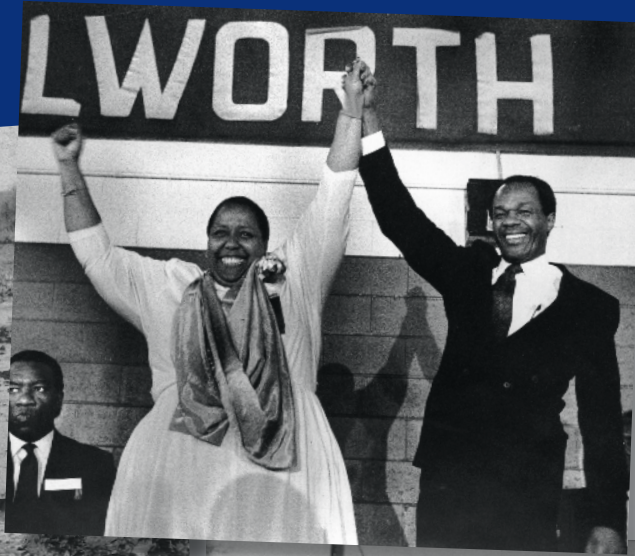


A DC Neighborhood by the Anacostia River

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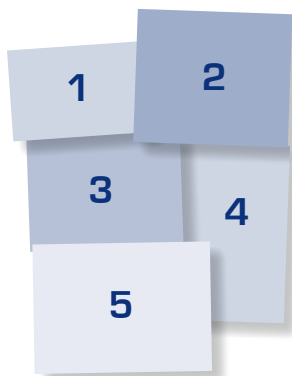


Photo credits (front cover):

1. Charles Shaw, son of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens founder W.B. Shaw, with his daughter Margaret enjoying the lily ponds. [Courtesy of Ruth Shaw Watts.]

2. Kimi Gray and Marion Barry at an October, 1988 ceremony pledging tenant ownership for Kenilworth Courts. [© 1988, The Washington Post. Photo by James K.W. Atherton. Reprinted with Permission.]

3. Park Ranger Walter McDowney, who grew up in Kenilworth Courts, shares his love of snakes with Junior Rangers at the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. [National Park Service Photo by William Clark, Archives of Rhuedine Davis.]

4. Frank Matthews on Douglas Street, mid-1950's. [Courtesy of Frank Matthews.]

5. Kenilworth Avenue in 1949, looking north from Benning Road. [Historical Society of Washington, DC, Wymer photo collection.]

Research and writing by Joe Lapp. You may contact him at lappjoe@yahoo.com.
Design by Laryn Bakker.

First printing funded by a grant from the Humanities Council of Washington, DC, with the sponsorship of Cultural Tourism DC, along with additional funding and support from Yoma Ullman, with Carole Kolker as the Humanities Scholar; published February 2006.

This second printing is funded by a grant from the DC Historic Preservation Office administered through the Humanities Council of Washington, DC; published September 2006.

This brochure was funded by a grant from the Humanities Council of Washington, DC, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The findings and views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the view of the Humanities Council of Washington, DC nor of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

HUMANITIES COUNCIL
OF WASHINGTON, DC

This project has been funded in part by U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant funds, administered by the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Office.

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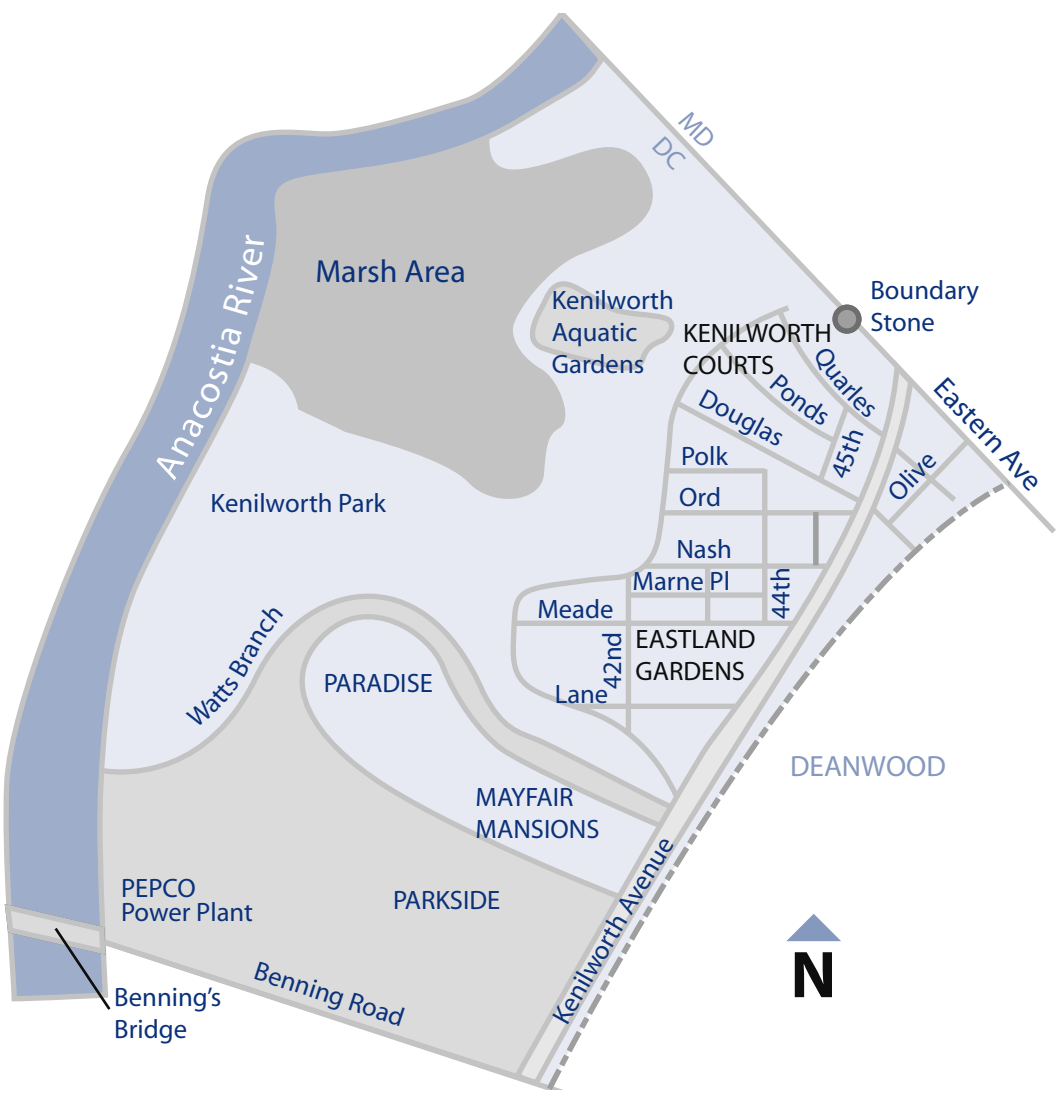
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I LOVE KENILWORTH: its woods, streets, and alleys; its highway and its people; its ponds and churches and homes. Love motivated this booklet, and I hope you will read it with that in mind.

My parents moved to Kenilworth in the 1960's to start a small church on Douglas Street, and I came home to Kenilworth when I was born. Over the last three years I've spent many hours roaming the neighborhood's streets, talking to its people, and digging up its history in libraries and in neighbors' archives. This booklet is the result.

I hope these pages will inspire you to find and record the history of the people and places that you love. And if you, like me, love Kenilworth, we can work together to make sure the neighborhood's future is a positive and a bright one.

Peace, Joe Lapp


Water, Woods, and Trees: Kenilworth Before It Was Kenilworth

IF YOU GO TO THE TOP OF THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT and look out past the Capitol, past the round roof of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Memorial stadium, where the Redskins used to play, toward Kenilworth, what would you see? You could pick out the Anacostia River winding north from the Potomac and Hain's Point. If it was nighttime you could see the giant, red neon "Pepsi" sign on the soda plant just north of Kenilworth. There'd be some smokestacks, too, like the tall chimneys of the Pepco electrical plant on Benning Road. Then, just above the trees, you would see the single brick smokestack for the big boiler that used to heat the whole Kenilworth Courts complex.

There would be hills, too, Mt. Hamilton and Hickey Hill on the western bank of the Anacostia, part of the National Arboretum today, and the bump of the Civil War-era Fort Mahan on the horizon above the intersection of Benning Road and Minnesota Avenue. If you look around from your birds-eye view you would see a ring of hills surrounding the bowl of downtown DC and the junction of the Anacostia and Potomac rivers. As part of this ring, a long ridgeline runs parallel to the Anacostia River on its eastern side. Fort Mahan is on this line of hills, as is Fort Stanton, where Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church now stands, and the hill on which St. Elizabeth's sits above the town of Anacostia.

Geologists think that the whole area inside that bowl of hills, including Kenilworth, might have been under water once, part of a large inland sea. When the waters receded, forests grew. Ranger Kate Bucco, who works at the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, likes to say that a squirrel could have run from the Atlantic Ocean to the Allegheny Mountains, right through Kenilworth, without touching the ground.

The Anacostia River became a rich habitat for all kinds of wildlife. Fish teemed in the river; fox and deer ran freely in the woods. Eagles and egrets

An aerial photograph showing the Anacostia River winding through a landscape. The river is prominent in the lower left, with several small islands and marshes. In the background, a city skyline is visible, including the Washington Monument. The overall scene depicts a mix of natural wetlands and urban development.

1936 photo showing the Anacostia River, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, and river marshland in relationship to the city of Washington, DC with the Washington Monument visible in the background. Note the open fields in the lower left corner, showing the rural land Kenilworth Courts was built on. (US Army Corps of Engineers, Office of History)

nested in trees and soared above the nearby hills. Ample marshland along the river supported fields of wild rice and other marsh plants that provided food for animals and humans.

It is no surprise, then, that Native Americans chose to live along the Anacostia River, where the game was abundant, the land well suited for growing crops, and the river provided easy transportation for hunting and trade. By 1608, when Captain John Smith first sailed up the Potomac River, a tribe called the Nacotchtanks had built a small town on the river bank a few miles downstream from where Kenilworth is today. It is easy to imagine people of this tribe living in small family homesteads up and down the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, as the Anacostia River was called then, their huts and fields linked by the river.

As Europeans came to the New World, they began to colonize the area around the junction of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers. Tradition says that the land along the Anacostia was originally deeded to one of the Lords Baltimore by the King of England himself. As more European settlers came, they divided up the land and began to farm it. By the first decade of the 1700's Ninian Beall, the famous Prince George's County landowner and Indian fighter, owned land around the present-day Kenilworth. Joshua Beall, probably a relative of Ninian Beall, received a deed for area land in 1764. The names of these early tracts were "Fife" and "Beall's Adventure."

In 1701 a Fife boundary stone was placed in the marsh that once spread back behind the present-day Mayfair-Parkside neighborhood, where Kenilworth

Park is now. Parts of this land eventually came down to the Sheriff family, for whom Sheriff Road is named. As late as 1946, the original paper deed for this land could reportedly be seen at the home of Mrs. Clement W. Sheriff, who, now a widow, had sold the family farm and was living on Ord Street in Kenilworth.

The nearest early settlement was Bladensburg. Founded in 1742, it was a port town at the upper navigable reaches of the Anacostia River. Oceangoing ships came to the Port of Bladensburg to trade in tobacco, other farm goods, and slaves. A rutted country road, called the "Eastern Branch Road" also led to Bladensburg from the Alexandria



Fife boundary stone with Anacostia River and river marshland in the background. (Photo by Charles Shaw, courtesy of Ruth Shaw Watts, 1929)

ferry to the south. It paralleled the Anacostia River on its eastern side roughly where the 295/Kenilworth Avenue corridor runs now. One can imagine travelers by foot, by horse, and by carriage following this sandy path over hills, by marshes, and past plantation houses set in alternately wild and tended countryside.

In 1790, the new United States government selected a 10-mile-square parcel of land at the junction of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers as the place to build a new seat of government for the whole country. As land-planning began, the area east of the Anacostia River, being outside the boundaries envisioned for the downtown of this new city, was left largely unaltered.

In 1792 government surveyors put stone markers every mile along the diamond-shaped borders of the District of Columbia. They placed one of these stones right where Kenilworth is today. It marked the eighth mile south and east from the city's northern tip. Visitors can still see this 200-year-old stone in the woods behind 4500 Quarles Street. It is protected by an iron fence put up by the Daughters of the American Revolution in the early 1900's.



Kenilworth's 1792 boundary stone.
(Courtesy of Ruth Shaw Watts)

Before Kenilworth, There Was Benning

ACCORDING TO WASHINGTON HISTORIAN RUTH ANN OVERBECK'S ESSAY on the Deanwood neighborhood, in the late 1700's William Benning, a slave owner and farmer from Virginia, bought 330 acres of Beall land in what is now the general Kenilworth/Deanwood/Benning Road area. Legend calls him "Captain Benning," a river pirate who settled down on the banks of the Anacostia River for a pleasant retirement.

Pirate or no, William Benning built one of the first bridges across the Eastern Branch, or Anacostia River, and the first across its northern half. He collected tolls to pay for the privately financed structure. Benning's Bridge and Benning's Road, as they were then called, appear on maps as early as 1861 and provided an important eastern route out of the city.

By the 1870's a town grew at the intersection of what was then called the Eastern Branch or Anacostia Road (now Minnesota Avenue) and Benning's Road, and Captain Benning lent his name to this small town as well. An 1879 map shows a post office and a train station. An elementary school for white children soon located there.

The area that would become Kenilworth was an outlying part of the town of Benning. By 1861, the date of the first available real estate map that shows



1882 etching of Benning's Bridge. [Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library]

landholders east of the Anacostia, people like James Fowler, a government clerk, F. Naylor, a coppersmith, T. Brightwell, a farmer whose household also included a dentist, and J. Hawley own local land.

One family, the McCormicks, owned a triangle of land

between the DC line and the Anacostia River close to the current intersection of Quarles Street and Anacostia Avenue. They had a big house in an oak-dotted meadow surrounded by farmland. The 1880 census shows Alexander, a farmer, married to Elizabeth, a housewife, with seven of their children still at home. The household includes Robert Jones, a black farm laborer.

William Benning also gave his name to the local horse-racing track that began operation in the 1870's and first established the area as a visitors' destination. Benning's Track was located just where the Mayfair Mansions and Paradise neighborhoods are now. If you look at a map, you can see the outline of its oval course still surviving in the shape of the streets that surround these neighborhoods. From 1890 until 1908, when a Congressional anti-betting law effectively shut the race track down, thousands of visitors came out Benning's Road to sit in the large grandstand and crowd the turns, betting, socializing, and watching the horses race. Here then-stable-hand Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, the popular African-American dancer and entertainer, probably saw for the first time the traveling minstrel shows that helped inspire his later career.

Benning's Track was used by horse owners as a spring training track well into the 1930's. Popular Labor Day auto races were also held there. Around 1940 Elder Solomon Lightfoot Michaux, a popular African-American radio evangelist known as the "Happy Am I" preacher, bought the site and built Mayfair Mansions. Designed by Howard University-trained architect Albert Cassell and built with federal loans, Mayfair Mansions' "garden apartments" became the fashionable address for young, professional African-Americans.



A race car rounds the turn at Benning's Track. Note the large grandstand on the left. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, 1916)

Shaw's Water Gardens: Farming the Marsh

IN 1879 CIVIL WAR VETERAN WALTER B. SHAW BOUGHT THIRTY-TWO ACRES OF LAND from his in-laws, David and Lucianna Miller, who had a farm in the rural part of Washington east of the Anacostia River, on the Anacostia Road just north from the rural town of Benning. Eighteen acres of usable farm land fronted on what would soon become Kenilworth Avenue with fourteen acres of Anacostia River marshland to the rear.

Walter Shaw was a “Yankee,” a white native of Maine who fought for the North in the Civil War. He lost his right arm at the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. Confined for a time in a hospital in Washington, DC, he taught himself to write so well with his left hand that the Treasury Department hired him as a copy writer. At the Treasury Department he worked with the sons of well-known black orator Frederick Douglass, writing in his diary that “their appearance caused some commotion at first, but I think it will subside.”

For awhile, like many government workers in the city, he lived in a boarding house in downtown DC. He got to know David Miller's three daughters and often walked or hitched a milk-wagon ride out Benning's Road to spend time at the Miller farm. The oldest daughter, Eliza, married a Joseph Voorhees; they bought half of the family farm and taught in local schools. W.B. Shaw and Lucy, the middle daughter, married and eventually bought the other half of the David Miller property. They had three children, Charles, Helen, and Robert.

W.B. commuted into town, probably riding the street car line as it went in Benning Road to his Treasury Department building. He also began to make improvements at his 1530 Kenilworth Avenue property, adding a small house back toward the marsh.

As the oft-quoted story goes, Shaw sent to his native Maine for a few water lilies and planted them in an old ice pond. He began to experiment with the plants, creating his own varieties such as the “Lucianna” and the “W. B. Shaw.” To accommodate his growing hobby, W.B. built a greenhouse and began to carve more ponds out of his marshy acreage. Soon he started to sell the beautiful flowers and plants to interested customers. His hobby became a full-time business, and he quit his job at the Treasury. By 1908 Shaw's Water Gardens was doing a brisk trade in cut lily and lotus flowers, sending thousands of blooms to elegant hotels like the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. Aquarium fish, aquarium plants, water lilies, and other water plants also sold well.

W.B.'s children grew up around the marsh and the botanical activities of their father. One can imagine them at his elbow learning about lilies and helping to build the ponds. While one son became a machinist and another joined the military, Helen stayed close to home and to the water plants she had grown to



L. Helen Fowler with a delivery truck. She is reputed to be the first woman in DC to have a driver's license. [Courtesy of Ruth Shaw Watts]

love. She married Marion Fowler, son of a well-known land-holding family in the area, and had a child, Melvin. The child died young of disease, and husband Marion also died within the first years of marriage. Helen threw herself into work at the ponds, and the lilies became her family.

Around 1912 Helen Fowler took over the water gardens from her father. She continued to expand the operation, traveling to South America and other locales to bring back exotic species. Water plants and cut flowers wrapped in lead or neatly secured in pine boxes were shipped up and down the eastern seaboard and as far away as Chicago. During the summer months Helen and her helpers sometimes gathered 3,000 blooms a day. She took painting classes at the Corcoran School of Art and began to illustrate her own catalogs, which she lovingly put together with many tips for the

beginning water gardener. You can see a copy of one of these catalogs at the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens visitors center.

The beauty of Helen's lilies became famous in the city and many society folk came to her gardens on Sunday mornings to have a picnic breakfast in the shade of the weeping willows that lined the ponds. President Woodrow Wilson visited the gardens, as did presidents Coolidge and Harding, and Mrs. Fowler counted first ladies among her friends.

In the early 1900's the Army Corps of Engineers began dredge and fill work along the Anacostia River trying to reopen the shipping channel, which had silted in. As they worked north from the Potomac, they used material dredged from the bottom of the river to fill in marshy land along the river's banks. Now valued as pollutant traps and vital habitats, the swamps were seen as "malarial flats" good only for breeding mosquitoes.

As early as the late 1910's, Helen became aware that Army Corps' dredging work might threaten her business. She hired a succession of lawyers to defend her rights to the marshland that she and her father had made the basis for

This early 1900's photo shows Anacostia River marshland before Army Corps of Engineers dredge-and-fill activity. The bridge shown is at the current New York Avenue bridge site. [Courtesy of Ruth Shaw Watts]



their thriving business. In the mid-1930's the Corps moved to seize her ponds without compensation, saying that the land had always belonged to the city. Helen successfully fought the seizure, probably saving the ponds from obliteration. The federal government bought the land and made the site a national park, the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens.

Terms of the sale allowed Helen Fowler to continue living on the property in a house not far from the current park visitor center. She continued to travel and gave lectures to area women's clubs about water plants and gardening. She died in 1957, and her house was torn down. The Shaw family land outside the gardens is now part of the land on which the Kenilworth Courts housing complex sits.

The Original Kenilworth: From Country to Suburb

BY THE LATE 1800'S REAL ESTATE COMPANIES WERE BUYING UNUSED FARMLAND east of the Anacostia River and subdividing it into small lots for houses. Outlying areas all around the expanding federal city began to change from rural land to built-up suburbs.

In 1895 the name "Kenilworth" was first applied to the area when white real estate developer Allen Mallery bought farmland from the Fowler family and subdivided it. He named this new neighborhood after Kenilworth Castle in England, the ruins of which can still be seen today in Warwickshire. This castle is famous for a 1575 visit by Queen Elizabeth the First that included



Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens with current greenhouse and visitor center in foreground. Helen Fowler's house is in the background. [Archives of Rhuedine Davis, 1953]



Ruins of Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire, England. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

days of lavish partying and entertainment. Mr. Mallery's wife had just read *Kenilworth*, the novel by Sir Walter Scott that immortalizes the story of this visit, and she chose its title for the new suburb.

The up-and-coming white suburb with the high class name was originally laid out along Olive Street and Kenilworth

Avenue, with an additional tract of Naylor family land added in 1898 that became Ord Street. The Washington and Suburban Real Estate Company itself paid for an extension of the existing trolley line — which started at the Treasury Department downtown and came out H Street and Benning Road — up Kenilworth Avenue to its new community. Neighborhood lore tells that a drinking trough for the horses on the early horse-drawn trolleys stood at Douglas Street and Kenilworth Avenue.



A typical early-1900's house on Kenilworth Avenue in the white suburb of Kenilworth. (Photo by R.G. Shaw, courtesy of Ethan Brent)

Though the new neighborhood of Kenilworth did not boom, by the early 1900's houses were popping up on lots up and down its newly laid out streets. With Benning's Track and Shaw's Water Gardens nearby and an easy trolley commute to jobs downtown, Kenilworth attracted white, middle class residents who wanted inexpensive land on which to build a modest home. By 1903 an elementary school and a Presbyterian church had been built at Ord Street and Kenilworth Avenue on land donated by Allen Mallery.

The original Kenilworth Elementary School served only the white residents of the area. A racial controversy put the school in the news when, in 1904, Mr. Mallery and other white Kenilworth residents accused an area man, John Colvin, of being a Negro and of sending his non-white children to Kenilworth Elementary. The Kenilworth Citizens' Association asked to have the children removed, but John Colvin insisted that he and his offspring were white. These attacks eventually forced Mr. Colvin and his family to move elsewhere.

As the neighborhood grew the Kenilworth Citizens' Association continued to take the lead in community organizing. At that time the District was administered by a board of three commissioners appointed by the President, and such citizens' associations provided an important way for residents to bring their neighborhood concerns to this ruling body. The need for better city services — such as gas, water, paved streets, fire protection, and electricity — dominated conversation in the early meetings.

Those who can still remember growing up in the original Kenilworth suburb do so with great fondness. The neighborhood had a small town atmosphere, they recall, and children felt safe under the watchful eyes of adults. Shaw's Water Gardens presented wonderful possibilities for outdoor exploration and had ice skating in the winter.

Walter Lingeback, whose family lived on Ord Street, remembers his first job there when, as a teenager, he helped Walter Shaw and Helen Fowler maintain the ponds and ship water plants to their customers.

The church, though Presbyterian, was a community church and attracted people of many different denominations. Pastors like the well-loved Kenneth Buker oversaw an active Sunday School program, a Loyal Temperance Legion, and a Ladies Guild. W. B. Shaw's granddaughter Margaret Shaw Petrie taught Sunday School classes there for over forty years. Ruth Shaw Watts especially remembers the church's yearly trolley outing to the Glen Echo Amusement Park on the western edge of the city when she and her Kenilworth friends sang Sunday School songs and waved to passersby from the open streetcar.

Change came to Kenilworth School in October of 1931 when cracks in the walls made the building unfit for use. Construction of the new school at its present site of 1300 44th Street began the next year. A 1933 Washington Post article showcases the new building as a modern school with "New Deal innovations" servicing a still-rural area.

The top stories of the condemned school building at Kenilworth Avenue and Ord Street were torn down and a community center erected on the old foundation. Opened in November of 1934, it had a small auditorium, game rooms, and workshop space, and at one point housed a dozen different community organizations. An active recreation program grew there with



An early 1900's photograph of 1606 Kenilworth Avenue, home of Charles and Alberta Shaw. (Photo by R.G. Shaw, courtesy of Ethan Brent)

neighborhood children competing in city-wide track meets and sports leagues. Brothers Willard and John Driggers started a Kenilworth Aircraft Club for neighborhood boys. The Dunkley sisters led a thriving Girl Scout troop.

Local stores included Benson's, a variety store at the corner of Kenilworth Avenue and Douglas Street. Two Wiseman brothers, Jewish merchants



Historic Kenilworth School at the corner of Kenilworth Avenue and Ord Street. Note the streetcar tracks in the foreground. [Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives Collection, DCPS, 1905]

Isadore and Sidney, also had a hardware store and a dry-goods store along Kenilworth Avenue. King's Drug Store, up toward Eastern Avenue, had a soda fountain and became a popular meeting spot for local teenagers.

By the 1940's the Kenilworth area had become more industrial, with a Seven Up bottling plant and other businesses coming to Kenilworth Avenue and the Kenilworth Dump in operation nearby. As nearby Deanwood and Eastland Gardens, historically black neighborhoods, grew around it, by the early 1950's the Kenilworth neighborhood itself

had already begun the transition from white to black residents. A December 1953 article claims that only 28 students attended the white Kenilworth Elementary, while local African-American schools overflowed with students eager to learn. District school authorities transferred the Kenilworth school to black use in February of 1953, with full integration coming to city schools and to Kenilworth Elementary in 1954. Jeanne Wilson Woods, an African-American who grew up in Eastland Gardens, remembers how proud she was when, shortly after integration, she entered the doors of Kenilworth Elementary School — doors that had been shut to her when young — as a school supervisor.

Around this time the community center, which officially had been open only to white children, was also opened to African-Americans. In the early 1950's the city's "playgrounds," as they were called, were slowly being integrated. With pressure from the civic association in the Eastland Gardens community just to the south, the Kenilworth center was opened to blacks in May of 1952, one of the first in the city to be opened to both races.

"White flight" had already come to Kenilworth when, in the early 1950's, plans began to make Kenilworth Avenue into a six-lane highway connecting the new East Capitol Street bridge with other newly completed highways just across the Maryland line. In June of 1936 Kenilworth Avenue, after much

lobbying by local residents, had become a modern macadamized road. The Kenilworth community, grateful for relief from potholes and mud, held a celebratory dance on the new pavement.

The community held no celebrations when construction for the new Kenilworth highway began in 1954. Planners widened the road to the west, taking out over thirty-five Kenilworth and Eastland Gardens houses, several stores, a popular Eastland Gardens nightclub, the newly rebuilt Kenilworth Presbyterian Church, and the community center. The much-loved trolleys also disappeared, replaced by bus lines. The new highway brought the end of the white suburb of Kenilworth. Gradually, the white families still living there sold their houses and moved to Maryland suburbs like Cheverly.

Over time Ord Street merged into the identity of Eastland Gardens, which was expanding north to meet it. Olive Street, with Kenilworth Avenue to the west now as much of a barrier as the train tracks to the east, came to be more identified with neighboring Deanwood than with the name of Kenilworth.

John Haizlip, an African-American who moved onto Olive Street in 1952, remembers that the street was racially mixed during this time of transition. Black and white children played together, he says, and adults were friendly, though there was little social interaction between grownups. He did appreciate, though, that as white families moved out they often gave first chance to buy to their African-American neighbors. In this way many residents helped their friends and family move onto the street as well.



Historic houses on Olive Street retain their original rural-suburb charm. (Photo by Joe Lapp, 2005)

Douglas Street: Of Neighbors and Gardens

AROUND THE SAME TIME THAT THE WHITE SUBURB OF KENILWORTH WAS SUBDIVIDED, a small African-American community began to grow close by on Douglas Street between Kenilworth Avenue and Anacostia River marshland. This three-block-long stretch first appears on real estate maps in 1903, subdivided out of land held by L. A. Stone. None of the real estate fanfare that accompanied the beginning of Kenilworth shows here, and no one knows for sure how Douglas Street got its name. But there, on a quiet dirt street

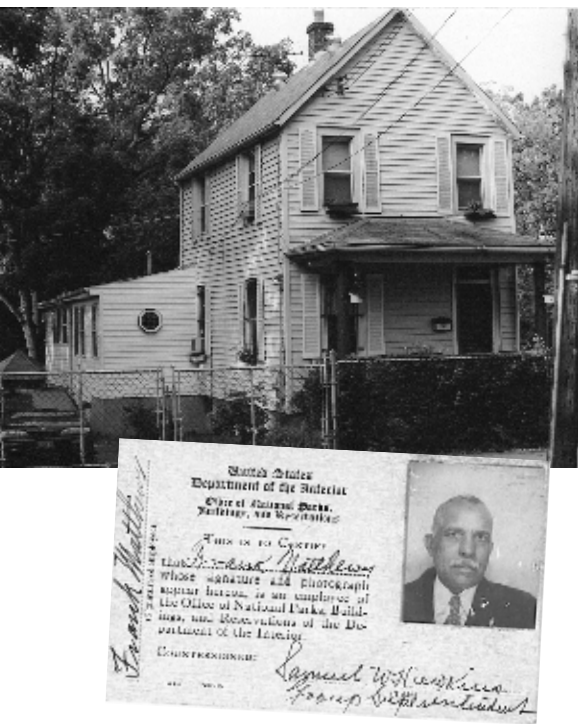
surrounded by a white neighborhood, farmland, and river marsh, a thriving black community grew.

Douglas Street formed as a secure place for middle-class African-Americans to own property and build a house at a time when many neighborhoods, including the adjacent Kenilworth suburb, were closed to them. The street attracted hardworking civil servants, teachers, and small business owners who could afford a bit of the American dream close enough to the city for convenience and yet rural enough for plenty of space and quiet.

John and Georgianna Lyons moved to the street in 1904 from T. B., Maryland. Their son James Lyons lived in the family house on Douglas Street until his death in 1985. “Uncle Jim” was well known on the street for his garden and for friendly greetings from his seat on the porch. Mrs. Audrey

Gilmore, granddaughter to John and Georgianna and current resident of the house on Douglas Street, reared her three children there. She still plants beautiful flowers in the yard, and her family gathers at the house each Sunday after church for lunch.

The Matthews family built on Douglas Street in 1907. Frank Matthews, who worked for the Census Bureau, and his wife Sadie passed the house on to their son Thomas. Thomas learned underwater photography in the Navy, then continued in that profession as a civilian. He married Beatrice, a local woman, and they lived on Douglas Street with their three children. Frank, the youngest, enjoyed growing up on the street because of all the woods and open land available for his go-carts and motor bikes. He had the local paper



Top: The Matthews home on Douglas Street. (Photo by Joe Lapp, 2005)

Bottom: Government-issued ID for Frank Matthews the elder. (Courtesy of Frank Matthews)

route and mowed the lawn of anyone who would give him a few dollars. He still lives on Douglas Street and takes great pride in keeping up the family house and grounds.

The Thomas brothers, Charles and Allen, lived next door to each other on Douglas Street. A Harvard-educated professor, Charles was a dean at the DC Teacher's College, while Allen worked for the post office. Both were well respected, and Charles's wife was a well-loved organizer who went door to door to distribute cards on special occasions and made sure neighbors worked together to care for each other.

Gardening was an especially important part of neighborhood life. Carolivia Herron remembers that her grandfather, Richard Johnson Sr., once used horses to work a large vegetable garden beside his 4335 Douglas Street address. Georgia Herron, the last living sibling of the original Johnson family that moved onto Douglas Street in the early 1900's, remembers that her father's most famous crop was corn and that people came all the way from Northwest Washington to buy it. In that family, the gardening tradition continued into the twenty-first century, with the last occupant of the house, Richard Johnson Jr., growing vegetables there until his death in 2003. Folks still remember the pleasure of receiving fresh produce from him, especially his round, ripe tomatoes that Mrs. Barnes would line up on her porch rail and eat like peaches.

It appears that the black community on Douglas Street and the white community of Kenilworth coexisted peacefully together. Both races shopped at nearby Benson's Store, and black families could get credit there same as white families. Georgia remembers that when a member of the Johnson family had scarlet fever and the house was under quarantine, Mr. Benson brought groceries down and hung them on the gate just like he would have for any other family. It is clear, however, that there was little social interaction between the races. It is clear also that many on Douglas Street, while grateful for government jobs that allowed them and their families a good life, faced racial prejudice that kept them from career advancement.

Controversies at the Kenilworth School and the Kenilworth Community Center, which were both closed to African-Americans into the 1950's, illustrate that the races historically lived largely separate lives in the Kenilworth area, as throughout the city. Wil Stephenson, who grew up on Douglas Street in the sixties, recalls that, as a black teenager, he could buy candy at a certain



Esther and Thomas Turner, relatives of the Johnson family, lived in this house close to the marsh on the W.B. Shaw property after a white family, the Bramhalls, vacated it for a larger house built on the same property. (Photo by R.G. Shaw, courtesy of Ethan Brent, early 1900's)

white-owned neighborhood restaurant but felt that he was not welcome to sit down for a meal there.

Change came to Douglas Street in the late 1950's when the Kenilworth Courts complex was built on adjacent empty farmland, bringing thousands of new residents to the area. Some of the new residents became friends to the families on Douglas Street. One was Reggie Glover, who was virtually adopted as a son by Mrs. Naomi Wilson, long-time Douglas Street resident. Other new residents vandalized fruit trees in their neighbors' backyards, effectively ending a long tradition of fruit-growing on the street.

In 1965 white residents in the person of Amish-Mennonite missionaries Elmer and Fannie Lapp moved onto Douglas Street. Their mission soon brought in volunteers to help with neighborhood programs and built a church



Fannie Lapp and Kenilworth Courts resident Cindy Sharpe work together in the kitchen. [Courtesy of Elmer and Fannie Lapp, late 1960's]

house, Fellowship Haven Chapel, in 1975. The church provided recreation for area youth, like a supervised playground and weekly craft classes, as well as faith-based activities like summer Bible school and summer camp. Gertie Troyer, who came to Kenilworth in 1967 from her family home in Plain City, Ohio, still lives in the neighborhood, and Fellowship Haven is still a conservative Mennonite church that meets at 4459 Douglas Street. Maranatha Chapel Fellowship, led by one-time Douglas Street resident Wil Stephenson, also meets in the building.

Another church, Jericho Baptist, came to Kenilworth in 1969.

Under the direction of Bishop

James Peebles the congregation built a modest brick sanctuary at 4417 Douglas Street. As the church grew, the street became full of life on Sundays as churchgoers from the neighborhood and around the city came to worship God at Jericho. In 1977 and 1988 the church expanded, and by 1996 had graduated 15,000 students from its adult Bible school. In 1997 the church built a multi-million dollar "Jericho City of Praise" complex in Landover, Maryland, with Bishop Betty Peebles, wife of James Peebles, as the pastor. Randall Memorial Baptist Church now meets in the former Jericho building on Douglas Street.

Transportation changes also continued to play a part in community life, as nearby Kenilworth Avenue became a major commuter link to downtown DC. The avenue sometimes brought history right to the community, like when hundreds of Vietnam veterans on motorcycles roared past each year on their way to Memorial Day activities downtown, or when the Grateful Dead played Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Memorial Stadium and the resulting traffic jam of concert-goers made Kenilworth Avenue a parking lot for hippies with long hair and flowered dresses.

In 1978 Metro brought the subway to the area at the Deanwood station. Nearby train tracks had long been a part of community life, and area children grew up hearing the haunting train whistles and crossing the dangerous tracks to get to schools on the other side. Now the subway tracks served the community's transportation needs, and residents convinced Metro planners to put in a tunnel under the tracks for the schoolchildren and to give the Deanwood and Kenilworth neighborhoods equal access to the station.

Today, Douglas Street is a street in transition. Some of the old houses burned or were torn down to make room for Kenilworth Courts and for Jericho Church. A few have sat empty for years. Others were passed down to family or sold to a new generation of black families looking for a good home in a decent neighborhood within the city limits.

Some things, though, are still the same. Mrs. Gilmore and others still while away pleasant summer afternoons on their front porches, and Frank Matthews still works on his mechanical toys (he's graduated to cars) on balmy Saturday afternoons. Children still play football and baseball on the street or in front lawns and look for tadpoles in the creek behind Douglas Street. Driveways and the fronts of houses crowd with cars on holidays as children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren come back to family homes for holiday meals.

Eastland Gardens: A Vital Civic Life

NO HISTORY OF THE KENILWORTH AREA WOULD BE COMPLETE without mention of the Eastland Gardens neighborhood just to the south. In 1928 Eastland Gardens, Inc. bought the Benning Race Track site from the Washington Jockey Club and subdivided part of it. Real estate developer Howard Gott sold small lots to black families at fair prices and, as they recall, on good financing terms.

Houses first went up on land at the southern end of what we know as Eastland Gardens today, on Marne and Lane Place, 42nd Street, and Meade Street not far from the intersection of Kenilworth Avenue and Deane Avenue (now Nannie Helen Burroughs). In 1931 the Eastland Gardens Civic Association was formed, with first president Walter Robertson beginning a strong tradition of civic engagement in the neighborhood.



Captain Owen Davis in police uniform. (Courtesy of Owen Davis)

As the community grew, it expanded north along the Kenilworth Avenue corridor toward white Ord Street. Several acres of open, grassy field separated the two communities. By the 1950's houses had filled in that gap and black families bought houses on Ord Street as whites moved away.

The life of the neighborhood can be well illustrated through the story of Owen and Rhuedine Davis. Owen and Rhuedine moved into their 42nd Street house on their wedding day, October 14, 1939, hosting the wedding reception there only days after well-known black builder Randolph Dodd had put the finishing touches on it.

Owen worked long hours as a police officer in his Shaw-area precinct and was one of the first two African-Americans to move up the promotion line in the DC police department. Still, he found time to stay active in the Kenilworth Elementary School Parent-Teachers Association. When Kenilworth Courts, a government-sponsored complex, was built nearby, Owen recognized the need to reach out to the many new families who now shared the neighborhood elementary school, helping to win a grant for a summer tutoring and cultural enrichment program there.



Rhuedine became a well-known civic leader who especially worked to promote and protect the neighborhood's natural resources. In 1957 she founded the Eastland Gardens Flower Club, which brought residents together around their shared love for gardening and held tea parties and fashion shows. She was a champion for area parkland, working with Lady Bird Johnson's beautification program to create Eastland Gardens Park, which the community maintained in a first-of-its-kind cooperative agreement with the National Park

Rhuedine Davis in front of her 42nd Street home. (Courtesy of Owen Davis)

Service. In June of 1971 she organized a three-day “Festival in the Park” to celebrate the transformation of Kenilworth Park from the city dump to a new community resource. She also helped Walter McDowney, a Kenilworth Courts resident, get a permanent job as a ranger at the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens then prompted him to start a Junior Ranger program there.

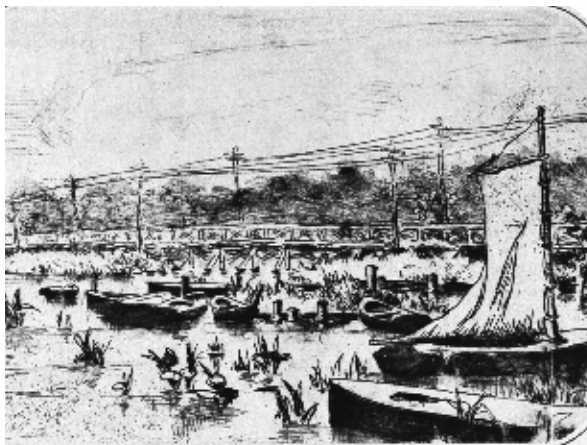
Today Eastland Gardens still retains its reputation as a quiet beauty spot in an area that, according to some, has seen its share of “urban blight.” Recently, the neighborhood has seen the same turnover as Douglas Street, with older residents moving elsewhere or passing away and new residents moving in. The Eastland Gardens Civic Association still meets once a month, and its members still tackle issues vital to neighborhood peace and prosperity.

From City Dump to Parkland: The Story of Kenilworth Park

IN THE 1940'S THE CITY NEEDED A PLACE to put the mounds of trash generated by the growing metropolis of Washington, DC. Planners chose open land on the eastern shore of the Anacostia River just north of Benning Road and a little south of the Kenilworth neighborhood. The site had once hosted some of the area's best bird hunting in its marshes, but the marsh had been filled in during Army Corps of Engineers' dredging work.

With the opening of the Benning Road Pepco electrical plant in the early 1900's, the area increasingly seemed a good spot for industrial growth. Rather than strive to protect the purity of the river or the wetlands along it, contemporary wisdom said that, with easy access to water and drainage, the riverside was a great place for industry. In the first decades of the 1900's, with airplanes and air travel an exciting novelty, the Kenilworth Citizens' Association lobbied to bring the proposed city airport to this open riverside south of their neighborhood. Instead, they got the dump.

The Kenilworth Dump opened for business in 1942. A constant stream of trucks brought waste from all over the city. Every day workers set fire to the piles of garbage, turning everything that would burn into ash and sending a great plume of smoke skyward. By the 1960's the site was burning up to 250,000 tons of garbage a year.



This 1882 etching shows Benning's Bridge and boats at a boathouse there before the building of the Pepco Plant and the River Terrace neighborhood. (Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

Living close to the dump was not a pleasant experience. The dark smoke rising from piles of smoldering trash became an infamous landmark visible around the city. When the wind shifted just right, the smoke and smell invaded nearby neighborhoods and houses. Residents tell of fresh laundry on the line suddenly black with soot and of houses turning from a freshly-painted white to a dirty gray. Carolivia Herron remembers large pieces of newspaper ash falling from the sky at her grandparents' house on Douglas Street, about three-quarters of a mile from the dump.

Not all the news from the dump was negative, however. Its piles of trash supported a cottage industry of men with trucks who salvaged items, fixed them up, and sold them. Children from the surrounding neighborhoods delighted to play in the dump, finding toys, money, comic books, bicycles, and other castaway treasures in its heaps of discarded goods. Adults scavenged there, too, with families furnishing whole apartments at the dump. Watchers knew the trucks that came to dump ice cream, or day-old baked goods, or the trucks from the department stores downtown that might bring returned items — easier for the store to throw away than repair, but fixable.

In 1967 a semblance of home rule came to the District in the form of the appointment of Mayor Walter Washington. Area residents, who had been complaining for years, asked him to shut down the Kenilworth Dump. Some in Eastland Gardens, like Ethel White and her neighbors, even staged protests at the entrance, lying down on the road in front of the garbage trucks. With national attention focusing on poor air quality in cities, some in Congress became embarrassed by the smoke and pollution rising daily from the dump in their own backyard.

Years before, concern that the Kenilworth Dump was running out of room had prompted the city to build incinerators at several sites. Procedural red tape delayed the opening of a final incinerator, and open burning at the Kenilworth Dump continued past the stated deadline of January 1, 1968. In February a young boy was caught in rapidly spreading flames and burned to death. Amid public outrage, the mayor halted the flames.

For several years the Kenilworth Dump became a “sanitary landfill” where trash was packed down and covered with dirt. In the early 1970’s all dumping ceased and conversion to a park began. The entire area was capped with a layer of clay and a layer of topsoil. Soon the nuisance dump became open fields of grass, now known as Kenilworth Park. Soccer fields, football fields, and tennis courts appeared. In the mid-1970’s the Kenilworth-Parkside Recreation Center opened with a gymnasium and a swimming pool.

The legacy of the dump remains, however. On a positive note, the buried, rotting trash gave off methane gas which, while it lasted, was piped over to the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens to heat the greenhouses. On a negative note, in the late nineties two construction companies brought in excavation

material from construction sites, supposedly to create improved playing fields. This material eventually formed a high, flat-topped mound of dirt studded with construction debris. “Mystery Mountain,” as neighbors call it, has closed part of Kenilworth Park while the park service studies potential environmental concerns, especially for the adjacent Watts Branch.



Clouds of smoke and piles of trash at Kenilworth Dump. (National Park Service photo by Jack Rottier, 1967)

The Kenilworth-Parkside Recreation Center continues to serve the neighborhood into the twenty-first century and is well used by area children for basketball, swimming, and for a popular neighborhood football league. It also hosts an active seniors lunch and activity program. Hispanic leagues now use the fields for *fútbol* games on summer Sundays. Recently concerns about remediation of contaminants in the underlying dump and soil quality throughout the park area have resurfaced, slowing down proposed recreational field projects. Residents and park and city officials continue to work together to ensure safe recreational usage of parkland and protection of the adjacent marsh and river areas.



The Kenilworth-Parkside Recreation center, with Kenilworth Elementary School visible in the background to the left. (Photo by Joe Lapp, 2005)

Kenilworth Courts: The Promise of Public Housing

IN THE EARLY 1940's, the United States government had a problem: where to house all the people who came to Washington, DC to help with the World War II effort? With available residences in the city already full, war workers needed new housing.



This 1949 photo shows the corner of Kenilworth Avenue and Quarles Street, with the Lily Ponds Houses in the background. [Historical Society of Washington, DC, Wymer photo collection]

The Alley Dwelling Authority noticed a large plot of unused farmland (once the David Miller farm) in the Kenilworth area, right next to the new national park, the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. In 1943 they built the Lily Ponds Houses, a complex of one-story red tile and cement block “townhomes” for white war workers. The complex centered around the 4400 and 4500 blocks of Quarles Street, the first time that street appears west of Kenilworth Avenue. A community center at 4500 Quarles Street offered day care facilities and an activity room. In the mid-1950’s, the Lily Ponds Houses were demolished.

During the 1950’s, the city continued to need housing for new residents and for families displaced by urban renewal programs such as the “slum clearance” project in Southwest. Closer to Kenilworth, the war-era complex at Parkside was also deteriorating and needed to be demolished. The National Capital Housing Authority decided to build a new complex where the Lily Ponds Houses had once stood.

In 1959 Kenilworth Courts opened, one of the first integrated public housing complexes in the city, available to both white and black families. The 422-unit, orange-brick complex of two-story, garden-style townhomes, with a few three-story apartment buildings thrown in, ran along the old Quarles Street with new stretches on 45th Street, Anacostia Avenue, and Ponds Street, and some frontage on historic Douglas Street. Alleys connected the back doors of units and the far ends of its winding “courts,” grassy openings off of the streets carefully laid out to accommodate as many house fronts as possible. Kenilworth Courts featured a large number of two, three, and four bedroom units to house larger families.

Walter McDowney remembers that, when his family moved into Kenilworth Courts in 1959, he thought their new home a palace. The kitchen shone with brand new appliances, and they had an indoor bathroom, much better than the

outdoor latrine they shared with other families in Southwest. Early residents remember a well-ordered community. Everyone respected Mr. Morton, the manager, and he visited homes to check on cleanliness and upkeep, levying fines on untidy housekeepers.

Community life thrived. 4500 Quarles Street stayed a community center and management office. The complex held yearly parades, and the Kenilworth drum and bugle corps was the pride of the neighborhood, once playing

for Lady Bird Johnson when she dedicated a beautification project at the Greenleaf Gardens complex in Southwest. Mothers congregated in kitchens and on front porches, keeping an eye on their children while socializing and trading stories. Those who grew up in Kenilworth remember that parents worked together to guide and teach all the neighborhood's children. If you were caught doing something wrong, neighbors would let you know about it then call your parents as well.

Complexes like Kenilworth Courts were envisioned as temporary housing, a low-cost way for households to "get on their feet" before moving on to homeownership elsewhere. The Courts held promise for many, the brand new homes a step up into modern life and conveniences. Most families who first moved in fit the model: stable, two-parent families who simply needed a place to live and rear their children in peace.

As years passed and families who were able moved out of the neighborhood, they were replaced by an increasingly transient population that did not value the promise of the property as highly. Management control became less strict, and the complex began to age and deteriorate. Gradually, headlines about Kenilworth changed from news of a well-ordered community to sensational stories of an emerging rough-and-tumble street life. A spate of rapes and other crimes hit the community. When the death of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 sparked riots in the city, the unrest that had begun to simmer in Kenilworth spilled over as well. Looters ransacked

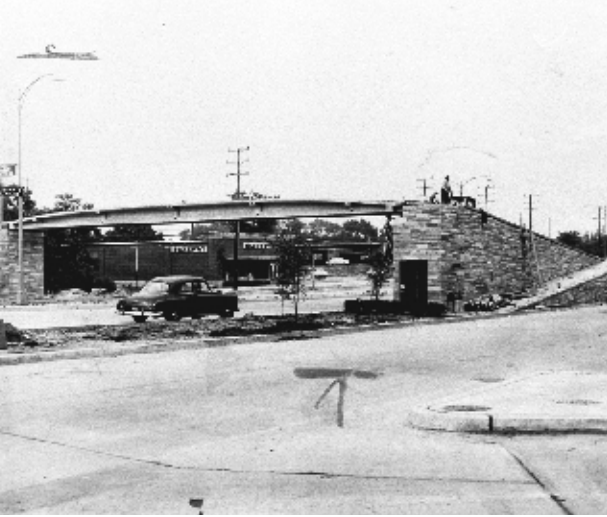


Kenilworth Courts "townhomes" with architectural enhancements added during late-1980's renovations. (Photo by Joe Lapp, 2005)

Kenilworth Courts children play in flooded streets. (Courtesy of Fellowship Haven Chapel, scrapbook notes by Elmer Lapp, 1967)



*Watch out Cindy - Nadine is -
Summer of '67. Front of 4330
A downpour. The raining kept
so what - Why not take advantage
of all the water on the streets.*



Partly completed pedestrian bridge over Kenilworth Avenue at Douglas Street, with the neighborhood Safeway, looted in the 1968 riots, in the background. [© Washington Post; reprinted by permission of the DC Public Library, 1957].

the neighborhood Safeway on Kenilworth Avenue, and it did not reopen. By now an almost exclusively black neighborhood, a new generation of youth felt increasingly alienated from the prosperity they saw others enjoying in the city

and the nation. "This place is like a reservation," one youth exclaimed for a September 27, 1971 Washington Post article.

Trash pickup became sporadic and rats ran freely in some sections. Wild dogs, drawn to the nearby Kenilworth Dump, terrorized residents. Heat and hot water were unpredictable. Lisa (Moore) Reynolds remembers having to boil hot water on the kitchen stove, then carry it upstairs to the bathtub for a warm bath. Drug addiction and the drug trade increased in the neighborhood. The property declined to a point where, in 1971, a mayoral aide called the once-proud Kenilworth Courts "hell on earth."

The view from inside was never as bad as the view from the outside, however, and even those who grew up in the neighborhood during this low point speak mostly of the security and fun they found in their family and community. Neighborhood leaders, especially an informal network of mothers, worked hard to keep the area safe for their children.

One community leader was Mrs. Vernita Wimbush. She helped organize activities for children and ran a day care center that, housed in nearby Zion Baptist Church in Eastland Gardens, provided jobs for area youth. Mrs. Wimbush also called attention to problems at the local school, Kenilworth Elementary. Anticipating a larger student body as a result of the building of Kenilworth Courts, in the late 1950's the school administration built a \$665,000 addition for a total capacity of 800 students. But by the fall of 1960, 1,157 children crowded the



Boarded-up storefronts on Kenilworth Avenue in the late 1960's. [© Washington Post; reprinted by permission of the DC Public Library, 1967]

school. In the winter of 1967-68 broken windows and poor heating made city-wide headlines. Protests from Kenilworth Courts mothers, led by Vernita Wimbush, resulted in personal attention from Mayor Walter Washington, who ordered the 400-plus broken windows fixed immediately.

In 1974 an innovative program called College Here We Come began under the leadership of neighborhood resident Kimi Gray. Kimi, a young mother of five who moved into Kenilworth Courts in 1965, had become a leader in the community and president of the Resident Council. College Here We Come began to offer a variety of college prep services to area teens, hoping that they could “get out of the ghetto” and receive an education, then come back and help the neighborhood.

The scheme worked. Wayne “Bumpsey” Ward went to Monique’s Beauty Academy and came back to open a nonprofit hair salon, Total Expressions. Michael Price went to college, graduated from the Howard University School of Architecture, and later designed a series of renovations for the complex. By 1985 the group had sent over 500 teens to college, where before only a handful had gone.

Inspired by the success of College Here We Come, Kimi Gray and others banded together to improve their neighborhood in other ways. As Mrs. Gladys Roy remembers it, “We had meetings trying to think about ways to make Kenilworth a better place to live, and to live like other people live, not just public housing, but we wanted to be somebody just like other people are that own homes and have a decent community. We wanted all that, too, for our children.”



Mrs. Gladys Roy with her daughter Pat Roy at the annual Kenilworth Reunion. (Photo by Joe Lapp, 2004)

Stuart Butler, an economic theorist with the Heritage Foundation in downtown DC, attended a meeting and met Kimi Gray. Kimi liked his ideas, and they struck up a friendship. Mr. Butler introduced Kimi to Jack Kemp, then a congressman from New York. Leaders like Kemp and Robert Woodson of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise were thinking about tenant management as a way for problem-ridden complexes like Kenilworth Courts to turn themselves around. Kimi understood that tenant management was exactly what her neighborhood needed. After forming the Kenilworth-Parkside Resident Management Corporation (KPRMC), Kimi, Mrs. Roy,

and others were trained in the management of public complexes. They began to manage Kenilworth Courts in 1982.

The new tenant management was a success. Since the complex was now run by people they knew, more residents paid their rent on time. Maintenance workers hired from the neighborhood fixed problems quickly: if the heat or hot water went out, they had to do without as well. “The office,” as the resident management center became known in the neighborhood, instituted a series of fines for everything from littering to breaking a window, as Kimi and the other managers stood conventional wisdom on its head in an all-out effort to improve their neighborhood. When one resident complained that poor people couldn’t afford to pay for broken windows, Ms. Kimi answered, “You got it wrong. Poor people can’t afford to break windows.”

New drug and alcohol treatment programs began to combat a surge of substance abuse problems. Neighbors tired of the drug trade formed close relationships with police and began to put pressure on the dealers camped out on Quarles Street. Residents obtained GED’s, found jobs, and left the welfare rolls. The physical appearance of the neighborhood improved as residents,

now required to take a six-week course in home repair and personal finance, began to take pride in their homes again.

Kimi’s contacts with Jack Kemp, now head of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), DC Mayor Marion Barry, and other political leaders continued. Problems in run-down public housing complexes gained national attention, and the Reagan administration made tenant management a cornerstone of its housing policy. The landmark Congressional “Housing and Community Development Act of 1987” paved the way for resident management corporations like KPRMC to actually own their own complexes.

To Kemp and others, Kenilworth was an ideal place to try the concept of tenant ownership. KPRMC received funds to renovate the property, and, on October 25, 1988, to much political and media fanfare, a ceremony was held in Kenilworth and KPRMC “bought” the property from the city for a dollar, conditional on timely completion of renovations. Longtime Kenilworth residents began to dream of owning their own home.



Kimi Gray's intelligence and dynamic personality made her an internationally-respected expert on public housing. [Courtesy of Kenilworth-Parkside Resident Management Corporation, 1984]

Kenilworth Courts management office at 4500 Quarles Street. (Photo by Joe Lapp, 2005)

KPRMC formed a construction management team to help oversee the project and began to relocate residents. All did not go well, however. The bureaucracy at the DC Housing Authority (DCHA) slowed renovations and costs escalated. Vandals stole construction materials. Government budget-watchers began to question the sustainability of selling individual units to residents.

In September of 1990 the first phase of renovations was complete. Ownership of these 132 units was turned over to KPRMC, as promised. The goal of home ownership seemed within reach, and residents quietly worked to maintain the successes of their community.

Kimi Gray, the complex's dynamic leader, became ill in the late 1990's and could not keep up her usual duties. In March of 2000 Kimi passed away. In her memory, neighbors and friends determined to build on her legacy of community work and advocacy. In April of 2002, however, DCHA took back management of the parts of Kenilworth Courts that had not been given over to KPRMC, and the deal with the government for individual home ownership fell through.

The Kenilworth-Parkside Resident Management Corporation still manages 132 units in Kenilworth and continues to find ways to improve its housing and inspire its residents. On the DCHA side, residents still work in "the office" at 4500 Quarles Street and on the maintenance crews, and a resident council continues the strong tradition of community activism.

Many are the unsung heroes of Kenilworth, the mothers who, despite scarce resources and sometimes without the support of a



Long-time Kenilworth Courts resident, the late Mrs. Kate Brown, with her six children. (Courtesy of the Brown family)

husband and father, dedicated their lives to their families and their community. Mrs. Kate Brown, whose family was one of the first to move into Kenilworth Courts, lived in the community until her death in July of 2005, taking such good care of her yard that people called it “the park.” Ms. Daisy moved into Kenilworth Courts early in its history after the old Parkside Dwellings were torn down, and for many years she and her son ran an ice cream truck/grocery store that stayed and helped out the community when other businesses fled. Mrs. Gladys Roy reared nine children in Kenilworth and, though she worked in “the office” as a manager of the complex for many years, was known to many neighborhood children simply as “the Kool Aid lady” because she always had a cool, sweet drink to quench their thirst. The history of Kenilworth Courts, in the end, is the history of families working, sometimes against tall odds, to create a safe and pleasant community for themselves and their children.

From forest to farmland, white suburb to urban African-American community, rural road to commuter highway, city dump to riverside park, this is the story of the past of Kenilworth, full of life and change.

Kenilworth’s present is its tenant-staffed maintenance crews sweeping the streets and homework-carrying schoolchildren buying candy from the ice cream truck. Kenilworth is its highway busily pushing people and goods in and out of the city. Kenilworth is its ponds full of lilies and its river full of trash and fish. Kenilworth is its neighborhood football teams, Sunday church services, monthly civic meetings, and neighborly interactions at the corner store.

By reading this booklet, you have become a part of the present of Kenilworth.

Just as Captain Benning, Allen Mallery, Helen Fowler, James Lyons, Owen and Rhuedine Davis, Elmer and Fannie Lapp, Kimi Gray, and many others shaped Kenilworth’s past, if we together invest our lives in Kenilworth’s present we can help bring the changes that will define a positive future.



If you have enjoyed the stories in this booklet, I encourage you to write down your own history, the history of your family, and the stories of the places that you call home. When you find good pictures store them in a safe place, then use them to pass stories of the past along to the next generation. Consider organizing a scrapbook about your family or your neighborhood. If you wish to do research on Kenilworth or other neighborhoods in DC, the libraries and archives outlined below are a good place to start. If you have historically significant material, think about archiving it at a library or with your church or other local organization. Above all, remember that the stories of our past contain information vital to our future, and find ways to tell your history so that others will be inspired to work for future good.

Information in this booklet was compiled from many sources. The **Washingtoniana Division at the Martin Luther King Jr. Public Library** has files on area neighborhoods and many books on city history. They also have a photo collection, an easily accessible stack of early real estate plat maps, and microfiche of major city newspapers. The **Library of Congress** has a fine collection of DC-area maps and has computerized plat maps for easy printing. The photo room has a file with pictures of the Benning Race Track; some are available through their online catalog. Perhaps the library's best feature is a searchable database of the full historical **Washington Post**; from this I amassed a six-inch-thick stack of articles about Kenilworth that became the baseline for my research. The **Historical Society of Washington, DC's** library holds some records of the old Kenilworth Citizens' Association and keeps the Wymer photo collection, which documents neighborhoods across the city in the late 1940's. The archives and staff at the **Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens** and at the **National Capital Parks-East** headquarters provided information on area parks. The **Sumner School Museum** has the archives of the DC public schools. **Ruth Ann Overbeck's** helpful essay, "Deanwood: Self-Reliance at the Eastern Point," can be found in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital*, edited by Kathryn Schneider Smith. I am indebted to **Matthew B. Gilmore and Michael R. Harrison's** article, "A Catalog of Suburban Subdivisions of the District of Columbia, 1854-1902," published in the Fall/Winter 2002 issue of *Washington History* for definitively establishing the dates of the Kenilworth and Kenilworth Addition subdivisions. Thanks to **Mr. Owen Davis** for allowing me to look through his late wife Rhuedine's files. Finally, an **oral history project** I conducted during the last three years added greatly to my knowledge of the neighborhood. Thanks to the many Kenilworth area residents and former residents who allowed me to interview them, sharing their stories (and sometimes their pictures) of the neighborhood. This oral history project and select materials from my research should be available to the general public at the Washingtoniana Division of the Martin Luther King Jr. Public Library by the summer of 2006.

If you wish to be informed about or included in future Kenilworth history activities, contact Kenilworth Courts management or email Joe Lapp at lappjoe@yahoo.com.

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