier, Maryland: Centennial of a Streetcar Suburb to the city’s citizens. An editor of such a work is tasked with selecting material that will capture the essence of the municipality over its many decades of changes, while at the same time being concise to make it a quick read and including enough intriguing material to make it enjoyable. In editing the material, I selected items that provided the basic historical facts, highlighted significant themes that run through the decades, and noted each era’s challenges and triumphs. The good and bad, beautiful and ugly are presented. I have not shied from presenting some of the less glorious episodes. Why? Knowing the past provides a benchmark from which to judge the amazing progress made to overcome those negative events. After reading this history, I believe you will agree that the city has without a doubt progressed in the face of many challenges in the last 100 years and will continue to be a beautiful and historic place in which to live and/or own a business.

Commemorative booklets were produced in 1960 for the 50th anniversary and in 1985 for the 75th. This centennial edition will not reproduce those histories in toto but will instead focus on the last 25 years while also providing some material from the previous histories since they are no longer in print. This web-based version of the printed history provides updated and additional material and allows for color photos. Much more research material is available in notebooks kept at City Hall and in the Prince George’s County Historical Society library.
Every attempt has been made to provide accurate information; however, some stories are based on an individual’s memories and in some cases local lore. The source of the information is provided in footnotes for those inclined to dig deeper. For this edition of the history, the Internet has opened access to sources not readily available to previous books. Hundreds of 19th and 20th Century newspapers are now archived and searchable on-line. Personal memories of earlier times are now provided on websites and in blogs. Digital and video cameras provide vastly more photos!

In editing this material, I found that some local issues never change. For instance, consider the following passage from the Washington Post on Jan. 13, 1947*: “The citizens of Mount Rainier have one sharp difference among themselves. The Johnny-come-latelys ... say “Ra-neer,” ... but the natives, and old-time residents call it “Rainy-er.”

To my ear, in 2010, most people call their home, “Rain-year.” No matter how you pronounce it, the sense of pride in and commitment to constantly improving our little city in the shadow of the nation’s capital has not changed since 1910.

I hope you find this centennial edition informative and entertaining.

Bryan Knedler, Editor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An editor relies on the work of other people. I would like to acknowledge them.

First, those individuals who compiled the 50th and 75th anniversary books upon which this book heavily relies.

Patricia Pugsley, Bunker Hill Road resident, whose determined hours of archival research added so much to the story. In addition, she created the chapter layouts.

Jimmy Tarlau, councilmember Ward One and chair of the Centennial Committee who collected materials, scanned many many pages of historical materials, and dealt with the business aspects of producing this book.

Becky Livingston, former resident and history sleuth who proofread chapters and provided valued advice and inspiration.
The many residents who provided stories and photographs that enrich documentation of our community’s history.

Other contributors to this history booklet include:

Staff of City of Mount Rainier: City Manager Jeannelle Wallace, Asst. City Manager Michael Jackson, Cable TV Director Graciela Carbonell, MRTV production technician Robert Page, City Clerk Janis Lomax, MRPD Chief Michael Scott, MRPD Capt. James Stoots, Councilmember Ivy Thompson, and Mayor Malinda Miles. George Denny, local historian and Brentwood’s former mayor; Howard Berger, MNCPPC staff; Vic Lemas; Kaywood Gardens Management; Fort Hill at Clemson University.

Residents and Former Residents: John Bowman, Cheryl Fountain, Deborah Grisar, Otis Hayward, Don Hibbard, Bill Holton, Joseph Howell, Jodi-beth McCain, Barry Miller, Karen Morrill, Marilyn Mowatt, Doyle Niemann, Patricia Pugsley, Allen Rice, Jimmie Rice, Fred Sissine, Patricia Williams.

And thank you to our Sponsors and Advertisers who helped defray the costs of production.

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes to save space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCM</td>
<td>City Council meeting minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNCPPC</td>
<td>Maryland-National Capital Park &amp; Planning Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSG</td>
<td>MESSAGE newsletter</td>
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<td>PGJ</td>
<td>Prince George's Journal</td>
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<td>The Prince Georgian</td>
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<td>WP</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>50th AB</td>
<td>50th Anniversary Book</td>
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<tr>
<td>75th AB</td>
<td>75th Anniversary Book</td>
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FOR RESEARCHERS

If you are beginning research on your house or local history, below are some suggestions.

If you are researching your home and it was built before 1940, you will need its pre-1940 address. The Prince George's County street names and address numbers changed in 1940 in order for street names to more closely follow those in Washington. To find the old address, consult the 1939 Sanborn fire insurance maps. The current and old address is given for each house. These maps are available as noted below. Mount Rainier is included as part of the District of Columbia map series in some of the early years.

On-line searching. The Internet provides a vast amount of archival data. If you are using a search engine, be sure to use several variants of the city's name: "Mount Rainier," and "Mt. Rainier." Also, "Rainier," "Ranier," and "Rainer." All variants will be found! Old newspaper archives are available from specialized collections on-line (some free and some requiring a fee or subscription) and offer a wealth of information.

D.C. Martin Luther King Library. Has some materials related to Maryland suburbs, including Sanborn maps.

Hornbake Library, University of Maryland, College Park. The Ku Klux Klan records are there. The library also has extensive collections of old area newspapers on microfilm and area maps, including the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. Mount Rainier is included in the Sanborn’s Washington D.C. map series in the early years. National Trust for Historic Preservation materials such as the Sears, Roebuck mail-order house catalog and related archival data reside here as well. The University's Maryland Room - a special collection - is also housed at Hornbake. The library's catalog is online.

Hyattsville Branch of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System on Adelphi Road. There is a wealth of local historical information at this branch, and its Maryland Room catalog is available on-line. If you are looking for an old federal census, that is a good place to start. The Periodicals Room has several major area newspapers on microfilm and also some census results.

Library of Congress. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps are available online and in hard copy, but few related to Mount Rainier appear to be available online.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has an archive of old maps and photos.

Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation. The real property index shows the approximate date of a home's construction and provides some previous ownership and transfer data.

Maryland's Environmental Resources & Land Information Network has a collection of aerial maps.

Maryland State Archives, Annapolis. Extensive assessment record research can be done here which will reveal when major changes were made to a property such as construction of a house and major additions.

Mount Rainier City Hall. For each house address, the city has an old tax folder in which you will find the names of previous owners, code enforcement notices, and old liens on the property. In addition, it is possible you may find old blueprints for additions to houses, photographs, and news clippings.

Prince George's County deeds and plats are available at the County Courthouse in Upper Marlboro and many are on-line through the Maryland State Archives.

Prince George's County Historical Society, Frederick S. DeMarr Library of County History, Greenbelt.
Researching your House in Mount Rainier

by Jarrett Stoltzfus

Deeds for Your House: Finding Ownership Over Time

Online Tools:
Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (1960s to current day):  http://dat.state.md.us/
Maryland Land Records Website (pre-1960s):  www.mdlandrec.net

Background:
The Maryland Land Records site shows deed transfers for properties. These deed transfers will identify the seller and buyer of a property. These sellers/buyers can be one person or a couple, and sometimes may often include an organization or corporation. For instance, some properties in Mount Rainier may have been bank owned, will to a Church upon the death of their owner, or some other party. The information in a deed can vary, but almost always contains the buyer, seller, and a reference to the previous deed. It may contain information on restrictive covenants (for instance, the house not being used to produce alcohol)

Utility for House Research:
You will want to start house research by working back from the most current owner. If you look up your property on the SDAT website, you will be able to get a wealth of information, including information on the type of your house, square footage, legal description of your location, and The section titled “Transfer Information” is important. It provides a listing of the property transfers over the last few decades. The section titled “Deed1” for each Seller shows a series of numbers like this” Deed1: /03635/00239”. These numbers are the folio and liber numbers for the actual deed and can be used on the MDLandRec site. The MDLandRec site will allow you to view an original copy of the deed.

Most – but not all – deeds will have a reference (liber and folio) to the previous deed. This will allow you to look up a previous deed by the reference in the current deed you are looking at.

Note: Since addresses have changed so often in history, they generally are not used in the deed. Instead, you will want to write down the legal definition of the location. For Mount Rainier, this will take the form of a lot within a block number of a specific subdivision. This historic legal location will be referenced even in the newest deeds, but in the oldest deeds, will be the only identifier for your house.

For instance, “Lot 10 of Block 11 of the Rogers Addition to Mount Rainier”. This means, your property is Lot 10 (one of probably 10-16 lots) within a particular block (in this case, Block 11), in a certain subdivision in the city. (in this case, the Rogers Addition to Mount Rainier). In some cases, your property may actually span more than one lot (some properties in Mount Rainier sit on a double or triple lot), or may be on half a lot (this happens particularly with corner houses or houses on East-West streets). Seeing a location like “the southern 1/3 of Lots 4, 5, and 6 of Block 11 of the Rogers Addition is normal.

Occasionally, a deed will not include a reference number for the previous deed. In this case, you can look at the Grantor/Grantee index for that time period on the MDLandRec website. The index will let you find the liber and folio number based on either the buyer or seller.

Lastly, the important thing to remember is that this is a deed transfer. In the early days of Mount Rainier, there was a lot of land speculation, and often lots without houses were sold. You can ascertain whether a house was there based
on Sanborns Maps or Tax Assessments (both discussed later).

The University of Maryland has a great site for understanding MDLandRec.net at: http://lib.guides.umd.edu/content.php?pid=166406&sid=1402905

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**Plats for Your House: Finding Your Subdivision**

**Background:**
Mount Rainier consists of a series of land divisions made during the early years of the development of the city (1900s-1920). Major additions include the original Mount Rainier, Rogers Addition to Mount Rainier, Rogers Second Addition to Mount Rainier, Granby, Edgemont, 35th Street Addition, Rhode Island Avenue Addition, Rhode Island Avenue 2nd Addition, and so on.

**Utility for House Research:**
You should find the division that your house is located in. You can also find a map for the original subdivision (this only contains the land and not your house, of course, as it occurred before any houses were developed). This can be a reference point when looking in the deeds.

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**Neighborhood Maps Of Your House’s Structure and Location**

**Sanborn Maps**

**Background:**
The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps have been drawn and revised by the Sanborn Company since 1867 for the entire United States. The earliest for Maryland go back to the 1880s and have been created for most cities and towns in the state. While the originals are drawn to identify the material that a structure was built from construction type for fire insurance purposes, they show a lot of information including number of stories, locations of porches, etcetera. The Sanborns maps that are available for Mount Rainier date from 1921 and 1939. These are fortunate dates, given that those were key periods of growth for the City. Only about half of the city’s lots were built upon in 1921, but by 1939, almost every single lot had a house built. Electronic copies of the Sanborn Maps can be found at the University of Maryland, at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, at the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis, or (for the City of Mount Rainier) from the City itself.

**Utility for House Research:**
The Sanborn Maps contain a lot of information. For instance, they will show if a house existed at all, how many stories it was (a lot of houses had attics that were later built out, which will be reflected on the map), locations of front or back porches, and other outlying buildings like garages or sheds. Since very few houses in Mount Rainier never had any additions, the Sanborn maps can be useful in identifying the location and age of various sections of your house.

Note: The Street names changed between 1921 and 1939 (from the ‘tree’ names like Ash, Beech and Cedar to the currently DC aligned names like Shepard, Taylor, Upshur, etcetera. Commercial buildings are also included on this map along with their uses.
Tax Assessments (Of Land and Houses)

Tax Assessments

Background:
Tax assessments may be used to ascertain an approximate date for the construction of a house. While deeds show a exchange of title from a seller of a property to a buyer, they do not convey whether a house was present. In present day, the selling of a property almost always includes a house. In the early days of the City, lots were sometimes sold multiple times within a few years, and a house may or may not have been included.

However, Maryland’s tax assessments were based on two thing. The “Land” itself, and “Improvements”. Improvements in the case of a residential plot always meant a house and any other structures. So by reviewing the tax assessment for your house, you can find if there was a tax assessed on just the Land, or a separate assessment on Land and Improvements.

Unfortunately, there is no online tool for the tax assessments. You will need to go to the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis, Maryland to review the tax assessment book (you will actually be looking at the original copy of the tax assessment book).

Visiting the State Archives

The State Archives are a wonderful source of materials. They are open somewhat limited hours, and you can only request 3 materials at once. You can also not get the materials yourself – they have to be checked in and out by a Archives librarian. (this is due to the age and importance of the materials).

You will want to bring a camera (no copies allowed), pen, paper, and laptop (wireless is available). Rubber gloves are available free of charge.

You will be looking for Prince George’s County Records:

http://guide.mdsa.net/county.cfm?
action=viewSeriesList&qualifier=C&type=county&county=PRINCE%20GEORGE%27S%20COUNTY

Within that, you will be looking for County Tax Assessment Records (here): http://guide.mdsa.net/series.cfm?action=viewSeries&ID=C1164

They are separate by Election District. By 1910 or so, Mount Rainier was in the Chillum District. Before that, Mount Rainier was located in the Bladensburg district.

This is important because the Tax Assessment books for Prince George’s County are separated in half (half the election districts in one, half the election districts in another). Make sure to check out the right book.

Once you locate the book with Mount Rainier in it, you will want to find the tax assessment for your property. You will need to have done the deed research before you get to this point for the owner names and legal name of your property.

You will need the following:

Owner Name : (by Last Name. Can be a company as well)

Legal Name of Your Property (Ie, the ‘Southern 1/3 of Lots 4, 5 and 6 of Block 11 of Rogers Addition to Mount Rainier)

You will need to look through the tax assessment book once you have located the correct Election District and look by last name. It is in roughly alphabetical order, but not exactly, so make sure to go through every single page and look for your owner’s name.

For instance, Frederick Heiling was the owner on a particular Mount Rainier house in 1908. We know that it was on the “Southern 1/3 of Lots 4, 5 and 6 of Block 11 of the Rogers Addition to Mount Rainier”.


We know this from the deed research/ Working backwards, we can find it in the Tax Assessment Book. This snapshot below of a Prince George’s Tax Assessment Book from 1908 shows Frederick Heiling’s property in Mount Rainier. We know this is the same property, because it is labeled “S 1/3 Lots 4,5,6 B11 Rogers “”). This stands for “Southern 1/3rd of Lots 4, 5, and 6 of Block 11 of the Rogers Addition to Mount Rainier”, which is the legal name of this particular property. You can see “300” located above the Lots 4,5,6 and you can see later on that line where “Imp. 850” is written. This stands for Improvements, or the existence of a house! So the total taxes for the house were 300 on the land, and 850 for the house for a total of $1,150 in 1908.

Note: Assuming you know your house was there by at least 1921 (on the Sanborns 1921 map), this is the only real way to see if there was something there before that date (if you don’t have any photos of your house), since the deeds don’t often indicate whether they was anything built on the property. You can do this research back to the original subdivision – but it is highly unlikely that there were any houses built on the Mount Rainier grid before the grid itself existed.
MAYORS

Robert E. Joyce 1910-1911 Floyd Mathias 1941-1949
Jospeh T.K. Plant 1911-1913 Herbert Reichelt 1949-1954*
W.H. Vanneman 1913-1914 Frederick Richardson 1954-1968**
Perry Boswell 1917-1921 Linda Nalls 1977-1983
Fred Negus 1923-1925 Linda Nalls 1989-1993
Kenneth Bovay 1925-1926* Fred Sissine 1993-2001
John H. Beall 1926-1927 Michael Lawson 2001-2002*
Fred Negus 1927-1929 Bryan Knedler 2002-2005
John Beall 1929-1934 Malinda Miles 2005-
Norman Pruitt 1934-1941

* Resigned  ** Died during term  † Recalled

COUNCILMEMBERS

FIRST WARD  SECOND WARD

C.O. Bohrer 1910* J.B. Moore 1910-1912*
F.M. Proctor 1910-1911 Victor Brooks 1912
Julius C. Statts 1911-1913 Warren W. James 1912-1914
John Klein 1913-1915 Irvin F. Haskins 1914-1918
Daniel Morgan 1915-1919 John M. Earnest 1918-1920
Norman Pruitt 1919-1923 Warren W. James 1920-1926
W.P. Earnest 1923-1925 Philip C. Dorr 1926-1928
Louis Rosenfield 1925-1927 Warren W. James 1928-1932
Norman Pruitt 1927-1934* Roger W. Moser 1932-1934
A.J. Bates 1934-1945 John Duever 1934*
Leo McMahon 1945-1947 Roy F. Fowkes 1934-1936
Frederick Richardson 1947-1954* John Duever 1936-1940
A.J. Bates 1955-1957** Charles Haskins 1940*
Roy W. Callaway 1957-1968 John Duever 1940-1941
                           Jerome A. Richards 1969-1977**
                           Charlotte McDonald 1977-1983

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Below are sources of general information used for this booklet. Each chapter has specific source material listed.

• City of Mount Rainier Golden Anniversary. 1960.
• Prince George’s County Metropolitan Directory of the Mt. Rainier-Hyattsville-College Park Area. 1950
• Program for the Celebration of the Completion of Rhode Island Avenue. October 15th, 1932.
• Mount Rainier Historic District National Register Nomination. Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commiss-
  ion, 1990
The City Charter was amended such that beginning with the 1985 election, the city was divided into two wards rather than four. Each ward with two councilmembers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WARD ONE</th>
<th>WARD TWO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alice Zickafoose</td>
<td>Doyle Niemann</td>
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<td>Donald Hibbard</td>
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<td>Daniel Granzow</td>
<td>Chuck Hackett</td>
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<td>Cyndi Alexander</td>
<td>Malinda Miles</td>
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The City Charter was amended such that beginning with the 1997 election, terms of officer were for four years rather than two, and the terms of office were staggered.

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<tr>
<td>Carol Gandee</td>
<td>Janine Jackson</td>
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* Resigned  ** Died during term  † Recalled