

# The Village Way

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## Falls Church - A Virginia Village

Recently, there has been discussion as to whether Falls Church:

- a. ever was a village
- b. should be referred to as a village now
- c. if the term "village" helps or hinders our future as a community.

This edition explores the subject of Falls Church as a village.

### *The Past*

*The following two quotes give appropriate testimony to our village of many decades ago. For a variety of current perspectives, turn to page 2.*

"Falls Church, while a Virginia village, is thoroughly cosmopolitan. Falls Church might properly be called a national village, since its citizens are chiefly employees of the government, and the interests of its ... people naturally center at the National Capitol. Endowed by State Law with the name of town when a mere hamlet, it is still 'the village' to its citizens."  
*(from "A Virginia Village" by Charles Stewart, 1904)*

"To me, it was a delightful, honest-to-goodness village. There were brick walks that the Village Improvement Society built. Everybody knew everybody. There was just a delightful atmosphere. I still can't get over it. I still say, 'I'm going to the village.' It was very much a village 40 years ago."  
*(from an interview with Elizabeth M. Styles by Tony Wrenn in 1971)*

### *Don't Miss the Fall Home Concert Series*

The mission of the concert series is to return cultural experiences to the home environment, to provide a new venue for local musicians to play and to be paid, and to provide residents an enjoyable evening. Seating is limited to 20, and the concert tickets sell out quickly. Tickets are \$14 each or \$36 for a series ticket (3 concerts). Call 532-0884 for reservations.

*See page 5 for concert descriptions*

### *Inside*

"Are We a Village?"

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### *Dates to Remember*

**Farmers Market booth**  
Sat. a.m. thru Nov. 22  
**Board Meetings**  
September 11, October 9  
**Film Premiere**  
Oct. 10  
**Home Concerts**  
Oct. 17, Nov. 21, Dec. 5  
**Farmhouse Tour**  
October 18  
**Victorian Ball**  
November 1  
**Society Fall Meeting**  
Thursday, November 13  
**Cherry Hill Book Signing**  
November 23  
**"It's a Wonderful Life"**  
Sat., November 29

# *Are We A Village? Four Perspectives*

*From the past Chair of the Business Development Commission ... Michael Slonim*

Some have said Falls Church should not be considered a village -- that somehow this would make our city less significant, less of a "player" in the economic competition that cities, counties, and states increasingly face with one another.

In greater Washington, D.C., there are only a handful of suburban areas that are interesting, dynamic, or vital enough to draw in business owners, residents, shoppers, and tourists. Such areas include ... (see page 3)

*From the President ...*

*Edwin Bancroft Henderson, II*

A village, according to my dictionary, is "An incorporated minor municipality," under which, I would say, Falls Church qualifies. Our small community, surrounded by 4-5 million people in hundreds of communities, does complicate the issue. When I think of a village, I think of a small country atmosphere with acres between houses and uncomplicated relationships between people, government, and businesses. The society in which we live is complicated due to diversity, technology, Washington, and multinational corporations, all within our reach.

However, when I look at our small population here in Falls Church, ... (see page 3)

*From 3-Time Past President... Louis T. Olom*

Falls Church was first a country village, then a town, and then a city of the second class. Today, Falls Church remains "a family-oriented urban village," trying desperately to cling to those positive characteristics of village life that spell a sense of community, a sense of place, a sense of history, and a sense of tradition. Village character and a cosmopolitan outlook and orientation are not, we have demonstrated, incompatible.

Many people in Falls Church continue to ....(see page 4)

*From the Vice-President ... John Maier*

As one of the many baby-boomers who was raised here and decided to stay (or return), I recognize one truth about life in Falls Church. Falls Church may be a city by name and a metropolitan suburb by locale, but it has the heart and soul of a village. Our peaceful setting, unique features and our spirited citizens make up that heart and soul and, in our cherished community, the whole is, indeed, greater than the sum of the parts.

Falls Church has always been a peaceful and friendly place to live, where daily life provides a village atmosphere. Even now, any citizen can shop, run errands, or take a leisurely stroll and encounter many friends and neighbors. Where else .... (see page 4)

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## **Falls Church Village Preservation & Improvement Society**

### **Officers**

President - Edwin Bancroft Henderson, II 534-4627  
Vice-President - John Maier - 533-3053  
President ex-officio - Cynthia Garner  
Treasurer - Mary Slattery  
Secretary - Jeri Hesson  
Publicist - Nancy Brandon

### **Board of Directors**

Dave Eckert, Kathy Grunz, Jon Hundley,  
Annette Mills, Curt & Janice Nette, Sue Neuhart,  
Jean Ponton, Frank Roche, Joanne Rodman,  
Ruth Rodgers, Michael Slonim, Clyde Thompson,  
Midge Wang, Cay Wiant

*To join - contact Annette Mills, Membership Chair, at 532-0884.*

### ***New Cherry Hill Book***

Society member Shirley Camp has recently completed a new book on the history of Cherry Hill. The Society will co-sponsor a book signing there on Sunday, Nov. 23.

### ***(from page 2 - by Michael Slonim)***

Old Town, Georgetown, Annapolis, Reston Town Center, Cleveland Park, and the Village at Shirlington. What do these areas have in common other than their economic success? They are villages in some sense. All are walkable, defined by pedestrians and human scale buildings rather than solely by parking lots. They are also "mixed use," which means that people live, work, and shop there.

So many suburban areas around Washington, D.C. are characterized by vast expanses of strip malls separated only by fast food joints and 7-11's and dotted with dumpsters. It can only be a good thing to separate our City from this type of numbing landscape. The first step in remaking Falls Church as a destination is to create the identity. This is not rocket science, just simple marketing. For example, as written by Charles Stewart (ed. - see page 1), we could present Falls Church City to the public as "The National Village." The second step is more difficult - making changes to try and become, once again, a dynamic village while avoiding the fate of most suburbs, where the greatest excitement is a ten-minute drive to the nearest convenience store.

For those who feel a village may not suit a large, important metro area, I would remind them that in France, Paris is still considered the "City of 1000 Villages." Certainly such a term has not hurt Paris. Perhaps we can learn something from this and other places. In the process, we can make Falls Church a "player" in the economic engine that drives the D.C. area and improve the quality of life for all Falls Church residents, visitors, and business owners.

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***In 1997, the Society purchased  
57 trees for the City.***

### ***(from page 2 - by Edwin B. Henderson)***

the quiet residential atmosphere, our ability to petition the local government and get things done, I would say that we are unique and different. We are not Fairfax County with approximately 1.3 million people and large bureaucracies, or Washington, D.C. with its Financial Control Board.

But even more than our differences in population or bureaucracies, by believing in the concept of a village, we can create an atmosphere that separates us from the confusion that is all around us. A Village is a state of mind where we can speak to each other, where we are secure and insulated from the big city reality just beyond our borders, where we can all coexist in peace and harmony, where our children can feel safe and go to schools that are among the best anywhere.

I grew up in such a village, but I have done a lot of travelling in my lifetime. I have either lived or worked in good and bad communities, and Falls Church is among the best that I have experienced. Our community, with its village atmosphere, but in close proximity to world cultures, government, and information, makes us unique and a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

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### ***Help!***

The Society needs the following from its members. Please call Dave Eckert at 532-0884.

**Gardeners** - We have three gardens on public land that we have planted and that need care.

**Ice Chest** - We need a used ice chest in good condition for our many functions.

**Rocks** - That pile in your back yard could help us to outline a nature trail.

### **Falls Church Farmhouse Tour**

Take a bus tour to visit 15 original Falls Church farmhouses on Farm Day. Call 241-5077 to register for this 2-hour tour (\$5). Your tour guide will be Dave Eckert.

*(from page 2 - by Louis T. Olom)*

to plant their gardens, preserve and plant trees, and promote the imperative need to set aside open space whenever feasible. In recent times, however, we have regrettably witnessed wholesale and egregious violations of these principles and practices by rapacious developers who have obliterated huge hunks of our inherited beautiful landscape over the protests of citizens.

In recent years, prolonged intensive campaigns were launched to foster economic development by recruiting new businesses while strengthening existing business establishments. The purpose was to alleviate the tax load on residential property owners. Because of a perceived connotation of "resistance to change," "standing in the path of progress" and an absence of "visions of a high-rise, high-density city," there has been resistance to the word "village."

In my opinion, it is important to retain the term "village" and continue to sponsor activities and to advocate those local governmental policies and practices that nurture and support our village-like character.

In recent years, more enlightened architects and developers have produced models and have created new developments designed to reflect and produce "village-like" character. They

advertise these areas as "village development."

Our response in Falls Church should be that we have inherited 300 years of beautiful landscape with our own tiny creek tributaries -- "babbling brooks" as one local developer called them in his ad. In Falls Church, we have all the village-like character certain developers strive to create, but our government leaders either do not know how or do not wish to package these virtues into effective public relations or marketing advertising campaigns. These would be to attract businesses that are searching for the serenity of small town living which also places great emphasis on quality, up-to-date, state-of-the-art living.

Falls Church has been referred to as a place of "nooks and crannies," which John Maier has attempted to record. (ed.- see page 5). These nooks and crannies require protection if we are to remain an oasis in a midst of megalopolis.

Our "family-oriented urban village" has been recognized by being named an "All-American City," "Tree City, U.S.A.," and a "Bill of Rights City." These awards reflect the goals of Falls Church citizens who have struggled for so long to develop, preserve, and improve the urban village that so many communities seek. *(The complete unedited text of this article is available upon request. Call 532-0884 for a copy.)*

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*(from page 2 - by John Maier)*

can you go into so many family-run businesses where they know you by name and can talk about the latest happenings in the community?

Many events that make our community special are based on village traditions and values. Perhaps our best examples are the Memorial Day Parade, the Farmers Market, and the Concerts in the Park. The most important fact is this - opportunities to participate in or create events and traditions in Falls Church are nearly unlimited, and anyone can get involved.

I have walked or bicycled through every Falls Church street and neighborhood for 30 years. Each one is special. I am impressed by

the pride that the residents place in their yards and in the preservation of our many historic homes. The value of our neighborhoods is maintained by both their continuity and features, but not by the "McMansion" development mentality of huge homes placed on bare, minimal lots.

My earliest memory of Falls Church is watching the Memorial Day Parade on the 900 block of West Broad Street, surrounded by Victorian-era homes. That scene made quite an impression on me. Was that small town just a surreal vision from the past as the theme in so many "Twilight Zone" episodes? No, with a little heart and soul, it can still be, it still IS Falls Church.

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*Over 2,000 people attended the Society's Concerts in the Park in 1997.*

## ***Tour the State Theater at Our Annual Fall Meeting***

Mark your calendar for Thursday evening, November 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the Woman's Club. The highlight of this meeting will be a grand tour of the State Theater, which will be in the full process of renovation toward a state-of-the-art performance theater in its original art deco setting. The theater owners will be there, along with Don Furcher, who was the theater usher in the 1940s. John Maier will also present a signature slide show on entertainment in "the Gulch." The Excellent in Design Awards, postponed from the Spring meeting, will be presented at the beginning of the meeting.

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### ***The Fall Home Concert Series***

All concerts are Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

#### **Romantic Music for the Saxophone**

October 17

Martin Wilkes, Falls Church resident and member of the U.S. Army Band, will present music of the Romantic Era on alto saxophone with piano accompaniment. Few people have heard the sound of a professional classical saxophone in such an intimate setting.

#### **DaVinci's Notebook**

November 17

Winners of the East Coast A Capella Quartet Contest and stars of national television, DaVinci's Notebook boasts a member living on our City's border. This wild and crazy group of guys will have you snapping your fingers and having too much fun. The song, "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" will never be the same again.

#### **Holiday Tunes Through the Ages**

December 5

The Falls Church Chamber Orchestra Brass Quintet will help you start the holiday season with festive performances of winter holiday music ranging from medieval times to the present.

#### ***The Home Concerts' Greatest Supporter***

Peg Jones passed away in August, leaving the Society without its greatest supporter of the Home Concerts. It was with her home in mind that the concerts were initiated. Her commitment and support of the concerts and her newspaper reviews motivated their continuation during the fledgling years. We thank Peg and will miss her dearly.

### ***Society Sponsors TV Premiere***

*Local Student Makes Falls Church Documentary*

The public is invited to the premiere of "Tripps Run, An Ancient Stream," by Falls Church resident, Teddy Wiant on Friday, October 10, 8:00 p.m. at George Mason High School. The Society is sponsoring this first-ever, live coverage of a TV production premiere in Falls Church. This production was made with the assistance of current and past Board members. It is also the first documentary to be aired about a Falls Church natural resource. The premiere will be complete with limos, stagelights, refreshments, and interviews with the stars. Check the Falls Church News-Press for updates on the event.

*The Society's booth "Village Center" at the Farmers Market has served for the past five years as a central location where citizens can easily find information about Falls Church. Our volunteers staff the booth every Saturday for six months. To help, call 532-0884.*

### ***Falls Church Victorian Ball***

*"May I have this dance?"*

Saturday, November 1, from 7:30 - 11:00 p.m. A Victorian Ball, portraying how life may have been in Falls Church 100 years ago, will include period music, dance, and dance classes in the Falls Church Community Center. The charge is \$25 per person. Attendees may come in modern or 19th Century Ball attire. Call Midge Wang at 534-8394 for reservations. Co-sponsored by the Victorian Society and the Historical Commission.

*The Falls Church Village Preservation & Improvement Society*

*So that Village Life ...*

*Lives On*

*Promoting the Cultural and Natural Environment of Falls Church, Virginia*

The Village Way  
Falls Church Village Preservation & Improvement Society  
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