

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

☒ New Submission ☐ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Subdivisions built by Edmund Bennett and designed by Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1956 --1973.

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

- 1- The Bethesda District and City of Rockville: physical and social change, 1860-1975
- 2- Collaboration between home builders and modernist architects in the United States and the Capital Region, 1945-1975
- 3- Collaboration between Edmund Bennett and Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon, 1953-1973
- 4- Planned residential subdivisions in the United States and in the D.C. suburbs, 1945-1975
- 5- Modern residential architecture in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., 1945-1975

C. Form Prepared by

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date June 21, 2004

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city or town College Park state MD zip code 20742

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature and title of certifying official State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State Historic Preservation Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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Subdivisions Built by Edmund Bennett and designed by Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon in
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Page Numbers

- E. Statement of Historic Contexts** 1
(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)
- F. Associated Property Types**
(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)
- G. Geographical Data**
- H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**
(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)
- I. Major Bibliographical References**
(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation:
State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local
government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State Agency
☐ Federal Agency
☐ Local Government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository:

Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation,
University of Maryland, College Park

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden

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estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Summary statement

Spanning three decades, the collaboration between home builder Edmund J. Bennett and architects Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon (hereafter referred to as KLC) was consecrated by an award of honor jointly conferred by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) in 1961 for "excellence in their cooperative efforts to create better homes and communities for Americans."¹ This award was only in its second year; its first recipients had been Eichler Homes teaming with Anshen & Allen and Jones & Emmons. In the past few years, these Southern California partnerships have received a considerable amount of scholarly and popular attention. Although he built a much smaller number of homes, Edmund Bennett can be considered as the "Eichler of the East" and his output deserves the same type of scrutiny. Indeed the Bennett/KLC collaboration received sustained local and national attention. In addition to extensive and very positive coverage on the part of the home building, architecture, and shelter press, the subdivisions it produced were popular among architecture students and foreign delegations visiting Washington.²

From the late 1940s to the early 1970s, a small group of merchant builders who firmly believed in the aesthetic virtues, functional advantages, and commercial potential of modern architecture found their match in an equally committed group of talented and progressive architects, who were intent on putting their mark on the tract house market. Together they produced what are commonly referred to as "contemporary" homes. A particularly fortunate and enduring match was that of a "smart builder,"

¹ "AIA-NAHB cites architect-builder team," *House and Home* (April 1961), 184.

² In 1960, a delegation of seventy Swedish architects visited Washington, at the time of a Stockholm exhibition at the AIA headquarters, were taken to visit Flint Hill (see Frederic Gutheim, "Stockholm Architectural Exhibit Offers Lessons to Area Planners," *Washington Post*, October 21, 1960, B3. See also *Washington Post*, October 13, 1962, D13, showing South African representatives of the International Union of Building Societies and Savings Association visiting Flint Hill, guided by Thornton W. Owen, chairman of the board of the Perpetual Building Association. According to a display ad carrying the title "On their recent trip here, what's the first thing Australia's leading builders wanted to see? The monuments? In a way, Edmund J. Bennett's Carderock Springs," published in the *Washington Post*, September 4, 1965, E3, "Edmund J. Bennett hosted leading home builders from Dusseldorf, Brussels and London." See *Washington Post*, November 10, 1962, D3 showing architect Arnold Kronstadt and his American University class in home construction at Carderock Springs and *Washington Post*, March 9, 1963, D7 showing Donald Lethbridge conducting a tour of Carderock Springs for a University of Virginia class in urban design.

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Edmund Bennett, and a team of "top architects," Arthur Keyes, Donald Lethbridge, and David Condon, who not only designed Bennett-built homes but were also involved in the planning of Mr. Bennett's subdivisions.³

Taken individually, all four men were also leaders in their respective professions. Together, they designed and built isolated, independently commissioned residences; two groups of adjacent houses benefiting from golf course views (we shall study the second of these groups, in Kenwood Park); three small subdivisions nestled in the woods (Potomac Overlook, Flint Hill, and Carderock Springs South); and two major communities complete with sports facilities (Carderock Springs and New Mark Commons, the latter including townhouses). With the exception of six homes in Northern Virginia, Bennett/KLC tract houses are all in Montgomery County, MD.⁴ And with the exception of Rockville's New Mark Commons, and of a handful of isolated examples, all these houses are located within a two-mile radius, in the lower Bethesda district, one of the most affluent and desirable sections of the Washington suburbs.⁵ While Bennett/KLC operations grew in scale and planning sophistication, the design of homes was perfected but did not change significantly, remaining faithful to a syntax based on the tenets of "situated modernism."⁶

Bennett/KLC homes belong to a second generation of modernist tract houses in American suburbia: as needs of World War II veterans had been fulfilled and incomes were rising, these were larger, had more amenities, and cost considerably more than tract houses built in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Meeting a specific demand, readily identifiable but presenting many variations, Bennett/KLC homes were not inexpensive. However, designed to preserve natural scenery, and avoid waste of space and materials, they were reasonably priced for the quality of community and family life they procured. They were built solidly and have aged well, with the proper maintenance.

The Bennett/KLC homes and subdivisions present one of the most extensive experiments in "situated modernism" in the United States, an experiment which the Washington, D.C. suburbs, with their wooded, steeply sloped lots nestled in the stream valley system of tributaries of the Potomac River, helped nurture. This was a tight and long-lasting collaboration that allowed for the establishment of a consistent syntax for planning and design. Edmund Bennett did not "invent" a new type of landscape or house. He took best advantage of the experience acquired by other home builders who started their businesses in the late 1940s and improved upon models which Donald Lethbridge and

³ "What happens when a smart builder gets together with a team of top architects? Every house is a prize winner," *House and Home* (April 1959), 157-161.

⁴ Through an advertisement in the *Washington Star*, January 15, 1955, B-2, we have identified a house at 10712 Montrose Avenue in Garrett Park, which has been altered and is encroached with overgrown vegetation.

⁵ In this perimeter, Mr. Bennett also built KLC-designed houses at 3701 Burning Tree Road in 1955 and 7112 and 7113 Laverock Lane in 1957.

⁶ Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, *Anxious modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture* (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).

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Arthur Keyes had devised for two Northern Virginia builders.

While dramatically different from those built in most "baby boom" suburbs nation wide, houses and subdivisions by B/KLC pursued the promotion of the "simple life" (with all the assets of modern comfort, though) and of the "natural house," both major tenets of American domesticity since the late 19th century. Bennett/KLC subdivisions must be considered an important link in the "picturesque chain" of America's middle and upper-middle class suburban landscapes. Most owners of Bennett/KLC houses are aware of their visual quality and have proceeded to sympathetic additions and alterations. However, because they are built in attractive and conveniently located suburbs where land values have risen exponentially, the temptation is great to unwisely enlarge or transform these houses, even to demolish them and rebuild much larger homes (which has already happened at Potomac Overlook and in Flint Hill). As the tear down phenomenon is just starting in the Washington suburbs, an historical account and re-evaluation of the B/KLC subdivisions are timely.

The Bennett/KLC subdivisions described herein are significant under criterion C. They embody the distinctive characteristics of "situated modernism" developed into an aesthetically satisfying and efficient formula and applied at the scale of tract subdivision development in Bethesda and Rockville, Maryland. The formula includes site development and land planning to create an amenity-rich subdivision respectful of its natural surroundings, architecture in the form of livable and aesthetically pleasing modern houses, and economies of scale to make the entire package affordable to post World War II "baby boom" suburbanites. The work of developer Edmund Bennett, and architects Keyes, Lethbridge and Condon deserves to be acknowledged as the equal of better-known suburban design firms such as Eichler Homes of California. Nationally recognized in their own time for design excellence, the Bennett/KLC subdivisions more than meet the threshold of properties achieving significance within the past fifty years because of exceptional importance (Criteria Consideration G).

1-The Bethesda district and City of Rockville: physical and social change

Built during the final years of transition from rural to suburban encountered by the area spanning from Glen Echo to Rockville, groups of homes built by Mr. Bennett are historically significant because they clearly reflect changes and growth patterns experienced by the physical, social, and economic fabric of Western Montgomery County. Our discussion will focus on their precise locations: the Bethesda district and the City of Rockville.

Until the late 1960s, when he opened New Mark Commons in Rockville, Mr. Bennett built his houses in the southern and western sections of the Bethesda district. Historically, this area, where Mr. Bennett himself spent most of his life until he left the Capital Region, continued residential patterns that originated in the adjacent neighborhoods of Northwest Washington, D.C.; it represented a "natural" zone of upper middle class migration for those looking for a convenient commute to offices occupied by the federal government and national or international organizations.

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1 A - Pre-suburban past.

The Carderock Springs subdivision is associated with Montgomery County's pre-suburban history in one significant way, as two-thirds of its acreage formerly belonged to the estate of Lilly Moore Stone (1862-1960), which Mr. Bennett purchased in 1961. According to the sales brochure for the first section of Carderock Springs, the very name of the subdivision comes "from one of the original land deeds" signed by the Moore family. In 1879, the Moores acquired Glenmore, a mansion built in 1864 by Charles Dodge, who had been paymaster for the Union Army. Glenmore's original Italianate exterior has been Georgianized and sheathed in field stone; its current address is 8311 Comanche Court, in a subdivision of traditional homes adjacent to those built by Mr. Bennett. Ms. Stone also owned Stoneyhurst, a house built in 1767, just off River and Seven Lock Roads. Her estate included mostly wooded areas. She also "ran four rock quarries in the Cabin John Creek Valley" that provided materials for building the C & O canal; one of them remains in operation.⁷ Ms. Stone, for whom Carderock Springs' "collector street" was named, holds a significant place in her county's history: she secured the adoption of its official flag for the DAR conference and, most importantly, she organized the Montgomery County Historical Society in 1944. Adjacent to Carderock Springs, the minute but exquisite Hermon Presbyterian Church (7801 Persimmon Tree Lane), built in 1874, is a well-preserved pre-suburban landmark of great historic and architectural significance.⁸

Today, planning policies protect vestiges of Montgomery County's rural landscape.⁹ However, departure from an agricultural economy began as early as the mid-nineteenth century, as Washingtonians began to enjoy the county's natural beauty and the relief it procured from their city's suffocating summers. Resort hotels were established in places like Cabin John (close to Potomac Overlook) and Rockville (close to New Mark Commons), as well as large estates. The Carderock area became, and still is, famous for rock climbing. From then on, outdoor recreation and social exclusivity would orient the county's growth.

1 B - From the 1880s to World War I

After 1880, suburbanization started affecting Western Montgomery County. It was marked by patterns that had a long-lasting impact on the residential landscape of the county, including that promoted by Bennett and KLC. Given the Capital Region's limited industrial base, suburbanization was largely a middle and upper-middle class phenomenon. Since Mr. Bennett himself worked for the government before he became a home builder, it is worth noting that the men who developed Montgomery County suburbs in the 1880s and 1890s were frequently Northerners who had come to

⁷ Carolyn B. Douglas, "Be it Ever So Humble, There's no Place Like Home," *Washington Post*, April 7, 1957, F 6.

⁸ Mary Lou Shannon, *A Look Back in Time*, typewritten document, 1999.

⁹ An excellent example is M-NCPPC's Rustic Roads policy; see Constance Terry, "Preserving a Cultural Landscape: The Rustic Roads Program in Montgomery County," M.A. Thesis, University of Maryland, 2001.

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Washington as government clerks and turned into real estate brokers.¹⁰

In the Bethesda district, the first major development was that of Chevy Chase Village, where Mr. Bennett spent his childhood. In their planning and design, Bennett/KLC communities maintained the ideal of the exclusive but progressive suburb informing this pioneering undertaking. Chevy Chase was envisioned as a model suburb by its developers, who wanted to achieve a healthy and visually pleasant environment combining the assets of city and country. By choice, Chevy Chase's residential stock consisted exclusively of detached single-family homes; strict covenants regulated the landscape around them and helped achieve a small scale, village atmosphere. Community involvement was facilitated by well-designed amenities, in particular churches and schools.¹¹

Bethesda, located immediately west of Chevy Chase, was essentially a rural crossroads until it was first reached by trolley lines, in the 1890s. Thereafter, subdivision of farmland to build single-family homes occurred rapidly. By 1905, the incorporated village of Somerset, as well as Friendship Heights, were "thriving communities."¹² The combined movement of westward expansion and steady gentrification was pursued with the opening of Bradley Hills in 1912. In 1998, Philadelphia entrepreneurs Edmund and Edwin Baltzley purchased 20 acres further south, along the Potomac River. Two years later, they organized the Glen Echo Chautauqua Association. The Baltzleys also offered large lots in woodsy and hilly Glen Echo Heights, where Potomac Overlook is located. Adopting a more rustic character than those in Chevy Chase, a few early 20th century houses have survived in Glen Echo Heights. In 1903, the Baltzleys sold their Glen Echo land, which was transformed into an amusement park, where a very large swimming complex opened in 1940.

Begun in 1912 and adjacent to Glen Echo, Cabin John was far less affluent than Chevy Chase, and many of its bungalows were bought from Sears catalogues. In the 1960s, differences in income level between Cabin John residents and their more affluent neighbors were still marked and directly influenced Mr. Bennett's Carderock Springs project. The Montgomery County school board approved a change in school district boundaries requested by Mr. Bennett, in order for children moving to Carderock Springs South to attend Carderock Springs Elementary School, instead of the more distant Clara Barton Elementary School. The latter establishment hosted fewer children and featured a greater mix of economic and racial backgrounds. Cabin John Citizens Association and the Clara Barton PTA fought the decision and succeeded in keeping Carderock Springs South children in their midst.¹³

1 C - 1918-1945

¹⁰ *Grateful Remembrance*, 209.

¹¹ Elizabeth Jo Lampl, Kimberly Prothro Williams, *Chevy Chase : a home suburb for the Nation's Capital* (Crownsville, Md. : Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission : Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission : Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1998).

¹² *Grateful Remembrance*, 225.

¹³ "Cabin John Has Dispute on School Boundaries," *Washington Post*, July 11, 1964.

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In the 1920s, Montgomery County began to experience phenomenal levels of residential growth. Its population rose from 34,961 in 1920 to 49,206 in 1930, a 41% increase; 3,506 houses were built during this decade, mostly between 1922 and 1926 and mostly in posh Bethesda and more affordable Silver Spring. Bethesda's growth pattern (and social life) revolved around exclusive golf clubs and their clubhouses. As land prices rose, houses became more luxurious, and were set on large lots. Pre-war plans for subdivisions were updated in a spirit of gentrification, with developers "combining small lots to make more attractive building sites" and "paying greater attention to winding roadways and landscaping."¹⁴

Bethesda's poshest subdivisions of the 1920s - such as Bradley Hills, Edgemoor and Battery Park, where many homes were bought by Army officers - were located in what became known as the Country Club District, where Mr. Bennett would eventually build most of his houses. The Chevy Chase (organized 1893), Columbia (1909), Kenwood (1927), Bethesda, and Burning Tree (1922) country clubs all predate World War II. The westernmost golf enclave, next to Potomac, was the Congressional Country Club, "the dream of two Indiana congressmen, Joseph H. Hines and George Moses,"¹⁵ which Carderock Springs adjoins. It opened in 1924 on a "406-acre tract in the Maryland hills overlooking the Potomac River."¹⁶ Membership was limited to 1,500 families and included the likes of Herbert Hoover and Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby.

Considerably slowed down by the Depression, Bethesda's upscale residential growth resumed in 1935, driven by the same embrace of the dual advantages of city amenities and pastoral living. In the Country Club District, sprawling period homes were built, facing large landscaped yards; some lots were large enough to accommodate stables. Developed by R. Bates Warren, Bradley Hills Grove opened in 1936 on 350 acres of well-preserved wooded and rolling land. Kenwood was also developed, and was completely built up in the 1940s. Meanwhile, Montgomery County acquired the reputation of having superior schools, parks, recreation facilities, and police and fire protection.

1 C - Post- World War II growth

Triggered by the Federal Government's planned dispersal of employment across the Capital region, the population move to the suburbs, and the establishment of mass retailing and service industries along new highways, Montgomery County's demographic growth continued its upward spiral. Its population increased by 176,00 during the 1950s and grew by 53.3% during the 1960s, bringing with it tremendous pressures for housing, education, consumption and recreation.

In the 1950s, 11,241 units were built in the Bethesda district. The expansion of its northern

¹⁴ *Grateful Remembrance*, 266

¹⁵ *Grateful Remembrance*, 266

¹⁶ "Plan New Clubhouse in Hills of Maryland," *Washington Post*, January 22, 1922, 3

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section revolved around Wisconsin Avenue-Rockville Pike, which developed as a major corridor for commercial infrastructure, for federal employment (it served the Naval Hospital, opened in 1942, and the rapidly expanding National Institutes of Health), and for large apartment complexes. Closer to the Potomac River, in Lower Bethesda, zoning ensured the maintenance of communities of single-family homes. This territory of discreet affluence was inhabited by many progressive, enlightened, and socially active citizens. East-West roads -- from north to south, MacArthur Boulevard, Massachusetts Avenue, River Road, and Bradley Boulevard -- served as growth corridors that concentrated places of worship, shopping centers, as well as higher density housing closer to downtown Bethesda.

By the late 1950s, Montgomery County had one the country's highest median family incomes, with Potomac topping the scale, closely followed by Bethesda. The climax of the "baby boom," in 1957, coincided with Mr. Bennett's decision to step up the size of his subdivisions, from only six homes in the newly developed Kenwood Park district to a 19-unit project, Potomac Overlook, in Glen Echo Heights (where he joined forces with builder John Matthews).

As their number grew exponentially, Montgomery County's suburban cohort garnered local control over political affairs. In 1948, Montgomery County adopted Maryland's first home rule charter government. As a member of the board that brought this change, Edmund Bennett's own mother, Marie, was a key player in this radical transformation of governance.¹⁷ The county's political ethos was severed from that of the State Assembly. Suburban constituents clearly signaled their desire to govern themselves according to a "middle-class democratic ideal that pretended it was not political at all."¹⁸ Designed to put an end to corruption and traditional political organizations, a "better government" movement put forward by neighborhood improvement associations and suburban service clubs began playing a key role in Montgomery County politics, and helped implement a nonpartisan management of planning and environmental issues.

Although Montgomery County's suburban cohort remained almost exclusively white, a few African-American enclaves were in existence. Along Seven Locks Road between Bethesda and Rockville, Scotland was one among these poor, tightly knit, communities. Located less than half a mile from Carderock Springs, it encompassed 42 acres and housed descendants of post-Civil War settlers (whose 1954 median income was \$ 85 a week) in small substandard homes accessed through dirt roads, with no sewer connections. In the early 1960s, at the very same time Mr. Bennett built Carderock Springs, officials and reform-minded suburbanites began taking notice of Scotland, which they labeled an embarrassment in such an affluent county and targeted for improvement.¹⁹

¹⁷ See obituary, *Washington Post* January 19, 1967, B 6. Marie Bennett was born in Budapest, Hungary, came to this country as a young child and died at age 70 in 1967; she was the President of Montgomery County League of Women Voters from 1949 to 1952 and was vice president of the state organization in 1955 and 1956. From 1935 to 1941 she was chairman of the Chevy Chase Forum of the Chevy Chase Women's Club.

¹⁸ George H. Callcott, *Maryland & America, 1940 to 1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 20.

¹⁹ Walter B. Douglas, "Hope Growing in Scotland Community," *Washington Post*, August 19, 1965, E 7.

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Real estate drove the county's economy. Until the mid-1960s, the residential market remained in the firm grip of local home builders, like Mr. Bennett, managing small or medium-size operations. Alternatives to profit-based shelter production hardly existed. On a former golf course, Bannockburn cooperators conducted an interesting but singular experiment in cost-cutting cooperative construction. Montgomery County voluntarily shunned public housing until 1974, when it devised a very progressive inclusionary zoning ordinance to provide affordable shelter, the first such legislation in the nation.²⁰

Construction activity in Montgomery County followed national trends, experiencing three major phases. Between 1946 and 1955, FHA and VA loans made possible the erection of modest single-family houses by the dozens, if not by the hundreds. Undoubtedly, housing remained less affordable in the Bethesda district than in most sections of the county. However, ramblers and split levels were built everywhere - ranging from large and luxurious to modest in size, from semi-traditional to avowedly contemporary in style. The late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed a second home building wave, which catered to fuller pocketbooks, larger families, and generally more traditional aesthetic tastes. Land became more scarce and expensive in Western Montgomery County: for instance, in Glen Echo Heights (the location of Potomac Overlook), lot prices doubled from 1954 to 1958.²¹ The rapid increase in labor costs encouraged progressive builders like Mr. Bennett to adopt semi-industrial construction methods.

In the late 1960s, downtown Bethesda and Friendship Heights took on an urban character, with the construction of high-rise apartment buildings, office buildings and stores. Low-density residential districts around this core were essentially built up, and Montgomery County home builders catering to upper middle class buyers set their eyes on more distant suburbs. Mass builders started working in the county: Levitt built Stratford at Bel Pré; at Rossmor Leisure World in Olney-Norbeck, Ross Cortese imported the retirement community formula he had established in California. Despite increases in interest rates that jeopardized prospects of homeownership for the lower middle class and a rather restless social climate, the examples of Reston and Columbia encouraged developers to envision ambitious and more diverse planned communities. In particular in 1966, Kettler Brothers, a local company that had so far built rather modest subdivisions, announced plans for Montgomery Village, a 2,000-acre project mixing various residential typologies. It is in this particular context that Bennett decided to build a "mini-new town" in

Haiti/Martin's Lane, in Rockville, is another African American enclave of long duration in the county; see Peerless Rockville's website: http://www.peerlessrockville.org/peerless_places/peerless_places_haiti_cemetery_2.htm. For the national context on African American suburban settlements, see Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

²⁰ In 1967 Mr. Bennett was one of the two members of a Zoning Committee for the Middle Income Housing Commission of Montgomery County. See *Interim Report of the Middle Income Housing Commission*, Montgomery County, October 17, 1967 (copy found in the Maryland Room, Enoch Pratt Free Library, XHD 7303.M3.M69)

²¹ "The Challenge in By-Passed Land," *NAHB Journal of Homebuilding* 12 (February 1958), 50

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Rockville.

Residential growth threatened the county's natural equilibrium. As a result, from 1971 to 1973, the State Secretary of health imposed a sewer moratorium on the Cabin John drainage basin, where Carderock Springs was located. As modernism had lost its glamour and vitality, but post-modernism was not yet popularized by the media, a "stylistic backlash" occurred and residential design oscillated between historicism and a massive, top-heavy and fussy neo-modernism that had little in common with the simple earnestness of KLC's designs for Bennett.

Montgomery County prided itself of being one of the best planned in the nation, a place where policies were informed by competent professional advice. Many planning decisions were monitored by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), a bi-county agency created in 1927 to cater to suburbs adjacent to the District of Columbia. Montgomery County's first zoning ordinance dates back to 1928. In 1934, subdivision regulations were adopted by its County commissioners. In 1930, M-NCPPC, in conjunction with its D.C. counterpart, NCPPC, published a Regional Plan for the scenic landscaping of the Potomac River banks and the establishment of Clara Barton Parkway as the Maryland pendant of Virginia's George Washington Parkway.²² After World War II, protecting the banks of the Potomac from residential and commercial encroachment would remain a priority for environmentalists. M-NCPPC, whose mandate was strengthened after 1950, was very successful in expanding its park properties, a measure widely supported by Montgomery County residents. It purchased land "unfit for building purposes" in stream valleys to create parks "which would attract upscale, single-family, residential development."²³ Thanks to Congressional funds, the sale of bonds, and money levied from local taxes, the total acreage of M-NCPPC parkland in Montgomery County rose from 4,342 acres in 1956 to 6,518 in 1961, and reached 18,082 acres in 1973. Of particular significance for this nomination is Cabin John Regional Park, across Seven Locks Road from Carderock Springs, which was already envisioned in the late 1920s: its 300 acres were acquired in several implements, ending in the 1960s. In addition, Glen Echo Park was acquired by the federal government in 1969.

Parks tempered the environmental impact of enlarged roads and new highways on the growth of the county. Adjacent to Carderock Springs, the Capital Beltway was completed in 1964. This same year, M-NCPPC adopted their "wedge and corridor" General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District, suggesting the conservation of open space and the creation of satellite urban cores. Zoning ordinances, setback requirements, road specifications, and building codes all affected Mr. Bennett's subdivisions and homes. He was able to curb some of the rules, but his attempt at varying zoning to build 277 townhouses with a little lake adjoining the Beltway at Carderock Springs was not successful,

²² This plan is illustrated in National Capital Commission, Frederick Gutheim, Consultant, *Worthy of the Nation*, Washington, D.C., 211.

²³ *Grateful Remembrance*, 342 and 287.

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"largely due to opposition by a large lot owner in more remote Potomac 'horse' country."²⁴ By the late 1960s, a slow-growth, or sometimes anti-growth, movement took hold in Montgomery County, where the County Council and M-NCPPC planners were reluctant to zone land for small home lots and where apartment buildings and townhouse were often considered a necessary evil.

²⁴ Edmund Bennett, note to Isabelle Gournay, October 2003.

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1 D- Profile of Bennett homeowners

To sell homes, Bennett banked on the reputation of Montgomery County, which his advertisements characterized as "prestigious" and "famous for its energetic, youthful outlook, exceptional schools, and many successful residents."²⁵ The area comprised by the District Line, MacArthur Boulevard, the Capital Beltway, and Old Georgetown Road was the turf of businessmen, professionals, and high-ranking federal workers. With the Pikesville/Ruxton area north of Baltimore, it included the highest concentration of modernist houses in Maryland. Whether in traditional or contemporary styling, houses in the Country Club District tended to remain understated; their owners, who often held very public positions, did not want to attract negative publicity by openly showcasing their wealth.

Prices of homes built by Mr. Bennett were not extravagant, as buyers with truly high income did not consider acquiring a tract house.²⁶ Mr. Bennett knew he could rely on a group of men and women who shared his background and aesthetic tastes. In Western Montgomery County, socially liberal and culturally progressive inhabitants frequently favored modernist forms for their residences, banks, office buildings, and shopping centers, as well as their community structures. Mr. Bennett also knew he could bank on an influx of progressive newcomers from all over the country. Some of his buyers hailed from the West Coast and looked for the kind of informal, unpretentious atmosphere they had left. The Country Club District also played host to many members of the diplomatic corps and employees of international organizations, such as the Word Bank. At Carderock Springs, a German-born sales person made brisk business with her countrymen, who were also attracted by the proximity of a German-speaking school.

The Bennett buyer was highly educated, and affluent, if not overtly wealthy. In the late 1950s, Bennett studied 26 of them: 96% were college graduates and 72% professionals who had done graduate work; their median income was \$ 12,000.²⁷ In 1967, Mr. Bennett defined the "typical" Western Montgomery County buyer as "a family with an average income of \$ 19,000, two and a half children, and 1.66 cars. The husband is a professional person, with 5 years of college education; his wife typically has 4 years of college. These are families who are buying their second or third home. Many are moving into the Washington area, transferred from elsewhere in the country or abroad."²⁸ In 1968, an advertisement in the *Washington Post* stated that "41% of all Carderock Springs' homeowners were professional-level government executives; 47 % are private professionals in legal, medical, education or other fields" and it was Mr. Bennett's own professionalism and that of his collaborators that attracted them to the

²⁵ *Washington Post*, February 24, 1968, D 17 and February 3, 1969, E 4.

²⁶ *Grateful Remembrance*, 358. In the late 1950s new houses, which were significantly larger than those built a decade earlier, cost an average of \$27,000 in Bethesda, \$46,500 in Potomac, and \$15,000 in Rockville.

²⁷ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 156.

²⁸ Edmund Bennett, "Economics and the Visual Community," 47

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community.²⁹ At New Mark Commons, buyers averaged "six years of college" and about half of the husbands worked for the government.³⁰

Edmund Bennett aimed at creating what he called "professional communities" where one's neighbor "may be a congressman, oceanographer, FTC attorney, foreign affairs specialist, diplomat, journalist, or architect." At a time when young middle-class mothers were not expected to hold a permanent job, he also believed his communities nurtured "stimulating rapport for wives who abhor the usual suburban fare of baby talk and daytime television."³¹ According to Arthur Keyes, buyers of contemporary homes were often newly weds or couples with young families who wanted something different. They were "leading the pack," or "showing off."³² Purchasing a Bennett/KLC house and community represented a very deliberate choice. Shortly after he signed his first contract for The Muppet Show, Jim Henson, while still an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland, bought an Overlook model in Flint Hill. He and his partner showed up wearing shorts; casual dress in those days was usually an indication that the person was not serious about buying and perhaps not respectable. Not only was Henson serious, but he paid cash for the house. He used the recreation room to make his puppets.³³

1 D- Moving to Rockville

The construction of New Mark Commons, from 1967 to 1973, is illustrative of a new chapter in Montgomery County's history. In the late 1960s, Rockville, the county's seat and one of its few incorporated municipalities, was experiencing a second growth spurt. Its first expansion, from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s, had given rise to the mini-Levittown that was Twinbrook. With the opening of I-270 between Frederick and Washington, Rockville stopped holding a peripheral position in Montgomery County's suburban spectrum and attracted more affluent home buyers. Professional-level government executives and private professionals moved there, as they were within commuting distance of downtown Washington, DC or worked in employment centers along the I-270 science-industry corridor.

The city of Rockville, which began its own recreation program in the late 1940s and entered the purview of M-NCPPC in 1961 only, had its own far-sighted planning office. In 1966, this office disclosed a very ambitious downtown master plan that it had commissioned from the Philadelphia architectural firm of Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, Cunningham (Robert Geddes partner in charge). Its

²⁹ Display ad, *Washington Post*, April 20, 1967, C 15 (repeated April 27, 1968)

³⁰ John B. Willmann, "Open Space Comes High; Another Step Into Systems," *Washington Post*, October 16, 1971, C1.

³¹ Display ad for Carderock Springs South, *Washington Post*, November 25, 1967, E 3.

³² Arthur Keyes, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, March 24, 2003.

³³ Brenda Bennett Bell, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, April 2003 and Edmund Bennett, note to Isabelle Gournay, both October 2003

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proposed multi-functional megastructure represented the latest word in urban design.³⁴ That same year, Rockville won the American Institute of Planners Award for best comprehensive planning in cities under 50,000 population.

As large tracts of land had become almost impossible to secure in the Bethesda district, Mr. Bennett was not the first builder of rather high-priced homes to move to Rockville. This trend was pioneered by Monroe Warren Sr. and Jr., who in 1960 opened Woodley Gardens, located north of New Mark Commons, off Viers Mill Road, close to I-270. This 200-acre subdivision included 500 neo-colonial single-family homes designed by architects Bagley and Soulé, garden apartments, rental townhouses (the Warrens deemed "solid renting families" a "desirable part of a community"³⁵), as well as an elementary school, a commercial area, and an Olympic-size swimming pool. With the exception of New Mark Commons, upmarket homes built in the late 1960s in Rockville (such as Meadowhall Square townhouses built by J.G. Properties; the Artery Organization's Plymouth Village, Kettler Brothers' Fallsmead) adopted traditional designs.

2- Collaboration between modernist architects and home builders in the United States and the Capital Region, 1945-1975.

2- A - Rationale and major mechanisms

According to architectural historian Chris Martin, "at both the local and national levels, Washington, D.C., was a formative arena in the promotion of builder-architect collaboration in tract housing."³⁶ The alliance between Edmund Bennett and KLC represents a major case study for the collaboration between modernist architects and merchant builders. Through these partnerships, the public was introduced to affordable "contemporary" models, ranging from stylized ramblers to flat-roofed atrium houses, which shared many of the features of more expensive custom-built homes.

In Montgomery County (as elsewhere in the United States) an architect was most likely to make his mark in the tract house market when he teamed with an experienced home builder. Anticipating today's design/build formula, some architects tried to act as their own builder. Most of them were not in business for very long. Arthur P. Becker, a registered architect, was also an official in the Merrimack Engineering Corporation. He seems to have focused mostly on the business side of his practice and did little design work besides houses. In 1949, Merrimack offered what it called "Washington's first truly modern low-priced home" on Navahoe Drive in New Hampshire Estates in Langley Park, close to the

³⁴ "Rockville's multi-level mini-core," *Architectural Forum* 125 (December 1966), 56-61; *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n.132, June-July 1967, 85.

³⁵ "Monroe Warren Optimistic. Town Houses Planned for Woodley Gardens," *Washington Post*, January 20, 1962, D2.

³⁶ Christopher T. Martin, *Tract-House Modern: A Study of Housing Design and Consumption in the Washington Suburbs, 1946-60*, Ph.D. Dissertation, George Washington University, 2000, 2.

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border with Prince George's County.³⁷ In 1952, architect Hyman Cunin partnered with the Polinger Company to sell very modern homes in the Cool Spring neighborhood of Adelphi, in Prince George's County, very close to the border with Montgomery County.³⁸ In the early 1950s, Catholic University graduate Jack Cohen tried his hand at home building, but quickly decided he was better off designing for more financially secure merchant builders.³⁹ His firm, Cohen Haft, would design tract house models by the dozens, ranging from traditional and stodgy to modern and elegant, as was the case at Tusculum Woods (1960), an award-winning subdivision in Bethesda built by Melvin J. Berman.⁴⁰ Around 1955, Deigert and Yerkes designed and built, under the DYA name, a few homes in Tulip Hill, next to Potomac Overlook. Starting in the 1965, they designed homes built by Miller & Smith (Gordon Smith was a former Bennett employee), in the style of KLC's houses for Bennett. In the late 1960s, architect Neil Greene operated Contemporary Homes, Inc., which built a cluster of large houses on Edgevale Road, off Dale Drive in Silver Spring.

Among architects who worked regularly for Montgomery County home builders was Catholic University professor Joseph Miller. In 1952, he teamed with builder Bert Tracy and realtor Sidney Mensh to build elegant modernist homes at Rosemary Hills in Silver Spring. Miller also served as a consultant for Carl Freeman's Ridgeview Estates split-levels in Bethesda, although Freeman, a fairly large builder of houses and "Americana" apartment complexes, customarily used the services of anonymous architects on his permanent staff. It is also worth noting that Thomas Cushing Daniel, who operated with his brothers Standard Properties, a prominent local developing and building firm, received in 1934 the prestigious *diplôme* (M.Arch degree) from the Paris Ecole des Beaux-Arts. In addition, from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, Techbuilt kit houses designed and commercialized by New England architect Carl Koch, who was one of Arthur Keyes' design critics at Harvard, were erected in Garrett Park and Glen Echo Heights.

Cooperation between builders and architects (as long as each held on to their particular expertise) was encouraged by their major professional bodies, NAHB and AIA. For example, in 1953, the exhibit at the national AIA convention included a special category for builder houses. Builder/

³⁷ In 1951, Merrimack applied for a permit to build 22 one-story and basement brick and frame houses on Onondaga Road in Glen Echo Heights. For Becker's own house, located at 5915 Onondaga Drive, see "You'll Never Feel Squeezed In This Architect-Builder Designed Dwelling," *Washington Post*, February 1, 1953.

³⁸ "All under \$15,000. Builders Exhibit Bargain Dwellings," *Washington Post*, February 24, 1952, R 1.

³⁹ Jack Cohen, in conversation with Isabelle Gournay, Fall 2002

⁴⁰ Like Jack Cohen, several talented architects throughout the country gained a large portion of their income by working with home builders. For instance, in California, Edward Fickett, whose father was a home builder, designed thousands of homes, to the great satisfaction of merchant builders. See for instance "Is an Architect Worth his Fee? Banker finds \$75 design + \$10 color scheme = \$1,000 more value," *House and Home*, January 1952, 140-144. Another such architect was John Highland in Buffalo; see "What a builder gets from an architect for \$100 a house," *House and Home* 7 (February 1955), 134-139.

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architect cooperation was actively promoted by *Architectural Forum* and by *House and Home*, an NAHB-affiliated journal. In August 1952, *Architectural Forum* mentioned:

A few years ago, it was very difficult to find architects who understood the merchant builder's problems, his techniques of repetitive construction, the economies which can be obtained through teamwork collaboration, the advantages of using standard-sized millwork, and other time- and labor-saving methods.

The situation had changed as

in all parts of the US today there are capable architects who are learning to work with merchant builders and who are realizing that this is a profitable and most satisfying field of endeavor. More and more builders find they can increase their profits through using the services of a capable architect, which either lowers the over-all cost of their houses or inevitably adds more value than the amount of the architectural fees.⁴¹

In December 1952, *Home Builders Monthly*, the organ of home builders in Metropolitan Washington, D.C., had the following comment on the collaboration between the Luria Brothers and Keyes, Smith and Satterlee and Francis Lethbridge:

This teamwork between builder and architects (...) proves that there is a steady market for contemporary design and that the new designs sell so much better than conventional houses which have been built without the advice and the technical knowledge of a registered architect. A great many builders during the last few years have shied away from employing an architect because they felt that the service of an experienced designer would run up the cost of their houses.

Home Builders Monthly stated that the Lurias spent \$125 per house for architects' fees, which was "not excessive for the vast amount of work done."

If the Lurias should use these same designs on a subsequent project, as it is most probable, their design cost would drop considerably. This proves that builders should pay skilled architects rather than salesmen because skilled architects make a long term contribution. For architects this development demonstrates that

1. They can well afford to spend time with merchant builders
2. Builder clients who begin with a few houses may go on buying architectural services: apartments, shops, office buildings, large houses.
3. Architects can sell many related services builders are happy to pay for.
4. By helping to create an entire community where people live well, architects can achieve a

⁴¹ "New Frontiers for Homebuilders," *Architectural Forum*, August 1952, 131.

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deep permanent satisfaction.

For builders it proves that:

1. In a competitive market, up-to-date design pays off in houses just as it does in the sale of every other product that people buy.
2. Experienced architects have a special talent for design that makes one group of houses, stores, or apartments stand out above others.
3. Architects brought in early can contribute many ideas that go far beyond the design of the building.
4. It is better to pay a skilled architect than to overpay a salesman. A well-designed house practically sells itself.
5. Once a builder gets a taste of the satisfactions that come from a fine community he will never do another ordinary project.⁴²

Award-winning architects and designs added appeal to tract housing. They made buyers (who may have wanted to hire their own architect, but could not afford, or were afraid, to do so) feel special. Snob appeal was certainly a promotional tool for the educated and worldly clientele targeted by Bennett. For instance a small advertisement he placed in the *Washington Post* for one of his large and expensive homes in Kenwood Park mentioned that a design by Keyes and Lethbridge (the denomination of the firm at the time) was "like Dior on the label of a gown."⁴³

Cooperation functioned within a common culture of peer recognition (bordering on self-congratulation) nurtured by a plethora of awards granted by professional organizations and magazines. Since Bennett was quite active in homebuilders' organizations, as was Lethbridge within the AIA, awards naturally came their way. Not surprisingly, *House and Home* magazine named Bennett and Lethbridge among the 12 Top Performers for housing throughout the United States for 1965.⁴⁴

2. B - Major precedents for the Bennett / KLC collaboration

If Mr. Bennett ever had "role models," these were Northern California's Joseph Eichler (1900-1974) and Northern Virginia's Robert Davenport (1906-2002). Like him, they had a clear vision of their mission, were socially progressive, and selected home building as a second career. Eichler Homes and Davenport's magnum opus, Hollin Hills, have been studied in monographs and articles, and have rallied many *afficionados* among their homeowners.⁴⁵

2 B - 1 / Joseph Eichler

⁴² "Local Builders Team With Architects," *Home Builders Monthly*, December 1952, 16-17.

⁴³ *Washington Post*, December 8, 1956, C 10.

⁴⁴ *Washington Post*, November 20, 1965, E 13

⁴⁵ John Burns ed., *Hollin Hills, Community of Vision: A SemiCentennial History 1949-1999*, Alexandria, VA: Civic Association of Hollin Hills, 2000

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Although his houses (a total of 12,000, more than 10 times what Bennett built) were designed by several architects, Joseph Eichler maintained particularly fruitful relations with two nationally known firms, Anshen & Allen and Jones & Emmons.

As was the case with Bennett and KLC, Eichler's first collaboration with Anshen & Allen was purely personal. After having lived for two years in one of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses, Eichler, a transplanted New Yorker who had received a business degree from New York University and had worked in Wall Street, hired in 1949 University of Pennsylvania graduate Robert Anshen to design his own house. The following year, he commissioned Anshen & Allen to design prototypes for five of his subdivisions, in an effort to raise the level of design of his models, which he had previously entrusted to a competent but rather uninspired draftsman. In 1950, Eichler Homes received the prestigious Subdivision of the Year award from the magazine *Architectural Forum*:

The architects' painstaking blueprints have eliminated the costly construction mishaps which ate into profits in the old days when Eichler's own draftsmen prepared plans. Their planning skill has also made it possible for Eichler to offer more variety than most builders, yet profit from standardization of structure, materials and detailing on each tract.⁴⁶

Eichler hired A. Quincy Jones for the first time in 1951. Anshen & Allen and Jones & Emmons established a "very balanced collaboration that Eichler found extremely useful for fostering new ideas":

The Eichler house design was improved over time through a process that involved careful analysis of past projects while searching for ways to improve their designs. This resulted in a continual reworking of the plans, a task Eichler himself particularly enjoyed. The two firms met almost weekly during the early period (...) Jones, Anshen and Eichler would walk through completed tracts and appraise their successes and failures (...) By observing how people lived in the houses, they found out what people had to do to make the houses accommodate their lives.⁴⁷

Each firm "made unique contributions to the designs" but "the success of the homes as a whole depended upon a consistent set of principles."⁴⁸

Any builder tempted by modernism could learn a few lessons from Eichler, Anshen, and Jones. They understood the California ethos (just as Bennett and KLC understood the spirit of Montgomery County). They offered a distinctive product, delivering houses that retained the look and feel of much

⁴⁶ *Architectural Forum*, December 1950, 80

⁴⁷ Paul Adamson and Marty Arbunich, *Eichler: Modernism Builds the American Dream*, Gibbs Smith, 2002.

⁴⁸ Adamson and Arbunich, 68.

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more expensive custom houses (something Bennett and KLC would also accomplish).⁴⁹ They popularized the idea of the open plan for living, dining, and kitchen areas. Eichler Homes were designed with fast and easy housekeeping in mind and featured many space-enhancing devices. They were built on a single level, with very large expanses of glass at the back, and 10-foot ceiling compensating for small surfaces. Eichler did not hesitate to hire talented landscape architects. He also commissioned experimental designs. For example, in 1955, he unveiled a steel prototype entrusted to architect Raphael Soriano. Eichler was media savvy and maintained the services of a talented photographer, two good lessons learnt by Bennett. Eichler's demise came when he tried to venture in urban and high rise development. Four Eichler subdivision have been nominated to the National Register of historic Places: Green Gables (1950, Anshen and Allen, 62 homes) and Greenmeadow (1954-55, 243 homes) in Palo Alto; Rancho San Miguel (1955-59, 339 homes) in Walnut Creek, and a section of the Terra Linda subdivision in San Rafael.

2 B - 2 The Davenport / Goodman collaboration at Hollins Hill

Robert C. Davenport hailed from Nebraska, where he also went to college. Like Bennett, his first career was as a civil servant. From the mid-1930s to the 1950s, he was an administrative officer in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Like Bennett, he first ventured in home building to secure better housing for his family, forming the housing cooperative of Tauxemont in Northern Virginia, where he built five very modern prefabricated houses in aluminum right after World War II. Davenport's total output was modest, approximately 500 houses, nearly all located in Hollin Hills, south of old Alexandria, where he lived for many years. While Eichler had at his disposal flat land and a balmy climate, Davenport worked on the same rough Potomac Valley terrain as Bennett. One major difference, though, was that he did not act as builder of his own projects, delegating this part of the business to C. R. McAlley. Additionally, Davenport does not seem to have intervened in design decisions to the same extent as Bennett did. Indeed, his architect, Charles Goodman, had a difficult character and did not like to share responsibilities.

A financial and media success, published not only in professional journals, but also in *Life* and *Parent's Magazine*, Hollin Hills certainly empowered architects and builders tempted by Modernism. Begun in 1949, it already had 75 houses the following year. Construction of the 463 houses on 300 acres lasted until 1971. For Mr. Bennett, "notwithstanding the strong appeal of Goodman's Mondrian architecture," the abundance of glass walls in this designer's houses presented two major drawbacks: excessive heat loss, or gain, and lack of privacy.⁵⁰ Arthur Keyes believes that Charles Goodman "was trying for something a little bit slicker," "more abstract" than what his own firm was trying to achieve. Goodman's designs were more urbane, less into nature. KLC looked at Goodman's work, but not to imitate it. The detailing on Goodman's houses, for example, was "sparse" and "rigid". His houses were not "comfortable looking;" they did not convey much sense of domesticity. Goodman thought of himself as more ahead of the curve than other area architects; "some of it was so ahead that I don't

⁴⁹ Adamson and Arbutich, 100.

⁵⁰ Edmund Bennett, note to Isabelle Gournay, October 2003.

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think it was very good."⁵¹

Despite these criticisms, it is undeniable that Hollin Hills was an eye opener for both Bennett and his architects, and for many compelling reasons. Davenport was the first builder in the Capital Region to sell a modernist package, offering Knoll furniture, and Knut Versen fixtures at builder's discounted prices. Assisted by talented landscape architects (Lou Bernard Voight and subsequently Dan Kiley), Davenport and Goodman devised a site planning strategy which was "guided by three considerations: existing contours, economic utility distribution, and capitalization on scenic vistas."⁵² The park areas backing lots related to storm drainage patterns and the topography dictated the design of uphill and downhill models. Charles Goodman helped propel the construction of small homes towards new technical and aesthetic levels of excellence and innovation. Thinking in terms of cost-saving, logical "building systems," he devised simplified carpentry or grouped utilities in a central core. His plans provided the "absolute minimum of lost space."⁵³

In Montgomery County, Davenport (under the Hollinridge Company name) built a subdivision of 33 Goodman-designed homes in Potomac, which opened in 1960. Goodman also worked for builders Paul Burman and Paul Hammond, designing two small, inexpensive, projects, Hammond Wood and Hammond Hill in Wheaton, completed in 1950 and 1951 respectively,⁵⁴ as well as Wheatoncrest.⁵⁵ For the Bancroft Construction Company, headed by Herschel Blumberg, Goodman also designed 76 houses in Kensington's Rock Creek Woods, which opened in 1959.⁵⁶ The almost square model "offered on a semi-custom basis" was called the Pineview, a name used by Bennett.⁵⁷ Altogether, "there are 900 Goodman-designed houses in the Washington area."⁵⁸

2 B - 3 - Collaboration between the Lurias and Keyes, Lethbridge, and their associates in Northern Virginia

Mr. Bennett was not the first builder for whom Lethbridge and Keyes contributed home plans. In fact, their collaboration with Bennett should be understood as the continuation of their work for Gerald and Eli Luria in Fairfax County.⁵⁹ Prior to building houses, Gerald was a jeweler and Eli was primarily an

⁵¹ Arthur Keyes, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, March 24, 2003.

⁵² "Builder's project combines intelligent land planning..." *Architectural Forum* 93 (December 1949), 82

⁵³ "A Transition from Conventional to Contemporary," *Washington Post*, March 22, 1953, R 8

⁵⁴ "Trim Design and an imaginative site plan are the easy-to-sell products of architect-builder collaboration," *Architectural Forum* 92 (June 1950), 130-131, *Architectural Forum* 92 (June 1952), 120-123 and "Builder housing: Wheaton, Maryland," *Progressive Architecture* 33 (May 1952), 88-92

⁵⁵ *Architectural Forum* 95 (December 1951), 126-129

⁵⁶ "A square shape pays off in this hillside house," *House and Home*, (November 1959), 132-135.

⁵⁷ Display ad, *Washington Post* (May 2, 1959), C 9.

⁵⁸ David Morton, "Heart of Glass," *Washington City Paper*, September 5, 2003, 24

⁵⁹ Martin, *Tract-House Modern*, 143

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investor with some experience in apartment house development. In 1951, they "switched from conventional to contemporary design."⁶⁰ Through their cousin Nathan Shapiro, they made the acquaintance of Donald Lethbridge and his then partner, Nicholas Satterlee.⁶¹ In the early 1950s, the demographic and socio-cultural profile of Fairfax County resembled that of Western Montgomery County. A cohort of well-educated middle-class professionals was anxious to settle in its pleasant natural surroundings and in easy-to-maintain, unpretentious, and cheerful modern homes. McLean was not unlike Bethesda; the new Lake Barcroft area welcomed modernist designs.

Built on a 135-acre abandoned farm about eight miles from downtown Washington, Holmes Run Acres opened in 1951 and its first section was completed the following year.⁶² Altogether it had 280 units. Cheaper than Hollin Hills, because of its more distant location from downtown Washington, D.C., it answered the need for small, economic homes on the part of returning veterans and their young families. The first houses designed by Satterlee and Lethbridge had only 873 square feet, two bedrooms, one bath, and were placed on 10,000 square-foot lots, the minimum size allowed by local zoning at the time. Carports and basements were offered as options. Savings were achieved by using standardized dimensions for lumber and pre-cut components. Holmes Run Acres' commercial and media appeal was in great part due to its thoughtful site planning, devised by the architects. A community swimming pool was planned in 1952 and opened the following year.

Early residents of Holmes Run Acres often heard criticism of their modernist abode from relatives and friends; these negative comments reinforced community spirit among those who had espoused their unpretentious, cabin-like design. However, Holmes Run Acres was widely published and acclaimed in the media.⁶³ It received the *Washington Post* House-of-the-Year Award for 1951 and the much coveted Certified Quality Design seal of approval of the Housing Research Foundation of the Southwest Research Institute. Satterlee and Lethbridge extended Holmes Run to the East with an adjacent 65-house subdivision built in 1954-55. Although Holmes Run remains a very desirable neighborhood, most of its original homes have been enlarged and altered beyond recognition.

In November 1952, the collaboration between Luria Brothers and the new firm of Keyes, Smith and Satterlee, for which Lethbridge acted as Associate, was already heralded in *House and Home*, although few

⁶⁰ "A Transition from Conventional to Contemporary," *Washington Post*, March 22, 1953, R 8

⁶¹ Martin, *Tract-House Modern*, 141

⁶² Martin, *Tract-House Modern*, 150

⁶³ "Local Builders team with architects," *Home Builders Monthly* December 1952, 16-17. Katharine Morrow Ford and Thomas H. Creighton, *Quality budget houses; a treasury of 100 architect-designed houses from \$5,000 to \$20,000* (New York, Reinhold Pub. Corp, 1954). According to Martin, *Tract-House Modern*, 184, "Lethbridge recalled that *Popular Mechanics* magazine advertised Holmes Run house plans, available by mail for five dollars, resulting in a large volume of sales throughout the country to builders and individual owners. See also Sarah Booth Conroy, "After a 25-Year Run, Holmes Run Is Still Ahead," *Washington Post*, September 12, 1976, M1 and M3.

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houses had actually been built.⁶⁴ The new Pine Spring development was located three miles from Holmes Run Acres, beyond Seven Corners. At 1,030 square feet for the basic unit, models complied with the increasing market demand for three-bedroom homes. The 125 houses ranging in price from \$15,250 to \$20,500 (including basic landscaping) were located on lots averaging 14,000 square feet. At Pine Spring, the Lurias also built garden apartments, designed by the same architects, as well as a row of stores.

Pine Spring received significant coverage and considerable praise. In 1954, photographs of the project not only graced the pages of *House and Home*, but also of FHA's *Insured Mortgage Portfolio* and Great Britain's *Architect's Journal*.⁶⁵ *House Beautiful* noted "the architect's ingenuity in turning building economic into design assets" and how they had "carefully calculated every piece of material to do the job required of it, and no more."⁶⁶ Pine Spring received a commendation from the Southwest Research Institute, an NAHB award of merit. In 1953, it was the only subdivision to receive an award in the biennial architectural competition sponsored by the Washington Board of Trade. In 1953 as well, Pine Spring received an Honor Award for Outstanding American Architecture from the AIA. The jurors, who included Texas architect O'Neil Ford and Edward Durrell Stone of New York City, called the subdivision "fresh and stimulating after miles of poor colonial copies ... well above average in any American city"; for them, "unnecessary variety in shapes, windows, glass, wood and brick panels" were a "minor defect."⁶⁷ Photographs of Pine Spring were on view for two weeks at the gallery of the AIA headquarters in Washington, D.C., in August and September 1953.⁶⁸ The extremely modern and elegant garden apartment Keyes, Smith, Satterlee and Lethbridge designed at Pine Spring also received much praise and coverage; unfortunately, its front facade has been remodeled beyond recognition.⁶⁹

Donald Lethbridge and Eli Luria were among the six architect/builder teams (including that of A. Quincy Jones and Joseph Eichler) invited to exhibit a house in the highly publicized "Research Village" sponsored by the United States Gypsum Corporation and erected in Barrington, Illinois.⁷⁰ According to

⁶⁴ "Lesson for builders: to sell houses, get a fine site plan, fresh designs; [Lesson for] architects: one design job for builders can lead to others," *House and Home* (November 1952), 140-147. Lethbridge was credited for designing the original houses at Pine Spring, in an advertisement published in *House and Home* in January 1953, 28.

⁶⁵ "Architectural Design under the FHA Program," *Insured Mortgage Portfolio*, Spring 1954, 4. *The Architects' Journal*, February 18, 1954, 222-226.

⁶⁶ Mary Roche, "A house for the family with \$ 7,000 a year," *House Beautiful*, June 1953, 137-139.

⁶⁷ *House and Home*, June 1953, 43.

⁶⁸ "Two Virginia Developments Rate Honor Housing Exhibit," *Washington Post*, August 23, 1953, R 7.

⁶⁹ See for instance *Mid Century Architecture in America. Honor Awards of the American Institute of Architects, 1949-1961* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p.223.

⁷⁰ Other teams consisted of architect O'Neil Ford and builder Frank Robertson (Texas); Hugh Stubbins and Leonard Frank (Hampstead, New York); Harris Armstrong and Don Drummond; Gilbert Coddington and Alex Simms (Dayton, Ohio). See "a proving ground for new ideas - U.S. Gypsum's 6 'Test Tube' Houses, *American Builder* (March 1954), 234 and *Progressive Architecture* (May 1955), 131-132.

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Chris Martin, Eli Luria relocated to California shortly after the first section of Pine Spring was completed. We found subsequent mentions of houses built by Luria Brothers, but these had none of the modernist crispness found at Holmes Run Acres and Pine Spring.⁷¹ Two groups of homes designed by Lethbridge and his partners insured the transition between their early work at Holmes Run and Pine Spring and the Kenwood Park houses they devised for Bennett in 1956. In January 1952, builder Charles Luria (working with the Highpoint Corporation Development Company) ventured in the orbit of Bethesda's upscale Country Club District. He offered a dozen houses on Massachusetts Avenue, 1.2 miles from the District Line, designed by Keyes, Smith, Satterlee and Lethbridge. Realtors were Luria Brothers. A second transitional precedent is the 30-unit section of Holmes Run Acres, which Lethbridge and his associates built for Joseph and Anthony Gaddy. Both projects are described at the beginning of part 3.D.

3- The Bennett/KLC collaboration, 1953-1973

3 A- Biographies

3 A. 1 - The architects

We shall begin with the architects since their involvement with home building preceded that of Edmund Bennett. Arthur H. Keyes, Jr. was born in Rutland, Vermont in 1917. After secondary school at Deerfield Academy, he studied at Princeton University, receiving a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1939, and at Harvard University, earning a Master degree in architecture in 1942. The same year, he received a certificate in Naval Architecture from MIT. At Princeton, he discovered architecture through his roommate, initially took basic courses in drafting, perspective, freehand, and mechanical drawing, as well as architectural history and declared his major during his junior year. Mr. Keyes was very impressed by the special issue that *Architectural Forum* devoted to Frank Lloyd Wright in 1938 and decided to visit Taliesin West with two of his friends. On the drive back, they visited many of Wright's designs (from a list of 66 given to them by his secretary), zigzagging back east in his Ford convertible. Among the houses they visited was the "Usonian" Jacobs House in Madison, Wisconsin (1936-37).

While Princeton's architecture program was, in Mr. Keyes' own terms, "submerged in Beaux-Arts classicism," its counterpart at Harvard reflected new ideas and was a magnet for the most progressive, enthusiastic, and talented professors and students. When Mr. Keyes entered the program in 1939, newcomers Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer had already put their stamp on the curriculum. However, he did not feel coerced into Bauhaus or International Style orthodoxy. Instead he recalls a climate of open-mindedness and tolerance: Gropius would say "start from scratch, start with a white box and then try to think out something logical and do it differently. That was a surprise." Working on a project for a "large house," Mr. Keyes submitted a design influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright and still got a good mark for it. He was also very impressed by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto,

⁷¹ Martin, *Tract-House Modern*, 188.

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when he heard him speak at MIT. In 1941, he married Lucile Sheppard, the daughter of then Texas Senator Morris Sheppard (he had met his fiancée in Cambridge). The ceremony took place in Washington, D.C., where the bride had spent her childhood. Mr. Keyes worked for the Navy for almost four years, first as a draftsman for the Boston Navy Yard, then in Washington, D.C. in the Bureau of Ships. He remained in the nation's capital after the war.

From 1946 to 1948, Mr. Keyes worked in the office of Berla and Abel, and moonlighted for Burket, Neufeld, and de Mars on plans for Bannockburn Cooperators. As we shall see, both experiences prepared him well for his future work with Edmund Bennett. Mr. Keyes' early commissions included a house for Harry N. Hirschberg, a high official in the Hecht Company who wanted "a modern house with some stonework."⁷² Located in Bethesda, the home, which Mr. Keyes qualifies as "rustic and simple," was visibly influenced by Aalto and was published by *Architectural Record* in November 1951. It received an architecture award from the Washington Board of Trade.⁷³ For his own house, located at 2605 31st Street, N.W in Washington D.C., Mr. Keyes and his partners produced another design of note.⁷⁴

Francis Donald Lethbridge was born in Hackensack, NJ in 1920 in a family that counted several architects and builders. He studied at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ from 1937 to 1940, the University of Colorado Engineering School in 1941, then enrolled as a pilot in the US Naval Reserve. In 1945, he went to Yale University, earning an M.Arch degree two years later. Upon graduation, Lethbridge moved to Washington to help his older brother "redesign a line of prefabricated houses he had a franchise to market."⁷⁵ For the same company that manufactured rather traditional homes, Lethbridge also designed temporary prefabricated dormitories for public universities in New York State. Two years later, he secured employment with Berla & Abel, where he stayed approximately one year and met Arthur Keyes. He went to work for another progressive local firm, Faulkner, Kingsbury and Stenhouse, until 1950. For a little more than a year, Lethbridge partnered with Nicholas Satterlee (Rochester, NY 1915- Washington, D.C. 1974), who was an architecture student at Harvard at the same time as Mr. Keyes and a former Berla and Abel employee (1946-48).

⁷² Arthur Keyes, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, March 24, 2003.

⁷³ *Architectural Record* 110 (November 1951), 135-137. The article also credits Basil Yurchenko, a Russian-born architect who, according to Mr. Keyes, did little actual design work on this house.

⁷⁴ See "an upside-down plan for a growing family," *House and Garden*, August 1952, 54-55, and Katherine Morrow Ford and Thomas H. Creighton, *Designs for living; 175 examples of quality home interiors* (New York, Reinhold Pub. Corp., 1955), 92. In 1957 Arthur Keyes built a house for himself on 16 acres, two miles west of Potomac Village, overlooking the river at 11920 River Road. The house had a cantilevered deck over the water. Mr. Keyes used a 4-foot module throughout and experimented with a series of trusses, all identical. Every room had a river view. The first level was stone and concrete. Unfortunately, the house was sold recently and the current residents bulldozed it, tore down surrounding trees and put in an 18th century colonial style house.

⁷⁵ William Bushong, Judith Helm Robinson, Julie Mueller, *A centennial history of the Washington Chapter, the American Institute of Architects, 1887-1987* (Washington: Architectural Foundation Press, 1987), 89.

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In 1951, Keyes and Satterlee joined forces with another former employee of Berla and Abel and a militant modernist, Chloethiel Woodard Smith (Peoria Ill. 1910- Washington, D.C. 1992).⁷⁶ They soon included Lethbridge into a rather informal partnership. The young and energetic team, which Lethbridge described as "almost like a confederacy," kept busy with local commissions and received significant notice in the specialized press.⁷⁷ For instance, the Therapy Building at Chestnut Lodge, a psychiatric institution in Rockville's historic district completed in 1954, which Mr. Keyes attributes essentially to Chloethiel Woodard Smith, was published the following year in a study *Architectural Forum* devoted to small health buildings.⁷⁸ The talented foursome attracted the attention of the Department of State, and was entrusted with the design of the Office Building and Embassy Residence in Asuncion, Paraguay.⁷⁹ Their first venture in tract housing was for N. Nathan Shapiro, a cousin of the Lurias, for whom they designed modernized ramblers at Forestvale, in Silver Spring, one block from the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road, which opened in early 1951. According to Lethbridge, Shapiro "wanted something like Levitt only better."⁸⁰ Keyes, Smith, Satterlee and Lethbridge also built a large flat-roofed house at 2533 North Ridgeview Road in Arlington for Gerald Luria, which featured glass transoms and a patio-solarium, and can be regarded as a precedent for the atrium houses at Carderock Springs.⁸¹

In 1955, Satterlee and Smith formed a separate office while Keyes and Lethbridge established their own. Two years later, they were joined by David H. Condon (Pasadena 1916 - Chevy Chase 1996), a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, who had worked for Charles Goodman between 1945 and 1952.⁸² In 1961, Colden Ruggles Florance (born Baltimore, 1931, A.B. Princeton, 1952, M.F.A. Princeton, 1955) joined the office, after having spent two years as job captain for Satterlee & Smith. KLC became an important training ground for young architects interested in residential design.

⁷⁶ Smith earned a B.Arch degree from the University of Oregon in 1932 and an M. Arch from Washington University in 1933. Her initial expertise was in housing. In 1935, she came to Washington, D.C. to work for the Federal Housing Administration; in 1939 she was promoted to Chief Architect and Chief of Planning, for the Large Scale Housing Division of the Federal Housing Administration. Between 1940 and 1946, she accompanied her husband, who was working for the Foreign Service, to Canada, Burma, and Bolivia, where she taught architecture in La Paz. She played a key role in the redevelopment of Southwest D.C. She was a member of the US Commission of Fine Arts, from 1967-1976, and became FAIA in 1960.

⁷⁷ Bushong et al., *A centennial history of the Washington Chapter*, 90.

⁷⁸ "A Normal Building for Restoring Mental Patients to Normal Life," *Architectural Forum* (September 1955), 133-135

⁷⁹ "Architecture to Represent America Abroad," *Architectural Record*, May 1955, 188

⁸⁰ Martin, *Tract-House Modern*, 236

⁸¹ "'Festival of Homes' Exhibit Houses Reflect New Trends," *Washington Evening Star*, August 28, 1954, B-1 and B-8

⁸² The house David Condon designed for himself on 6805 Georgia Street in Chevy Chase is illustrated in *House & Home* (February 1969), 88.

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For instance, Hugh Newell Jacobsen worked there in 1957-58, after a stint in Philip Johnson's office and before establishing his own practice in the Nation's Capital. Lethbridge left the partnership in 1975, embarking on a second career as a restoration architect.⁸³ The firm was renamed Keyes, Condon and Florance and still exists as the Smith Group.

During their partnership, Arthur Keyes, Donald Lethbridge, and David Condon were also noted for their remarkable individual achievements. They were all elected Fellows of the American Institute of Architects in the 1960s. Well read, aware that architects had a role to fulfill in society, very concerned with the idea of "conservation," Lethbridge, who was responsible for the design of the US embassy in Lima, Peru, was the most "public-oriented" personality of the three.⁸⁴ From 1960 to 1962, he served as a member of the new AIA Residential Architecture Committee; in 1962 he chaired the AIA Committee on the Homebuilding Industry (other members included Carl Koch and A. Quincy Jones). In 1964, he served as President of the Washington Chapter of the A.I.A. He co-authored with Hugh Newell Jacobsen *A Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C.*, published in 1965. He was also Chairman of the Joint Committee on Landmarks for the National Capitol and a member of the Potomac Planning Taskforce for the Department of the Interior. In 1968, Lethbridge was one of the jurors for the Awards for Design Excellence attributed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He was a member of the Society of Architectural Historians and National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In the 1950s and 1960s, KLC was essentially active in the District of Columbia, where it had its office, Montgomery County, and to a lesser extent Northern Virginia.⁸⁵ They set high standards for modern architecture in the Capital Region. In the District of Columbia, their office buildings include the Forest Industries Building (1619 Massachusetts Avenue, 1962) and the Sunderland Building (1320 19th Street, NW, 1969). In the pilot urban renewal operation for Southwest, D.C., KLC won the competition for Tiber Island (1961-1963), a residential community that received an AIA national award, and the adjoining Carrollsburg Square apartment and townhouse complex (completed 1966). In the renewal area of Foggy Bottom, the firm designed Columbia Plaza (1963, in association with deMars and Reay). Mr. Keyes was particularly involved in KLC's multi-family housing commissions. In 1968-69, KLC devised a Master Plan for the project for Fort Lincoln New Town (in association with planner David Crane).

Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon contributed to bringing high quality modern architecture to

⁸³ See *Property Development Plan for the Decatur House*, prepared for the National Trust for Historic Preservation by Francis D. Lethbridge and Associates; with Shirley Maxwell Massey, Constance Werner Ramirez, 1980, and *Property Development Plan for the Woodrow Wilson House*, prepared for the National Trust for Historic Preservation by Francis D. Lethbridge and Associates and Emily Hotaling Eig, 1980.

⁸⁴ See Jane C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 165 and 170, fig.145.

⁸⁵ See, for instance, St Patrick's Episcopal Church in Falls Church Honorable Mention, illustrated in *Potomac Valley Architect*, June 1958, 12.

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Montgomery County. They designed at a rather domestic scale two Unitarian churches in Bethesda, adopting the same "woody" and natural spirit as in their houses. Mr. Bennett was a member of both churches and assisted in buying land, and selecting the architects and the contractors.⁸⁶ Cedar Lane Unitarian Church was built in two phases, in 1960 and 1968, with Pietro Belluschi acting as Associated Architect.⁸⁷ The design of Cedar Lane is not overtly religious, its assembly room, with a beautiful window in Belgian stained glass designed by Condon, being used for many purposes. Lethbridge was the partner in charge for River Road Unitarian Church (first phase completed in 1966).⁸⁸

Both built in the early 1960s, two custom designed homes by KLC received media attention: in Potomac, a rustic residence for J. Gibson Semmes⁸⁹; in Bethesda, a Demonstration House sponsored by the Hoo Hoo Club, a fraternal group of lumbermen in cooperation with the National Lumber Manufacturer's Association, which showcased many samples of wood ranging from tongue in groove mahogany to redwood.⁹⁰ In Bethesda, KLC also designed Ayr lawn Elementary School (currently owned by YMCA), built on the site of a dairy farm, the tower of which was preserved. They also designed two youth centers for M-NCPPC, thanks to their connections with the chairman of the Montgomery County Planning Board, J. Newton Brewer, Jr.: one on Walsh Street, just off Wisconsin Avenue, in downtown Bethesda (First Award PVC-AIA 1962); the other in Wheaton on Georgia Avenue (Award of Merit, PVC-AIA 1964).⁹¹ KLC were commissioned to design the twin-towered Administration Building at the National Institute of Health (with Richard Collins and Associates)⁹² and an office building for the Hydrospace Research Corporation in Rockville (which received an Honor Award, from the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce and Potomac Valley Chapter of the AIA in 1970).

3 A.2 - Edmund J. Bennett

⁸⁶ John B. Willmann, "Contemporary Homes Built to Fit 'Bethesda Family Profile'," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1962, B2: Bennett "built a parsonage as his contribution to the building fund, taking only overhead and supervisory expenses".

⁸⁷ "Four Houses of Worship," *Progressive Architecture* 40 (June 1959), 119-121

⁸⁸ First Award PVC-AIA 1966 (PVA 11-12 1966) "Unforced Simplicity for a Unitarian Church," *Architectural Record* (January 1967), 129-132; *AIA Journal* (July 1966), 50-51

⁸⁹ This house received a First Award from the Potomac Valley Chapter of the AIA in 1962 and was reproduced in the May 1962 issue of *Potomac Valley Architect*.

⁹⁰ See "Warmth and Comfort are Modern," *Architectural Record Houses of 1961*, New York, 1961, 104-107; "This house uses wood in traditional forms," *House and Home* 19 (March 1961), 110-111; *Journal of Homebuilding*, June 1951, 73; *Potomac Valley Architect*, January 63.

⁹¹ Arthur Keyes, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, March 24, 2003, mentioned having designed two little libraries around 1975. One was in Twinbrook (Rockville), clinging to the edge of a shopping mall, at the southside of the parking lot. The other was in Holton Arms; it was an octagonal building with a skylight.

⁹² This building won the Oliver Kuhn cup awarded from the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce. See "NIH Office Wins Award in Bethesda," *Washington Post*, January 6, 1962, B2.

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Among Maryland's home builders, Edmund J. Bennett was certainly one of the best educated, most articulate, and media-savvy. He was born in the District of Columbia in 1920. Soon after, his parents moved to 4119 Leland Street in Chevy Chase. His father, James V. Bennett (who, in 1956, moved to a house built by his son, located at 5840 Marbury Road in Kenwood Park), was Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons for 27 years.⁹³ Mr. Bennett had two sisters: Brenda and Ann, who both worked for him. Edmund J. Bennett attended Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School and Mercersburg Academy, started college at Brown University in Providence, but decided to move to a warmer climate, selecting Stanford University, where he was awarded a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Political Science. The modern architecture of the Bay Area, and of the West Coast in general, appealed to him a great deal.

From January 1943 to June 1946, Mr. Bennett was in the Army.⁹⁴ He subsequently was a civil servant, first in the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, then in the Department of State where he was a management analyst. From 1951 to 1953, during the Korean War, he was recalled to active duty and worked as Deputy Executive Officer of the Psychological Strategy Board (in the Executive Office of the President), which was chaired by the head of the C.I.A. As Secretary, his role was that of a "scribe," recording meetings with key military and political leaders. He, and other board staff members, kept an eye on General MacArthur's performance on the Korean War front. Mr. Bennett also earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration from American University in 1950, and started working towards a Ph.D. in this field. His government experience in management analysis was an unusual but useful prelude to home building. As stated by *American Builder*, Bennett was applying in his second career "the same principles of sound management that he once used for Uncle Sam." Bennett was intent to excel in the five fields he saw proper to homebuilding activity: "planning and organizing; land development; production management; financial management; and merchandising."⁹⁵ He acquired a national reputation among homebuilding professionals as a consummate manager.

In 1953, Bennett wanted to build a five-bedroom house for his family "on one of two south-facing lots overlooking a fairway at the rear of the Bethesda Country Club" on the 7700 block of Bells Mill Road (this road was discontinued in the 1960s with the construction of Democracy Boulevard). Earlier that year, he had seen Charles Goodman's Hollin Hills and Donald Lethbridge's work at Pine Spring. Mr. Bennett approached Lethbridge and requested he modify his five-bedroom two-story design for Pine Spring. His plan was to build and sell the second, adjoining home, to help pay for his own residence.⁹⁶ As the latter was being completed, someone asked to buy it. The \$6,666 profit from

⁹³ J.Y. Smith, "James V. Bennett Dies; Reformed U.S. Prisons," *Washington Post*, November 21, 1978, C6.

⁹⁴ "Gala Round of Parties Honor Miss Peck and Captain Bennett," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1946, 10.

⁹⁵ "Government Analyst," 86

⁹⁶ Edmund Bennett, note to Isabelle Gournay, October 2003. Two Bennett-built "Solar Houses with a View" on "half-acre wooded lots in scenic community" -- a "3-bedroom rambler with bath, powder room and recreation room" for \$25,750; and a "5-bedroom rambler with 2 baths, powder room and recreation room" for \$27,550 --

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the sale of his house served as capital to start a homebuilding business.⁹⁷

Edmund Bennett's firm carried several names: Bennett Construction Company from 1954 to 1962; Bennett & Matthews Construction Company from 1962 to 1965; and Edmund J. Bennett Associates from 1965 to 1975. Mr. Bennett built two houses in 1953, six a year from 1954 to 1956, eight in 1957, fourteen in 1958, twenty in 1959, and sixty in 1963. In 1959, his payroll included a secretary, a field supervisor, four carpenters, and three utility men.⁹⁸ At the time he was building Carderock Springs, Bennett had 75 persons on payroll and nearly 300 on subcontracted work.⁹⁹ The size of his firm was rather typical of the Washington, D.C. suburbs until the early 1960s. Even then, industrial scale builders like Levitt and Sons (who, besides an 8,000-unit community in Bowie, built relatively small subdivisions in the region) did not dominate this market.

Bennett's professional leadership at the local and national levels is undeniable. He was President of the Suburban Maryland Builders Association in 1960-61, Director of the NAHB Research Institute, and the NAHB Environmental Design Institute from 1967 to 1972, a member of NAHB's community design committee, and the "Washington area building industry representative to a *House and Home Magazine*-sponsored organization of innovative builders (about 25) from across the U.S. known as the 'Young Turks.'"¹⁰⁰ Bennett received numerous personal awards. He was on the cover of *American Builder* in June 1964 (plate 1); the companion article noticed that "his unorthodox ideas and strong convictions had sparked a steady growth of business."

Bennett had a "strong instinct for selling."¹⁰¹ He wrote in trade journals in an earnest and clear prose.¹⁰² Maryland homebuilders were a rather sophisticated group, but Mr. Bennett saw himself as better traveled and more cosmopolitan. As one of his advertisements explained: "When they want new ideas, most builders go no further than the house next door. Edmund J. Bennett goes to Stockholm, Copenhagen, Mexico City, Sussex. And his houses show it."¹⁰³

were advertised in the *Washington Evening Star* on January 2, 1954, section B and *Washington Post*, January 31, 1954, R 7. Morris E. Trotter, ASLA was mentioned as the landscape architect and planning consultant. Mentioned features were a "huge pine-paneled recreation room with fireplace," a "large brick terrace partly under roof," a "carport and storage shed," "bathroom vanities, aluminum windows, large closets," and "breezeway 12x26 partly roofed and screened from street".

⁹⁷ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 152. KLC designed a spectacular summer home for Edmund Bennett in Rehoboth Beach and in the 1960s, another residence at 10215 Fernwood Road in Bethesda.

⁹⁸ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 152 and 153.

⁹⁹ Bennett Talks of Building 'New Town,'" *Washington Post*, July 25, 1964,

¹⁰⁰ Edmund Bennett, note to Isabelle Gournay, October 2003.

¹⁰¹ John Matthews, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, March 24, 2003.

¹⁰² For instance, Letter to the editor of *House and Home* August 1962 regarding article July 1962 "59 Research-Tested Ideas" regarding copyrighted house designs.

¹⁰³ Display ad, *Washington Post*, September 18, 1965, E7.

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From 1969 to 1974, Bennett built a total of 850 garden apartment units and 400 town houses in Reston and Columbia.¹⁰⁴ In 1971, he developed 174 town houses in the Phelps Luck neighborhood in the village of Long Reach; clustered around courtyards, they had traditional design by the Bethesda office of Patterson and Worland. In January 1972, the *Washington Post* announced that financing was being completed by the Rouse Corporation for a 300-unit 221(d)4 garden apartment complex in Columbia, "developed by Bentana Park Associates Limited Partnership with Edmund J. Bennett Development Corp. of Rockville as general contractor."¹⁰⁵

In the fall of 1971, Mr. Bennett sold his company to American Cyanamid, "a national chemical company that aspired to fast profits in the expanding housing industry" and which acquired another local building firm, Croyder-Irvin. In Northern Virginia, Bennett developed the Bentana Woods townhouses and Bentana Park garden apartments in Reston (1972-73), two "rustic-modern" designs by Cohen Haft. In 1974, he opened Alexandria Overlook, a series of condominium garden apartments on a wooded site.¹⁰⁶ Ironically, Mr. Bennett's final collaboration with KLC was also in Northern Virginia: Pegram Place (1974), six houses, based on Carderock Spring's Overlook and Pineview models, which are still extant.¹⁰⁷ As "high interest rates emerged and impacted the industry negatively," Cyanamid sold off its land inventory and left the business.¹⁰⁸ From 1975 to 1978, Mr. Bennett assisted 2 REITs in completing distressed housing projects in several southeastern states. Then he moved to Arizona, where he still lives.

3 A.3 - Other persons associated with Bennett/KLC subdivisions.

At Potomac Overlook, Edmund Bennett was associated with Matthews and Potter; John Lee Matthews also worked with him on the first 77 houses at Carderock Springs. He was born in Akron, Ohio in 1921. In the 1930s his family moved to Washington, D.C, living in Georgetown before it was fashionable. His father had the Seven Up franchise for the region. Mr. Matthews studied engineering at Catholic University, served as surveyor with an Army artillery division in Italy during World War II, then went to work for an engineering firm in Silver Spring, also as a surveyor.¹⁰⁹ Around 1950, Matthews told us he designed and built himself a first "Cape Codish" type of house on the section of Wiscasset Road that was never paved (we were not able to locate the house). He drew up his own plans, and got the appropriate permits. The house had large steel casement windows at the corners, 4 panes wide. It

¹⁰⁴ Edmund Bennett, note to Isabelle Gournay, October 2003.

¹⁰⁵ See "Bentana Park Financed," *Washington Post*, January 22, 1972, D12.

¹⁰⁶ "Overlook Does Brick Business," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1973, 13. An advertisement in the *Washington Post*, December 29, 1973, B 3 for the Reston, Columbia, and Alexandria projects also showed small images of Carderock Springs and New Mark commons with the caption "Bennett does it Better."

¹⁰⁷ Display ads, *Washington Post*, May 18 and 25, 1974, E 29 and E 7.

¹⁰⁸ Edmund J. Bennett, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, April 2003.

¹⁰⁹ John B. Willmann, "Contemporary Homes Built to Fit 'Bethesda Family Profile'," *Washington Post* May 26, 1962, B2

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had a living room in the front and a dining room in the back.

Matthews learned the trade by building his own house and then he "learned as he went." He joined Lloyd Potter, who owned a sawmill and supplied some of the lumber for Potomac Overlook houses. They hired the skilled workers they needed as they went. They had two or three carpenters working for them. Mr. Matthews used to spend a lot of time just going from site to site to supervise construction. He estimates that he has probably built about 500 houses in all. He "went to contemporary houses" because "that was just his instinct" and because he "loves to see out."

Among the eight or so houses Matthews and Potter built in Bannockburn, one (at # 7103 Laverock Lane, 1959) was designed by KLC.¹¹⁰ In Bannockburn, Mr. Matthews also worked with Donald Drayer, a D.C. architect who designed a large number of apartment complexes and whose archives are in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress. After 1963, Matthews-Schwartz continued building distinctive homes, working essentially with the firm of Cross and Adreon. However, KLC designed for Matthews-Schwartz the two models for Timberwood of Virginia, a 22-unit subdivision near Holmes Run Acres, which opened in 1968.

Aware he needed to delegate certain responsibilities to expand his business and focus on what he did best, Mr. Bennett surrounded himself with very competent collaborators. For the managerial and commercial end of his operation, he hired several graduates of Harvard Business School. One of them was Gordon V. Smith, who later started his own building firm and now heads a major development company. Bennett's sister, Brenda Bennett Bell, worked as a sales associate for her brother's developments in 1960-61 and after 1967 as Sales and Merchandising Manager, the only woman to hold such a position in greater Washington at the time. Because the majority of his sales agents were women with strong personalities, Mr. Bennett felt he needed another woman to supervise and organize them.

Mr. Bennett regularly worked with landscape architect Thurman Donovan (1924-1984). Donovan spent almost all of his adult life in Maryland, living in both Silver Spring and Boonsboro. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture from the University of Maryland in College Park and his Master of Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Illinois. After fighting in Belgium during World War II, Donovan worked as a landscape architect in the office of Sandy Sanders. He established his own practice in 1959. In 1977 the firm was renamed Donovan, Feola, Balderson & Associates and still exists, with offices in Montgomery Village. Thurman Donovan worked on the Wheaton House garden apartment complex (1962, Cohen Haft), the Evergreen Garden Apartments in Hyattsville, Pooks Hill Apartments in Bethesda, and Green Acres Nursery and Elementary School in Rockville, as well as on larger projects such as Rossmoor Leisure World, Sumner Village, Crystal City, Montgomery Village, and the Van Ness Center. He was also very

¹¹⁰ For 7103 Laverock, see the display ad in the *Washington Post*, May 4, 1960, B8 where the three-bedroom, two-bath home was offered at \$37,500.

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interested in golf course design, which he studied in Scotland. In Maryland, he designed the Red Gate, Enterprise, and Washington National golf courses. Donovan and his firm received several awards though they did not believe in going after the praise. The American Association of Nurseryman awarded Donovan its Plant America Award in 1960, its Industrial Landscaping Award in 1966, and its Commercial Landscaping Award in 1967. In 1964, Donovan received a Federal Housing Administration Award of Merit for Residential Design for his work on Georgetown South.¹¹¹

3 B - The Bennett/KLC synergy

The Bennett/KLC synergy was based on mutual respect and a shared vision. Edmund Bennett did considerable market research to identify typical purchasers, hiring consultants to that effect. He declared to the *Washington Post* that he had "a 100-page study of how American suburban families like to live" and that he "may know more about the things people really want in a house than they do."¹¹² Bennett was architecturally and urbanistically savvy. For Potomac Overlook, he gave KLC a list of standards such as floor area limits and minimum sizes for rooms, which he had assembled with some market input. For Carderock Springs, he provided "a fourteen-page memo outlining his thinking on every phase of his operation".¹¹³ Arthur Keyes feels that his firm was constrained by the pressures of economizing: "Bennett was very opinionated. He knew what he wanted and you couldn't talk him out of it." But among home builders, he was one of "the most devoted to protecting land, contours, and trees" and showed a keen interest in the process of home building and the quality of materials.¹¹⁴

Edmund Bennett's educational and professional background had taught him how to assemble systematically data and documentation. *House and Home* mentions that his sources included "books and reports by Architect Robert Wood Kennedy, merchandising consultant Stanley Edge, the Small Homes Council, ACTION, the Women's Housing Congress," and the Housing and Home Finance Administration.¹¹⁵ Bennett's trust in market research and in analyzing customer preferences was shared by most of his colleagues. He also believed in targeted, sophisticated publicity and excellent professional photography (essentially performed by Robert Lautman and John Alexander). His advertisements displayed good graphic quality; his brochures adopted the same uncluttered look as his houses and, for greater objectivity, relied on photography more than on renderings. His houses did not have any prearranged FHA-insurance and Bennett's company organized mortgages and helped prospective homeowners to finance their purchases.

¹¹¹ Andy Balderson. Interview with Liz Creveling, June 25, 2003.

¹¹² Ruth Wagner, "Seek an Area and a House That Suit Your Family," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1966, F 16.

¹¹³ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 157.

¹¹⁴ Arthur Keyes, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, March 24, 2003.

¹¹⁵ "59 research-tested ideas," 147. See Robert Wood Kennedy, *the House and The Art of its Design*, New York, 1953.

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Donald Lethbridge was the partner in charge for Carderock Springs, David Condon for New Mark Commons. Arthur Keyes recalls that all members of the trio would intervene in the design process but, in case of disagreement, the partner in charge had the last word. John Matthews recalls that when a problem occurred with the architects' plans, he reached out to Lethbridge, whom he deems "an excellent architect": not only were the houses well-designed, but the specifications were good, and all the necessary information was on the blueprints for plans, elevations, and details.¹¹⁶ KLC-designed houses achieved a successful combination of brand identity and flexibility, a rather unusual occurrence in tract housing. As noted in *American Builder*, "houses are so flexible in plan that they are attractive on all four sides and may be turned end-wise to the street, reversed and modified to adapt to any hillside problem."¹¹⁷

KLC and Bennett Construction Company copyrighted their architectural plans "after a suburban Virginia builder 'pirated' them to build a few houses in Vienna, VA, without their knowledge" and "a law suit stopped further misappropriation."¹¹⁸ The architects' design fees averaged 2% of the sales price of the house.¹¹⁹ Buyers of tract houses could request limited variations on prototypes, at an additional charge but, according to Bennett, "these instances were quite infrequent."¹²⁰

3 C-- Common characteristics

Edmund Bennett believed in "the importance of establishing and maintaining identity,"¹²¹ a feat that could be achieved by a "complete architectural integration of street layout, siting, design, varied elevation, color, texture, cedar roofing materials, landscaping, and even interior details and finish."¹²² As people and homes needed to achieve "more prominence than the automobile and the streets," Bennett promoted the concept of a "visual community," which he contrasted with "ordinary" subdivisions and which catered to buyers "seeking a home and community differentiated from the more anonymous mass of suburbia."¹²³

3 C. 1- Planning and landscaping

Edmund Bennett believed that "the difference between an average subdivision and an outstanding one is the way the land is planned."¹²⁴ Environmental friendliness is common to all KLC-

¹¹⁶ John Matthews, Interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, 24 March 2003.

¹¹⁷ Mason, "Problem sites," 63

¹¹⁸ Edmund J. Bennett, notes to Isabelle Gournay, October 2003.

¹¹⁹ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 153.

¹²⁰ Edmund J. Bennett, notes to Isabelle Gournay, August 2003.

¹²¹ Edmund J. Bennett, "Economics and the Visual Community," 47

¹²² Brochure for the first phase of Carderock Springs

¹²³ Edmund J. Bennett, "Economics and the Visual Community," 47

¹²⁴ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 155.

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designed and Bennett-built houses and subdivisions. The sales brochure for the third section of Carderock Springs claimed: "We agree with Frank Lloyd Wright that the house should be 'of the site and not *on* it' (emphasis in text)." While most mass builders tried to erase accidents in the natural terrain if they were in the way of fast and cheap construction, Bennett did not hesitate to purchase heavily wooded and rugged sites that abounded in Western Montgomery County. He used sections that were impossible or difficult to build upon for open or recreational space.

Edmund Bennett's strategy was to "avoid paying too much for land" as "too many builders go broke that way."¹²⁵ He declared to *American Builder*: "Problem sites make my best sellers"; this journal published by NAHB admired how Bennett's "planning-building skill converts rugged terrain from a liability to a sales asset."¹²⁶ Compliance with soil erosion and drainage regulations did not come cheap. Bennett and KLC took advantage of the sloping terrain to offer cost-saving and space-efficient two-story plans, while preserving the feeling of "lying low on the land," which was a characteristic of most post-World War II modern houses.

Tree preservation was a major concern for Bennett and his architects. In addition to moral and emotional benefits, there were also practical advantages to wooded home sites. Not only did they protect privacy, but they also attenuated the noise of vehicular traffic (Carderock Springs and New Mark Commons are adjoining major highways) and preserving trees saved "the buyer considerable expense in landscaping his property."¹²⁷ At Potomac Overlook, branches were trimmed and a few trees cleared in order to provide a view of the Potomac River from every house. In heavily wooded sites, a majority of the underbrush and spindly trees were cleared but the bigger trees were preserved. Whenever possible, the forest floor was conserved. Houses were amply setback from the street, but instead of a manicured and fertilized lawn, front yards featured shade-loving and natural-looking ground covers and bushes.

At Carderock Springs, a topographic survey of the entire property involved locating every tree with a diameter of at least 12 inches. The survey was imposed on a topographic map, and all houses and roads were sited to save as many trees as possible. In addition, an inspection is made after a house is staked out, and the siting is changed if it will save a particularly attractive tree or clump of trees."¹²⁸ Greenhorne and O'Mara, a highly respected engineering and surveying firm based in Riverdale, Prince George's County, worked from aerial photographs secured from the Soil Conservation Service. As these photographs had been taken in winter months, pines could be easily recorded and differentiated from hardwood trees, which Mr. Bennett wanted to spare.¹²⁹ At New Mark Commons, this kind of census recorded 653 trees at least 12 inches in diameter.

¹²⁵ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 154

¹²⁶ Mason, "Problem Sites."

¹²⁷ Mary Roche, "A house for the family with \$7,000 a year," 138.

¹²⁸ "Good land, made better by skilled planning," 90.

¹²⁹ Edmund J. Bennett, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, April 2003.

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Edmund Bennett was much more methodical and thorough in his approach to land planning than most home builders. In its July 1962 issue, *House and Home* appraised the first section of Carderock Springs:

On a single enlarged geodetic survey map, he [Bennett] plots pertinent data from up to a dozen other local maps. Topographic data help him avoid land with gradients of over 20% (generally too costly to develop) (...) Zoning information steers him from land where big-lot zoning (over ½ acre) makes volume building unfeasible (...) Soil conservation maps help him find wooded land (which he likes). And planning-commission maps tell him if his plans jibe with the over-all county plan. The result? Fast and thorough land appraisals. Instead of spending hours - or even days - checking out a prospective piece of land, Bennett can decide whether it is desirable in a matter of minutes. And he uses the time that's saved to work up a preliminary land plan, analyze development costs, figure what he can afford to pay for the land, and submit the bid quickly.

Edmund Bennett

starts with a detailed topographical survey showing contours every two feet. He and the two engineers on his staff hike over and study the actual site conditions and prepare their own rough approach to street layout, following the land contours and avoiding as much cutting and filling as possible. The preliminary studies are then turned over to Thurman Donovan, land planner and landscape architect, who perfects and completes them.

Similarly, the actual siting of houses is first done by Bennett and his own staff, then turned over for final study to Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon.¹³⁰

Minimizing the impact of the automobile was another key priority. Bennett wrote:

It is far better for dollars to be spent on such things as swimming pools, landscaping, and walkways than for the same dollars to be spent in excessively wide streets, needlessly graded right-of-way, and rigidly stereotyped utility line layouts.¹³¹

Garages were not systematically part of the Bennett package, maybe on the assumption that, as intellectual workers, home buyers would not be handy, and that low-maintenance landscaping did not necessitate storing many gardening tools. At Flint Hill, the Woodside model had a carport deep enough for automobiles to be parked out of sight.¹³² At Carderock Springs and New Mark Commons,

¹³⁰ "Research tested ideas," 158

¹³¹ Edmund J. Bennett, "Economics and the Visual Community," 47

¹³² "What happens when a smart builder gets together with a team of top architects? Every house is a prize winner," *House and Home* (April 1959), 161.

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automobiles were not allowed to remain permanent fixtures in driveway and visitors still cannot park on street curbs.

The connector street and cul-de-sac networks and ensuing picturesque clustering of homes at Carderock Springs and New Mark Commons are described in Sections 3-F and 3-H. Donald Lethbridge did not believe in building scattered detached houses at a density greater than three per acre. If there are more, you must go to a concentrated cluster."¹³³ To animate the streetscape, house models were alternated and roofs formed contrasting masses. In all Bennett-built and KLC-designed subdivisions, homes, even when they are set at regular intervals, form harmonious groups.

Edmund Bennett persuaded the Potomac Electric Power Company "to bury its primary lines, put secondary lines along the backs of its lots (where they are partly hidden by trees), use small poles without cross bars for secondary lines, and drop distribution boxes from the tops of poles to pads on the grounds." He "agreed to do all primary-line trenching at a cost of about \$50 a house." Carderock Springs was the first large subdivision in which the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company buried its lines.¹³⁴ Bennett was also aware that, "when you build your merchandising around environment, every detail is important".¹³⁵ At Carderock Springs and New Mark Commons, street signs used materials "which relate to the homes and the natural terrain."¹³⁶ New Mark Commons was the first Bennett/KLC community to include sidewalks.

3 C.2 - Buildings

Combining sophistication and rusticity, alluding to the imagery of the cabin, all houses by Bennett/KLC belong to the same family. Designed in a "style combining warm textured materials with clean disciplined design,"¹³⁷ they were subjected to a type of Darwinian evolutionary process: a restricted number of models was proposed. Those that did not sell well were eliminated; commercial successes, in particular the Overlook model, were refined and enlarged over the years.

According to Mr. Bennett, "the key to our design is a clean and crisp approach all the way from interior living space to exterior leisure space - all of it functional, all of it simple"¹³⁸ Model homes appeared free of clutter both outside and inside, and devoid of ostentation. Their modified open plans,

¹³³ Sarah Booth Conroy, "From the Folks Who Brought Us Contemporary Architecture," *Washington Post*, December 8, 1974, H 3

¹³⁴ "Research tested ideas," 158-159.

¹³⁵ "Good land, made better by skilled planning, helps this development sell itself," *House and Home* (May 1967), 88.

¹³⁶ Edmund J. Bennett, "Economics and the Visual Community," 48

¹³⁷ Display add, *Washington Post*, October 12, 1963, D 5.

¹³⁸ "Carderock Springs Grand Opening Offers Contemporary Home Design," *Home Builders Monthly* (June 1962), 44.

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large expanses of glass forming Mondrian-like rectangular rhythms, indoor/outdoor living features (balconies and patios, accessed by sliding glass doors) made them clearly modern but in an effortless, unassuming way. Their colors, overhanging roofs, wooden or brick exterior and interior finishes blending with the surroundings placed them in the category of "situated modernism" as opposed to hard-edged International Style.

With the exception of Carderock Springs' seven atrium houses, all Bennett/KLC houses had a two-slope roof, the low pitch of which precluded attics but made possible space-enhancing and homey cathedral ceilings, as well as glazed transoms. The "traditional" roof also reassured both lenders and buyers as to resale values. Room configuration and fenestration were flexible enough to adapt to the topography of each site. By "digging into the hillside," Bennett and KLC added "a lot of usable space at relatively low cost per sq. ft."¹³⁹ With very few exceptions, houses adopted a two-story layout. In Washington's close suburbs, where lots were relatively small, this cost-saving, stacked configuration was more prevalent than that of "ramblers." In a recent interview, Mr. Bennett stressed his concern for proper solar orientation.¹⁴⁰ He favored south or southeast exposures for the major living spaces and tried to minimize western exposures as much as he could. In addition, he tried to make sure that glazed areas would not interfere with either family intimacy or energy conservation.

Edmund Bennett, who had studied factory production and fabrication methods at Stanford University, was among a number of progressive mid-twentieth century builders who, in his own words, switched from "stick-to-stick" to "component building": "When I learned that three carpenters quit the trade for every one that enters, I saw the handwriting on the wall. I don't build anything on the site now that I can get economically delivered."¹⁴¹

Bennett wanted to speed construction (at Carderock Springs, houses were delivered for occupancy 75 days after their ground had been broken) and, to a lesser extent, to save money (in 1959, an estimated \$ 2,000 per house in direct and indirect costs). He believed greater quality of workmanship could be achieved by using firms specializing in a particular element. "For example, the mill that builds our stairways does a far better job than we could do at the site." Another reason was to give his houses a slicker look.¹⁴² Describing Potomac Overlook, NAHB's *Journal of Homebuilding* quoted Bennett:

We use mill-built wood window bucks with aluminum sliders and screen hardware already mounted ... Our stairways and stair rails are mill built; birch kitchen cabinets, Formica-topped vanities, and medicine cabinets are designed by us and mill-built to our specifications. All our

¹³⁹ "It looks like a one-story - but a daylight basement doubles its area," *House and Home* November 1960, 119.

¹⁴⁰ April 2003

¹⁴¹ "The challenge of right now: How to succeed with today's serious buyers," *House and Home* (January 1960), 129

¹⁴² "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 155.

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exterior and some interior walls are fabricated lying flat on the deck and then tilted into place complete with exterior siding; we do not build scaffold to apply exterior material or trim. We use plywood roof sheathing and drywall on interior walls, including some of the exposed soffits. We use pre-assembled door units. A spotnail stapler nails our roof sheathing in about 45 % of the time we formerly took with 6 or 8-penny nails. Our outlookers at the eave end of the house are integral parts of the rafter. The bottom side of our plywood roof sheathing becomes the soffit.¹⁴³

Upon completing Flint Hill, Bennett told *American Builder*:

I use every component technique that's available in my area and economical for my 26-house-a-year volume. These include: roof trusses, stairs and stair rails; plywood roof and floor sheathing; plywood siding-sheathing; door and window units; kitchen cabinets; bath vanities; precast shower floors; and drywall.¹⁴⁴

Above concrete foundations, houses had a simplified wood frame.¹⁴⁵ Using trusses permitted KLC/B to have cathedral ceilings and non-loading interior walls, consisting of a pre-assembly of 2"x3" studs. The roof overhang was formed by the extension of the truss. At Flint Hill, the soffit was eliminated, replaced by a 6" fascia and gutters were semi-circular. In the first section of Carderock Springs, 8" fascia and flat gutters were used to "accent the architectural lines" of the roofs.¹⁴⁶ Panels for Carderock Springs houses were fabricated at the Admiral Homes Plant in Pittsburgh and trucked to the site overnight.¹⁴⁷ Initially, they were first hauled by manpower, but Bennett came up with the idea to "put hooks on the top and get cranes to help with the assembly's idea."¹⁴⁸ According to Arthur Keyes, these panels were well made. At Carderock Springs South and New Mark Commons, Mr. Bennett had to revert to conventional on-site assembly because transportation cost had become too high.

Mr. Bennett used window walls which came "pre-glazed with aluminum sliding windows"; lower sections could be glazed or filled with painted panels.¹⁴⁹ Component construction applied to the stairs, which Lethbridge had designed. Each flight came pre-assembled: the risers measured 7.9 inches, the soffit was made of ¼" mahogany plywood, the stringers of 2 x 12 wooden board, balusters were ½" wrought-iron bars painted white, and the railing was made of oak. Starting with Carderock Springs,

¹⁴³ "The Challenge in By-Passed Land," *NAHB Journal of Homebuilding* 12 (February 1958), 50

¹⁴⁴ "Government analyst," 90.

¹⁴⁵ "Government analyst," 91. Bennett was described as the first builder in his area to use the idea of "integral slab-footing," which saved him \$ 100 per basement at Flint Hill.

¹⁴⁶ "59 research-tested ideas," 149.

¹⁴⁷ Mason, "Problem sites," 63.

¹⁴⁸ John Matthews, Interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, 24 March 2003.

¹⁴⁹ "Government analyst," 90. At Potomac Overlook, John Matthews had his carpenters make window walls on site.

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adhesive-nail-on drywall was used to "achieve smooth planes and curved ceilings."¹⁵⁰ It was directly fitted to slotted door jambs and windows frames, in order to cut cost and labor.¹⁵¹ At Carderock Springs, the chimneys were prefabricated and plastic shower receptors were built in one piece. At New Mark Commons, Bennett used one piece molded fiberglass bath and shower units manufactured by Universal-Rundie. At Potomac Overlook, bubble plastic-dome skylights were used on bathroom ceilings; at Carderock Springs a new kind of invisible, double-layered plexiglass skylight measuring 2 feet by 3 feet was used to illuminate bathrooms, as well as some halls and kitchens.

Outside, wood was treated as vertical boards with batten joints or, less frequently, as horizontal beveled siding.¹⁵² It was either stained or painted in colors selected by Edmund Bennett himself in consultation with Donald Lethbridge and later with David Condon. Brick can be regarded as a concession to local traditions, but it was handled in a crisp, modern way. Bennett and KLC were partial to a light pink shade and a rustic texture. At Carderock Springs, previously used bricks -- "kilned before 1911" -- were brought from Baltimore.¹⁵³ As opposed to many builders, who used wood for the top portion of a brick gable, Bennett used brick up to the top: "A wood-covered gable would be cheaper, but it would also look cheaper," Bennett decreed to *House and Home*, which approvingly mentioned that his buyers "never have to worry about painting the hard-to-reach gable end."¹⁵⁴

For the roofs, Mr. Bennett was partial to hand-split cedar shakes, which were mostly used on the West Coast but were "approved by fire underwriters in Maryland and 23 other states." Convinced of their superior "aesthetic appeal" and cooling effect on attics, he did not mind the extra cost (averaging \$ 230 per house in the first section of Carderock Springs).¹⁵⁵ In March 1965, the *Esoterica* newsletter noted:

Most visitors to Carderock Springs comment on the natural beauty of the cedar shingles and shake roofs.

What many don't realize is that in addition to its aesthetic qualities, cedar is the finest material available for residential roofs.

The absence of pitch and resin in cedar is responsible for its lack of flammability. At the same

¹⁵⁰ "Continued advance of drywall construction," *Home Builders Monthly* 19 (August 1962), 6-7. Mr. Bennett's drywall contractor was Charles Immer, who chaired the Technical Committee of Gypsum Drywall Contractors International.

¹⁵¹ "Government analyst," 90

¹⁵² John Matthews, interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, 24 March 2003, mentions that one of the houses he built at Potomac Overlook had mahogany siding, as this was the only type of wood available at the time. For his own house at Potomac Overlook, Mr. Matthews used Texture 111, which has grooves every four inches and is 5/8 inches thick.

¹⁵³ Display ad for Carderock Springs, *Washington Post*, October 7, 1964, C 12

¹⁵⁴ "59 research-tested ideas," 148.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

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time its natural oils contribute to its extreme resistance to decay under most adverse conditions. In fact, cedar roofs often outlive the structures which they protect (....)

Cedar also has exceptional insulating qualities. Its cellular structure retards the passage of heat through the wood and therefore reduces heating and cooling bills.

Moreover, the length and rigidity of the cedar shingles and shakes add to the strength of the structure (...)

Finally, the cedar roofs in Carderock are almost immune to damage by hail or high winds, which frequently destroy roofs of flexible asphalt shingles or of brittle material as slate.

Original roofing has been overwhelmingly replaced with less expensive artificial shingles.

Windows had slender aluminum frames set in white wood surrounds, which created another chromatic contrast. Their grouping, sometimes on two levels, formed broad geometric patterns. Cantilevered balconies were a Bennett/KLC trademark; they added "visual depth to a facade and prestige to a house" and permitted floor-to-ceiling operable windows.¹⁵⁶ Mr. Keyes attributes their modest width (four feet) to code requirements. At Carderock Springs, balconies and interior stairs had steel railings composed of flat horizontal members and of vertical rods measuring 3/8" in diameter.

Edmund Bennett was partial to rectangular footprints on two levels. A vast majority of his houses had four or five bedrooms and three full, compact, bathrooms (placed back-to-back to save on plumbing costs). In nearly all models, living and dining spaces were combined, generally in an L-shape configuration, and provided with "extra high vaulted ceilings."¹⁵⁷ Dining areas were screened from direct view from the front entry. Houses were "zoned for family living."¹⁵⁸ One or two bedrooms with a small bath would generally be placed at the lower level, along with a large recreation room, which compensated for relatively small children's bedrooms and was directly accessible from the front or back yards. Advocated by residential experts, this "separate, walled off family room" was "where young people can congregate without disturbing parents who read newspapers and books."¹⁵⁹ Closed storage as well as laundry rooms were also provided. At Carderock Springs, the fourth downstairs bedroom was planned as a "get-away" room; in model homes, one of its walls was paneled with mahogany "to emphasize its potential use as a den or study."¹⁶⁰ Fully equipped kitchens were large enough to accommodate a breakfast table; some had access to a patio. In many of these kitchens, cabinets and appliances were placed to insure "a natural line for food to move from the refrigerator to the cutting block to the sink to the counter top to the stove and to the dining room."¹⁶¹ A major asset of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 149.

¹⁵⁷ Sales brochure for Carderock Springs, third section, 1963.

¹⁵⁸ Robert J. Lewis, "This Plan is Clean, Compact," *Washington Evening Star*, August 4, 1956, B-1 and B-6

¹⁵⁹ John B. Willmann, "Contemporary Homes Built to Fit 'Bethesda Family Profile'," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1962, B1.

¹⁶⁰ "59 research-tested ideas," 151.

¹⁶¹ John B. Willmann, "Contemporary Homes Built to Fit 'Bethesda Family Profile'," *Washington Post*, May 26,

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most models was the naturally lit entry-stair hall combination, with elegant and space-enhancing open risers and minimalist balustrades. Interiors gave a general impression of simplicity, clarity, and airiness. Radiators were conspicuously absent, replaced by forced air systems. A wood burning fireplace, consisting of a simple, mantel-free hole inserted in a brick or wood panel wall was found in all living rooms, and in most recreation rooms. A few fireplaces had freestanding cylindrical flues, acting as a sculptural element both inside and outside the house. Some fireplace walls also had "built-in wood boxes."¹⁶²

Interior finishes extended the natural look of the exteriors, but in a less rugged way. At Potomac Overlook, Mr. Bennett hired an interior designer "to select interior colors and furnishings" of exhibit houses and to "coordinate color schemes" for buyers.¹⁶³ For the National Home Week open house, the Riverview model hosted \$11,000 worth of furniture (including Harry Bertoia's famous wire chairs in the recreation room) from Modern Design, a store in Chevy Chase.¹⁶⁴ At Flint Hill, model homes were furnished by another store, Ursell, with slender coffee tables and Scandinavian furniture by Arne Jacobsen and other well known designers. Interior designer Dorris M. Harris worked on Carderock Springs' model homes, using furniture sold at Modern Design. In the fall of 1963, Carderock Springs' Valleyview model displayed custom furniture by well-known wood carver George Nakashima, who was established in Bucks County, PA.¹⁶⁵ One of the initial model homes at New Mark Commons was furnished by the interior design staff of KLC, the others by Modern Design.

At Carderock Springs, entry halls had quarry tiles (in a fawn color), which were also used for the hearths of fireplaces. Light fixtures -- "free-form globes and brushed-chrome or aluminum holders" -- added another modern touch.¹⁶⁶ In kitchens, plastic-faced cabinets had hidden hinges and magnetic catches; Formica backsplashes and countertops, with integrated hardwood chopping boards; and the floors were in linoleum. In bathrooms, floors and wall sections had scored American Olean ceramic tile and countertops were in laminated plastic.

Described in detail in parts 3-F and 3-H, the community buildings at Carderock Springs and New Mark Commons adopt the same character as the houses. Promoting community spirit was important to Mr. Bennett: for instance, he threw a large party for those who built, and lived in, Potomac Overlook, when the subdivision was near completion. At Carderock Springs, he showcased paintings by residents who had already moved to the subdivision in the second series of model homes and was one of the judges in the "spruce up for Spring" contest.¹⁶⁷ On the day the pool at New Mark Commons

1962, B1.

¹⁶² Display ad, *Washington Post*, October 12, 1963, D 5.

¹⁶³ "This is Builder Ed Bennett," 152

¹⁶⁴ "The Challenge in By-Passed Land," *NAHB Journal of Homebuilding* 12 (February 1958), 50.

¹⁶⁵ "Nakashima Furniture Seen Here," *Washington Post*, November 16, 1963, E 2

¹⁶⁶ "59 research-tested ideas," 151.

¹⁶⁷ "New Section Opened at Carderock Springs," *Washington Post*, October 12, 1963, D 15.

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opened, he and his sister Brenda were photographed on the diving board. He also was the driving force behind *Esoterica*, an attractive "insider newsletter published by, for, and about the residents of Carderock Springs, Flint Hill, and Potomac Overlook," which was printed from 1964 to approximately 1968. In its second year, *Esoterica* published a lavishly illustrated "Special Recreation Edition," which informed residents of resources offered close to their homes, along the Potomac River and C & O Canal, from Great Falls to Roosevelt Island, as well as of the opportunity to watch polo games at close-by Travilah.

The subdivisions that we describe in Section F followed a long tradition of post-occupancy environmental control in exclusive suburbs. They were regulated by strict aesthetic covenants, drafted by KLC and Edmund Bennett, who were convinced that they encouraged sales. Forbidden were "such eyesores as exposed television antennas, or unapproved exterior change."¹⁶⁸ For Carderock Springs, covenants stipulated that clothes dryers and lines needed to be placed "within a screened enclosure of an approved design of attractive rustic wood not over eight feet square and not over six feet in height," that fencing would be "either horizontal rustic, unfinished split rail or vertical split cedar" and would "not extend beyond the front wall of any house and be within forty feet of any publicly dedicated street in the case of a corner lot." Special authorization was required for the removal of hardwood trees.¹⁶⁹

4 - Evolution of residential planning in the United States and in the D.C. suburbs, 1950-1975.

Summary of significance The subdivisions built by Edmund J. Bennett, with site plans and home designs by Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon, are culturally and historically significant. They play an important role in the evolution of planned communities of single-family homes in the United States in general and in metropolitan Washington, D.C., in particular. Houses in these communities are important examples of Modern Movement residential architecture packaged for a mass middle or upper-middle class suburban audience without sacrificing design or construction quality. In particular, the Bennett/KLC tract subdivisions and dwellings are noteworthy nationally for the following Modernist features and innovations:

- brilliant alternative to the bulldozer approach to conventional site planning.
- sophisticated examples of comprehensive community and subdivision planning
- pioneering experiments in land conservation

¹⁶⁸ Sales brochure for Carderock Springs, third section, 1963.

¹⁶⁹ *Conditions, Covenants, Restrictions, and Easements Affecting Property of Edmund J. Bennett Associates, Inc* September 10, 1962.

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- successful semi-industrialization of assembly and construction
- models were the outcome of very systematic interior planning work and generated tremendous customer satisfaction

Starting with the Pineview model at Carderock Springs, KLC's designs for Bennett evolved toward a greater degree of symmetry, as panelization had to be abandoned due to the prohibitive expense of shipping the components. Some models became entirely sheathed in brick, but those that remained attuned to the woodsy tradition of situated modernism shared many principles of contemporary "Deck Houses" and designs by architects such as Charles Moore and William Turnbull, of Sea Ranch fame. The fact that Bennett/KLC houses reflect divergent trends adds to their significance and added to their appeal for their suburban clientele.

4 A - Landscape preservation

Around Washington, D.C., as elsewhere in the nation, tract house construction placed a large burden on natural resources in the three decades following World War II. However, regulatory obstacles to preserving the natural landscape were numerous and hard to overcome. For example, the FHA balked at insuring homes with driveways sloping more than 5%. Edmund Bennett deplored the "entrenched attitude on the part of many public officials, particularly those in public works" that hampered "innovative community concepts."¹⁷⁰ His groups of homes are significant from a planning and landscaping standpoint because they offered a brilliant alternative to the bulldozer approach to site planning.

Mr. Bennett belonged to a small but significant category of mid-century builders who, for reasons that were not only ethical and aesthetic but also practical (they sought to provide privacy and shade, for instance), took the conscious decision to interfere minimally with natural site conditions. Because this approach was more costly than bulldozing, and made the most visual sense on relatively large lots, it was more likely to be adopted in upmarket subdivisions, like those built by Bennett. His attitude reflects a more pervasive state of mind that was associated with the advent of the new discipline of ecology. By the early 1960s, when Carderock Springs was being planned, concerns over environmental protection had reached the general public. Interestingly enough, a Montgomery County resident, Rachel Carson (she lived in Silver Spring from 1936 till her death in 1964) was a figurehead for the ecology movement.

Pre-World War II neighborhoods in Montgomery County's posh Country Club District may have been nestled in wooded settings, but front lots were landscaped in a way that required high maintenance and houses kept a formality which made them stand out from, more than blend with, their surroundings. Begun in 1949, Robert Davenport's and Charles Goodman's Hollin Hills subdivision in Northern Virginia was the first subdivision in the Capital Region that tied minimum intervention on the existing landscape

¹⁷⁰ Edmund J. Bennett, "Economics and the Visual Community," 50.

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with the introduction of land-hugging, modern architecture.

What did landscape conservation involve? Respecting existing topography was certainly a key factor. According to Francis Lethbridge, "if you're going to preserve anything of the natural cover, you've got to preserve the contours."¹⁷¹ Popular sentiment rose in favor of tree preservation, a trend that was not restricted to modernist builders, as evidenced in Levitt and Sons' refashioning of the Belair estate in Bowie.¹⁷² Landscape preservation also called for the placement of utility wires and poles underground. By the early 1960s, the added expenditure this placement involved became less taxing for home builders, as utility companies were increasingly willing to bear some of the cost themselves. In January 1964, the *Washington Post* reported this trend, illustrating Carderock Springs as an example: "Uncluttered streets without overhead wires provide only the aesthetic argument for putting wire in the earth. Another, and possibly more important, motivation is the prevention of damage by snow and wind storms to the spaghetti-between-poles."¹⁷³ Carderock Springs acted as a testing ground for Montgomery County's 1965 decision that cables should be buried in all new subdivisions. In 1968, the Maryland Public Service Commission ordered that power and telephone lines be placed underground for residential subdivisions of five lots or more throughout the state. Three years later, Maryland was the first state in the nation to require that all power and telephone lines for all new construction (including mobile homes) be placed underground.¹⁷⁴

The anti-bulldozer approach entailed the adoption of house plans adapted to major differences in grade. Hillside housing was already a major residential sub-type in California, in both the San Francisco and Los Angeles regions. There, steep site conditions challenged modernist architects and helped them devise some of their most innovative and spectacular designs. A good example is Richard Neutra's seminal Lovell Health House, completed in 1930.¹⁷⁵ By the early 1950s, as availability of flat land dwindled near most large metropolitan centers, hillside construction was recognized as an

¹⁷¹ "Area Author Pleas for Tree Preservation," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1961, A 21.

¹⁷² Julie H. Ernstein, "Landscape Archaeology and the Recent Past: A View from Bowie Maryland" in Deborah Slaton and William G. Foulks, eds. *Preserving the Recent Past II*, Washington, DC, Historic Preservation Education Foundation, National Park Service and the Association for Preservation Technology International, 2000, 2/97-2/103.

¹⁷³ According to John B. Willmann, in "Some Area Home Builders Join Trend to 'Buried Cables,'" *Washington Post*, January 25, 1964, E1, this trend was particularly important in Northern Virginia. In addition to referring to and illustrating Carderock Springs, the article mentions wire-burying for 3,000 homes by Levitt in Bowie's Belair. The estimated cost of underground wiring at Carderock Springs was \$ 400 for each house. The debate about whether burying cable should be required by FHA and who should carry its cost was ongoing in the 1960s. See John B. Williams, "Nobody Knocks Buried Wires," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1966, E 1

¹⁷⁴ "Maryland orders builders and utilities to put all new wiring underground," *House and Home* 40 (October 1971), 28

¹⁷⁵ See Dominique Rouillard, *Building the slope: hillside houses, 1920-1960* (Santa Monica: Arts + Architecture Press, 1987).

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important sub-category of tract housing and was discussed in specialized magazines. For instance, an article in the September 1954 issue of *American Builder* explained that a hillside house "can be perched to look out over long distant vistas, or it can be placed so that the view of tree tops offers seclusion," that its "basement becomes fully livable," and that it "appears to have more space between it and its neighbors than do houses built upon level terrain." While offering savings on expensive excavation work, hillside planning "encouraged fresh thinking to create new and interesting design."¹⁷⁶

4 B. New planning concepts: clustering, Planned Unit Developments, new towns

Carderock Springs, Carderock Springs South, and New Mark Commons are important and original illustrations of cluster development, which challenged the notion of a uniform fabric for tract housing, consisting of lots of even size and shapes and of streets of similar width. Clustering single-family homes instead of spreading them evenly on available land led to grouping them around dead-end streets. Cluster planning was perceived as advantageous on several grounds: it helped enforce contour and tree preservation; it lowered sales prices as it shortened the length of utilities and streets; it facilitated child rearing and fostered community spirit by providing internal parkland.

The systematic exploration of ways in which to configure cul-de-sacs, driveways, and lots, and to provide pedestrian-friendly communal green space was pioneered by developers of early 20th century planned, exclusive suburbs, such as George Woodward in the Pastorius Park development of St. Martin's, Philadelphia.¹⁷⁷ These innovations first garnered widespread public attention, however, with the superblock plan devised by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein in Radburn, New Jersey (begun 1927). Cluster design was most popular among planners and developers from the 1950s to the 1970s, during Edmund Bennett's tenure as a home builder. Then, cul-de-sacs and superblocks came in all kinds of shapes and sizes, but the solutions devised by Bennett and KLC - triad and quad courts, landscaped knobs, and townhouse clusters - were among the most unobtrusive and attractive.

After clustering, the next logical step in the battle against suburban blandness and sprawl was to find alternatives to exclusively residential subdivisions. Change was made possible by the planning and legal concept of the Planned Unit Development (PUD). By the early 1960s, NAHB and ULI, two organizations with which Mr. Bennett maintained close ties, were at the forefront of the PUD advocacy movement. Treating a tract of land as a single unit rather than on the basis of individual lots, guidelines for PUDs were drafted and legally endorsed at the local level. In addition to relaxing restrictions on minimum lot sizes and setbacks, and to encouraging cluster plans and the provision of common open space, these guidelines allowed more flexible and integrated land uses. They authorized the combination of a variety of residential types and densities and often allowed commercial activity. The

¹⁷⁶ "Building on hillside lots," *American Builder* 76 (September 1954), 82-83. See also Fred W. Marlow, "Let's take to the hills for building sites," *Practical Builder*, August 1957, 121-123.

¹⁷⁷ Harold D. Eberlein, "Pastorius Park, Philadelphia and its Residential Development," *Architectural Record* 39 (Jan. 1916): 24-37.

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philosophy behind PUDs was generally progressive: by mixing lot sizes and housing typologies, people of varying incomes and ages could live in close proximity to one another. The social, urbanistic, and programmatic goals of PUDs could be achieved regardless of stylistic choices for their buildings. In fact, many well planned PUDs in the Capital Region, like those at Crofton and Northampton built along the D.C.-Annapolis corridor, had traditional-looking homes.

Modernist home builders in the D.C. region had anticipated the PUD wave, but with very limited success, in the absence of a favorable legal framework. In 1946, a 200-member cooperative, essentially formed by professional government workers, purchased at a public auction the Bannockburn Golf and Country Club near Glen Echo. According to the *Washington Post*, this "new venture in community planning" was followed by planners and housers nationwide as it promised to "set a future housing pattern for families in the middle income group."¹⁷⁸ A master plan was commissioned from Vernon de Mars (whose previous work for the Farm Security Administration was regarded as a model of successful community planning) and local architects Reese Burkett and Joseph Neufeld. It called for "detached homes, semi-detached homes, garden duplexes, and three elevator apartment buildings, plus complete community facilities," but the rezoning request was defeated.¹⁷⁹ Only the most acceptable elements of a neighborhood unit plan, the elementary school (on land donated by the cooperators to the county), the community pool, and tennis courts were implemented. Robert Davenport's plan for a convenience store at Hollin Hills was also defeated by neighbors. The Luria Brothers achieved a limited success in the early 1950s when they were able to build garden apartments at the outskirts of their Pine Springs development, but zoning regulations prevented them from erecting a shopping center. Edmund Bennett himself was not able to fully achieve his vision: he lost zoning battles for his proposed townhouses at Carderock Springs (near the school), and a commercial center with office space at New Mark Commons. Kettler Brothers' Montgomery Village in Gaithersburg, which included an 18-hole golf course, and Rossmoor Leisure World were the largest PUDs built in Montgomery County in the late 1960s, but their site planning and architectural design did not achieve the distinction of New Mark Commons.

In terms of PUDs, the precedent that inspired some of Mr. Bennett's thinking for New Mark Commons was the village of Cross Keys in Northern Baltimore, near Roland Park. In 1961, the Community Research and Development (CRD) Corporation, headed by James W. Rouse, purchased 68 acres from the Baltimore Country Club. The site plan was entrusted to Richard Stauffer, the staff architect for CRD. Through rezoning, Rouse was able to mix townhouses, garden, mid-rise, and high-rise apartments (initial plans called for 600 residential units), and to build a Village Center, with shops and Rouse's own offices above. The landscape architect was Lewis Clarke of Raleigh, N.C. The rolling terrain and presence of mature trees informed the site plan and reinforced privacy for each residential cluster. Designed by Collins and Kronstadt of Silver Spring, the first 98 townhouses opened

¹⁷⁸ "Work Starts at Bannockburn," *Washington Post*, January 16, 1949, R4

¹⁷⁹ See Vernon de Mars, "Bannockburn Cooperators, Inc.: Montgomery County, Maryland," *Progressive Architecture*, February 1951, 65-67; and The Bannockburn Community Club, *Bannockburn, The Story of a Cooperative Community*, Bethesda, 1978.

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in 1964, achieving a density of 10 units per acre. They were grouped into four "hamlets" with central parking courts in the front of the units and private wooded areas in the rear. Varying in width from 16 to 23 feet, each unit included screened front and back terraces.¹⁸⁰ The site strategy and insertion of parking were less sophisticated than at New Mark Commons, and the facades less varied. At Cross Keys, the first of two planned swimming and tennis clubs opened in the summer of 1964, when construction on the Village Square began. The first apartment opened in the spring of 1965

Many PUDs featured club-type, year round recreation facilities that included community buildings. Family life, especially in the summer, tended to revolve around pool activities. Again, the idea was not unprecedented: recreation facilities were not only a staple in affluent suburbs, they also have been erected by the federal government in PWA and defense housing projects, as well as in Greenbelt. A notable post-war example is the series of neighborhood swimming pools that served as major social and visual anchors for the Levittowns. For home builders in Montgomery County, democratizing and extending the healthy but glamorous life style of the Country Club District by including a pool, tennis courts, and a multi-purpose club house in their subdivisions made both practical and financial sense. These amenities were a magnet for families with small children, who wanted to walk or bike to the pool. But erecting sport and community facilities could easily become a logistical nightmare and a financial ordeal for builder-developers, as their cost was not always recouped in home sale prices. Some builders preferred to delegate construction and funding to homeowners' associations.¹⁸¹ As a result, for communities of the size of Carderock Springs and New Mark Commons, a modest cabana was more likely to be built alongside the pool than a large, multi-purpose building. Both in programmatic and aesthetic terms, the clubhouses built by KLC for Bennett are truly exceptional and deserve protection.

PUD legislation encouraged the construction of townhouses, a market that took off in Montgomery County in the late 1960s. In terms of planning and design, few townhouses achieved the distinction of those at New Mark Commons. Indeed, they posed a particular aesthetic challenge with regard to the automobile: parking space incorporated into the bulk of the lower level was convenient, but had an adverse impact on facade design. The presence of driveways marred the landscaping, detached garages were awkward in terms of scale, and on-street parking entailed large surfaces of asphalt.

Mr. Bennett also acknowledged his indebtedness to the Finnish and Swedish new towns that he visited in 1962 (and again in 1973 and 1980). They offered humanly scaled, user-friendly civic, commercial, and cultural amenities, and non-intrusive solutions to parking. Tapiola near Helsinki was a particularly successful example of Situated Modernism, which preserved wooded scenery, offered extensive open space, and a great diversity in housing types; its central district on an artificial lake was an inspiration for the new town of Reston.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ "Townhouses designed to fit on an open, rolling, site," *House and Home* 28 (July 1965) 64-65.

¹⁸¹ See "The community swimming pool," *Practical Builder*, February 1964, 94-97.

¹⁸² See Frederic Gutheim, "Stockholm Architectural Exhibit Offers Lessons to Area Planners," *Washington Post* ,

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Indeed, the presence of an artificial lake came to be considered the ideal compensation for the higher density of townhouse design. Water views became a major selling argument not only in Reston but also in James Rouse's new town of Columbia, whose preliminary plan was unveiled in 1964. In addition to Whittlesey and Conklin's ultra-modern semi-circular "village" of superimposed shops and apartments, Reston's 30-acre Lake Anne hosted Waterview Cluster, a 15-acre complex of 90 townhouses that opened in late 1965. Designed by Cloethiel Woodard Smith & Associates, it had the same architectural character and price range as townhouses at New Mark Commons. In Maryland, townhouse architecture rarely matched the distinction and originality achieved by the best designs for free-standing tract houses. An exception to this rule was Hugh Newell Jacobsen's Tidesfall at Columbia's Village of Wilde Lake, built by the Page Corporation, which was completed in 1970 and featured bold silhouettes and multi-level, open plans.¹⁸³

5 - Development of Modern Residential Architecture in the Washington, D.C. suburbs, 1945-1975

5 1 --- National context for modern tract houses

Since the days of Andrew Jackson Downing, excellence in "small house" design has always been a major pursuit on the part of American designers and critics. Through plans published in pattern books or magazines, such as those by Frank Lloyd Wright in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, high end design was adapted to the life style and pocketbooks of the middle class. In the 1930s, this tradition was revisited by protagonists of the International Style and Situated Modernism. A few avant-garde designers (Richard Neutra in particular) and progressive manufacturers envisioned small homes as kits of industrialized parts, with clean, mechanical lines. In the San Francisco Bay Area and Pacific Northwest, regionalist architects such as William Wurster and Pietro Belluschi combined local traditions with Scandinavian and modernist influences. Their goal was to streamline and stylize the domestic vernacular of board and batten construction. Their clean and crisp facades in dark wood with light-colored trim and warm interiors, both lofty and intimate, belong to the same school of thoughts as houses built at Potomac Overlook, Carderock Springs, and New Mark Commons. Upon their arrival in New England, German immigrants Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius also devised houses representing a middle ground between the Bauhaus legacy and America's nature-anchored domestic tradition.

Frank Lloyd revisited his own legacy for small homes in his single-story Usonian houses, a very

October 21, 1960, B3 (This article was very positive on the "introspective" and "self-effacing" quality of Swedish architecture but negative on Vallingby); Rasa Gustaitis, "'Dream Suburb' Built in Finland," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1963, C 4; Wolf von Eckardt, "Finland Leads Way in Urban Planning," *Washington Post* December 1, 1963, G 5; Wolf von Eckardt, "Sweden is a Fun Place for Children," *Washington Post* August 30, 1964, G 6.

¹⁸³ See *Architectural Record* (May 1971), 92-93 and *House and Home* 39 (June 1971), 34

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fine example of which was built in Falls Church, Northern Virginia in 1940 (the Pope-Leighy house has since been transferred to the Woodlawn Plantation). Usonian houses featured a simplified wood assembly, a carport, no radiators, a unified living-dining space, all characteristics to be found in Bennett/KLC models. Each Usonian design was unique but they all shared standardized construction and planning principles. Wright had a knack for making small spaces look more generous and for ennobling simple materials like brick and wood, and his Usonian designs served as a departure point for many home builders, including Joseph Eichler.

During World War II, defense work designed in, or coordinated from, the Nation's Capital, for such places as Vallejo (Wurster), Aluminum Terrace (Gropius and Breuer), Great Locks, CT (Stubbins), and Channel Heights (Neutra) helped democratize and disseminate pre-War experiments in modern small homes and using wood in novel technical and aesthetic ways. At the time Mr. Bennett became a home builder, modern designs for American single-family houses went in two general directions. The first direction consisted of variations on the minimalist flat-roofed glass box, emphasizing ideals of lightness and transparency and using industrialized materials and construction methods. This type was best adapted to, and most popular in, warm climates and resort locations, as, for example, in Southern California, where John Entenza's Case Study Houses Program (Eames House, Santa Monica, 1949), attracted considerable press attention. Examples of this modernist direction in Maryland are relatively sparse. We can mention Harold Esten's dwellings in Maryland's D.C. suburbs, such as the Residence of George Katinas, in Bethesda (c. 1959).

The second general direction, which was adopted by KLC, included expressions of "new regionalism" that might be considered modern interpretations of vernacular design. These were more numerous and more popular than the minimalist boxes. They looked less radical and more acceptable to FHA inspectors and to lenders, as a vestigial low-pitched roof was generally necessary to secure an advantageous loan. Modified modern houses appeared light, buoyant, and strove for livability. Often, as was the case at 5838 Marbury Road in Kenwood Park, their interiors conveyed more radical modernist values than their facades, with flexible spaces, open and flowing into one another. They featured an intimate indoor-outdoor relationship, enabled by glass walls, balconies, patios, or interior courts, and other inventive ways of bringing nature into the living spaces. Some houses reflected their designers' interest in passive solar energy, achieved by using overscaled eaves. This second direction took its cue from the work of Finland's Alvar Aalto, whose use of brick and wood, masterfully expounded at Saynatsalo's Town Hall and Civic Center in Finland (1949-52), appealed to KLC's design sensibility.¹⁸⁴ And, as we saw with Bennett/KLC houses, this second direction in home building was not only championed by many architecture and homebuilding journals, but also by more mainstream interior design magazines (*Condé Nast's House and Garden*, *Better Homes and Gardens*) and the feminine press (*McCall's*).

¹⁸⁴ Aalto's furniture was on sale at D.C.'s America House in 1940; see "New Decorator's Shop Shows Work of Famous Finn," *Washington Post*, December 1, 1940, V7. See "Widely Imitated, Finn is Pioneer of Modern Furniture," *Washington Post*, April 30, 1950, R9. An exhibition of postwar Finnish architecture was held at the Octagon House, owned by the AIA, in 1955.

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An architect whose work anticipates and then parallels that of KLC for Bennett was Carl Koch, with whom Arthur Keyes studied at Harvard. Keyes recalls visiting Snake Hill, a 1940 subdivision of eight houses, including one Koch built for himself, in Belmont: "The houses were very charming, very unique. There would be a big outcropping of rock and he would put the fireplace on it or he would place the living room and let some rock come in where you could put plants. It was a lot of fun."¹⁸⁵ In Concord, Carl Koch and Associates designed the Conantum subdivision, which opened in 1953; the 100 cabin-like homes were "built from standard elements with slight variations in plan," preserving the existing woods, the development was "laid out along curving roads that follow the topography."¹⁸⁶ Another distinguished subdivision of modern homes in the Boston suburbs, which was close in spirit to Bennett/KLC communities, was Five Fields (1947-1950) in the Six Moon Hill area of Lexington, planned and designed by The Architects Collaborative. Established on a hilly dead end road, this was a "community of eleven relatively low-cost private houses for some of the members of the Collaborative and their friends."¹⁸⁷ The 1951 edition of *McCall's Book of Modern Houses* featured three Koch designs that relate to KLC's later work: one built of concrete blocks; another in the country, designed with Huson Jackson; and a Hillside House that featured a cantilevered balcony off the living room and a large multi-purpose room with a fireplace at the lower level, a picture window, and an outside door.¹⁸⁸ In the 1950s, Koch began designing and selling his Techbuilt pre-cut, semi-custom, homes which local representatives commercialized and assembled. Techbuilt homes shared the clean and woodsy syntax of B/KLC models; in Montgomery County, examples were erected in Garrett Park and Glen Echo Heights. As soon as the war was over, California had taken the lead in tract house modernism and its homes monopolized media attention. Mr. Bennett, who studied at Stanford University, and some of the homeowners we interviewed see a kindred spirit between the relaxed and opened character of their homes and those on the West Coast. It is true that Bennett homes also have cathedral ceilings, post and beam framing, and free flowing plans. However, tailored to different life styles and climates, they maintained a higher degree of formality than their West Coast counterparts. For example, they always featured enclosed kitchens.

5 B - Local Context: Modern Tract Houses in the D.C. Suburbs

We estimate that, from the mid-1940s to the early 1970s, "contemporary" designs represented approximately 15% of all single-family homes built in Montgomery County, a ratio significant enough to

¹⁸⁵ Arthur Keyes interview with Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin Sies, 24 March 2003. Snake Hill is illustrated in *Architectural Forum*, June 1941, 392-393 and Elizabeth Mock's *Built in USA Since 1932* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1945), 54-55.

¹⁸⁶ Conantum is illustrated in Joan E. Goody, *New Architecture in Boston* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 90-91.

¹⁸⁷ Kate Ellen Rogers, *The Modern House U.S.A* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 36-37.

¹⁸⁸ Mary Davies Gillis, *McCall's Book of Modern Houses* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), 16-21, 26-31 and 112-121.

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betray important aesthetic and societal change.¹⁸⁹ In his dissertation, Christopher Martin has noticed the broad range of modernist expressions among merchant builders in the Capitol Region and their constant search for improved quality in design.¹⁹⁰ Experiments in modern tract housing began around D.C. in 1946. They blossomed between 1952 and 1962 and Bennett became a home builder at the peak of this period. They were followed by a more eclectic phase where modernism survived and evolved but lost its commercial edge.

Homes in the Capitol Region remained overwhelmingly traditional until the late 1940s. The local public was nonetheless informed about new domestic trends by the national and local press. In particular, the *Washington Post* published throughout the 1930s many articles on modern homes built in other parts of the country and the world.¹⁹¹ Even with very few examples of progressive domestic design - all custom built, needless to say - we see two tendencies emerge in and around Washington: a mechanistic imagery of crisp dematerialized volumes and flat roofs, and a more earth-bound look using natural materials and residual roofs.

The first brand of modernism was adopted in some high-end commissions. Edward Durrell Stone designed a Moderne house for George Preston Marshall and Corrine Griffith in Northwest D.C. in 1939.¹⁹² Two non-traditional designs were built in Montgomery County's Kenwood district. In 1936, a twelve-room, three-bath "Motohome," built of panels of compressed cement and asbestos mounted on a steel frame, was erected for automobile distributor Lee D. Bulter at 101 Brookside Drive. The *Washington Post* commented:

The simplicity of its straight line design, in which the familiar decorative devices, and furbelows are noticeably absent, may at first impress one as being rather cold and too much simplified. Upon becoming more familiar with its unusual departures from orthodox modes of design and construction, the beauty of this simplicity of line become increasingly more evident and more pleasant to the eye. Straight line construction is new in home design, but not in architecture. Designers of some of the most beautiful business structures in the country have taken advantage of it and used it generously.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ "Contemporaries," either custom-made or on "spec" were an exception (one could even say an aberration) in Prince George's County.

¹⁹⁰ Martin, 222.

¹⁹¹ See for instance "Radical Changes Are Seen for single Family houses," *Washington Post*, October 19, 1930, R 2, and "Homes now built nearer the ground," *Washington Post*, February 8, 1931, R1.

¹⁹² Eliot Nusbaum, "Polishing Stone," *Traditional Homes*, May 2002, 64-72

¹⁹³ "Prefabricated Home Attracts Attention Here," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1936, R 4; see also "2-Story of 'Motohome' Type Started," *Washington Post*, October 20, 1935, R 9. Henry Ward Jandl, *Yesterday's Houses of Tomorrow*, 153 and 155. The house, which had a basement recreation room with a fireplace, was radically altered in 1988.

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In February 1942, *Pencil Points* published an elegant design by Alfred Kastner for a hilly and wooded site, with the following comments.

Dr. Teichman intended to build a residence along contemporary lines, but had bought property subject to the customary real estate restrictions requiring traditional design types. The architect describes the house as a "compromise of both types.... The stucco used around the entrance door contrasts with the light buff brick exterior walls and green roof of Vermont slate."¹⁹⁴

More closely related to the homes Lethbridge and his associates would design for Mr. Bennett are two relatively small houses built in Bethesda around 1940 and published in *Architectural Forum* and *Architectural Record*.¹⁹⁵ Their designer was Francis Palms, Jr., who subsequently shared office space with Keyes and Lethbridge. They were set in heavily wooded and rugged lots, had a low-lying profile, and roofs with a relatively low pitch. Textured brick dominated on the outside, but redwood, treated as clapboard or vertical siding, was used to cover gables and one side wall. The overall effect was far from mechanical, conveying a rustic and understated character. The compact plans, rendered more complex by the recessed or diagonal placement of several rooms, were extended by generous decks that allowed mothers to supervise children's outdoor play from the kitchen. In one house, the sloping terrain enabled the designer to create a bedroom and garage/recreation room under the deck. In the other, the garage was tucked into the slope.

A series of custom built homes, often small and simple enough to serve as inspirations for tract houses, introduced new ideas to the Nation's Capital and its suburbs. In the late 1940s, Keyes, Lethbridge, Satterlee, as well as Chloethiel Woodard Smith, all worked for Berla and Abel. Although its specialty was apartment design, this firm produced a few progressive and elegant custom-built houses that were noticed in the press. Those built in the Northern Virginia suburbs, in Langley for Mason Barr and Stanley S. Surrey, and in Alexandria for Mr. and Mrs. Peyton Armstrong Kerr,¹⁹⁶ helped transplant the rustic modernism of San Francisco's Bay Area Style. In 1946, Berla and Abel also designed a house and a chinchilla farm for Stanley Pangborn, who was also a painting contractor in Glen Echo Heights, at 5435

¹⁹⁴ *Pencil Points* 23 (February 1942), 78. Note that a recreation room with a fireplace was also built at ground level, opening onto a terrace. Next to it was a maid's room.

¹⁹⁵ *Architectural Forum* 74 (June 1941), 420-421 and *Architectural Record* 90 (November 1941), 70. Francis Palms, Jr. (Detroit 1910- Monterey 1982) received his B.Arch degree from the University of Michigan in 1933. The following year, he spent four months researching apartment design in Holland, Belgium, France, and Germany. He then moved to DC. to work for the Supervising Architect of the Treasury and established his own practice in Falls Church in 1939. He worked on the War Production Board during World War II, then was associated with Cloethiel Woodard Smith and Louis Justement on the renewal plan for Southwest D.C. Palms moved to Carmel, CA around 1952 (source: obit. *Monterey Peninsula Herald* 5/20/82, AIA Archives).

¹⁹⁶ *Architectural Forum*, August 1946; William H. Hennessy, "Expandable for Growing New Family in Alexandria," *American Home* 39 (January 1938), 56.

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Mohican Road (still in existence).¹⁹⁷ Exterior walls of cinderblock were plastered; the overhanging roof adopted a single, shallow, slope. The front facade was extremely understated; in the back, the living room had two fully glazed walls, with mullions creating an attractive geometric composition that extended to the adjacent, lower screen porch. Beyond was a terrace with a gently curving plan. The fireplace and mantel were built in rough stone, which extended to the entry steps. Ingenious, streamlined built-ins included a dresser in the bedroom and a work desk in the L-shaped kitchen.

In 1950-51, Arthur Keyes designed two modern homes showing great promise. The Hirschberg House, which he characterizes as "rustic and simple," was visibly influenced by the architecture of Alvar Aalto.¹⁹⁸ In Mr. Keyes's own house, located at 2605 31st St., N.W in Washington D.C., the design of the stairs, with their open risers and slender metal balustrade, and the placement of the "children's playroom," anticipate detail and planning for Mr. Bennett.¹⁹⁹ Arthur Keyes and Francis Lethbridge helped establish working drawings for Bethesda's Bannockburn cooperative, a project that we have already mentioned. The first section of 24 homes was begun in early 1949, the ground breaking ceremonies taking place on January 15, with a "large crowd of prospective home owners, Congressmen, and housing officials."²⁰⁰ Seven home styles (with or without basement) were offered, including a "rambler-bungalow." The four Bannockburn houses illustrated in the February 1951 issue of *Progressive Architecture* were not conceived as a unified series, but they shared many characteristics that would be found in Bennett/KLC models. As terrain was very uneven, decks outside the living room took the shape of balconies. Exteriors mixed brick and horizontal wood siding, with white trim for windows. Roofs adopted a low pitch. The massing and fenestration reflected a bipartite separation between day and night spaces; the combined living/dining space was illuminated by large windows (generally floor-to-ceiling glazing). One of the living rooms had a cathedral ceiling.²⁰¹

In the second half of the 1940s, Washington area home builders saw modernism as merely intriguing. In their journal, *Home Builders Monthly*, articles were entitled "Tomorrow's Windows Will Be Larger, Insulated Beauty Features," or "People Are Clamoring for 'Outdoor Living' suburban Locations - More Terraces, Porches - Show Trend" or "Tremendous Daily Throngs Crowd N.Y. Museum of Modern Art To See 'Those Eccentric House Designs!'"²⁰² By the early 1950s, modern forms for tract houses

¹⁹⁷"Oak Hill - Maryland Chinchilla Ranch," *American Home* 38 (November 1947), 69-71 and William J. Hennessey, *America's Best Small Houses* (New York: Viking Press, 1949), 34-37.

¹⁹⁸ *Architectural Record* 110 (November 1951), 135-137. The article also credits Basil Yurchenko, a Russian-born architect who, according to Mr. Keyes, did little actual design work on this house.

¹⁹⁹ See "an upside-down plan for a growing family," *House and Garden*, August 1952, 54-55

²⁰⁰ "Work Starts at Bannockburn," *Washington Post*, January 16, 1949, R4.

²⁰¹ Another small house with an ingenious, fluid plan, white window trim, and a large picture window in the living/dining space was designed in 1947 by Chloethiel Woodard Smith in Rockville (135 S. Van Buren Street). It was not published in magazines, however. See the nomination authored by Liz Creveling, Isabelle Gournay, and Mary Corbin Sies submitted to the Maryland Historical Trust, 2004.

²⁰² *Home Builders Monthly* (April 1945), 11 and 26; July 1945, 5-6; October 1945.

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had become more acceptable. In 1951, *NAHB Correlator* published a "Design Clinic" entitled "What features of contemporary design have met with the greatest customer acceptance in your area," with the following "facts" related to the Eastern United States:

A) A one story plan or, where site conditions require it, a split level one; B) An opened plan with emphasis on function and dual use areas, this functionalism extending beyond the envelope to include the site in the overall planning; C) A roof pitch of no more than three inches to the foot, with a wide overhang over the walls, which are unadorned except for usually awning-type fenestration and large fixed-lites, properly oriented for climate and privacy.²⁰³

A few builders (such as Carlton Construction Company for Lustron) distributed and erected prefabricated houses in the Capitol Region.²⁰⁴ However, early "modern" tract houses in the D.C. suburbs were more likely to be streamlined versions of Cape Cod models, with more opened plans, abstracted facade compositions, and larger windows. In Montgomery County, this trend found its leader in Carl M. Freeman, who had worked for noted Los Angeles home builder Fritz Burns. In 1947, Freeman built 29 houses, according to plans by Berla and Abel, on two streets in the Carol Highlands district of Takoma Park, near what was then the end of New Hampshire Avenue. *Washington Post* real estate journalist Conrad P. Harness took note that "Unique, California Styled Bungalows Make Debut Here"; his article carried the subtitle "Low-Slung Homes Win Approval."²⁰⁵ The model, built on slab with incorporated radiant heat, offered only two bedrooms at the relatively high price of \$13,500. In 1948, Freeman raised the roof pitch (which rendered his houses more traditional-looking) to provide an expansion attic convertible into two extra bedrooms.

As stated in *Architectural Forum*, Freeman's street facades were "quietly conventional," so as not to "frighten the most timid customer."²⁰⁶ A touch of originality was conferred by the removal of tiles from the overhanging eaves above the kitchen window, to provide more light into this room. In the back, a large picture window, rising above a two-foot sill, ran the entire width of the living room. A glazed door opened onto a terrace. According to *American Home*, which offered the plan for purchase, such a compromise solution "should satisfy that vast growing public who, though wanting modern, just can't take it straight."²⁰⁷ The living and dining spaces formed an opened L. The fireplace was a simple hole in the wall, with no mantle (in the 1947 model, three long, flat Vermont slate stones protruded from the fireplace

²⁰³ "What features of contemporary design have met with the greatest customer acceptance in your area," *NAHB Correlator* (March 1951), 1951, 115.

²⁰⁴ Conrad P. Harness, "Post Takes a Camera Tour of New Homes," *Washington Post*, January 30, 1949, R 1 illustrates a 2 bedroom Lustron bungalow selling for \$9,188. One of these was erected in the Calvert Hills district of College Park (4811 Harvard Road).

²⁰⁵ *Washington Post*, August 17, 1947, R 1

²⁰⁶ "Hillside Development," *Architectural Forum*, April 1949, 123.

²⁰⁷ William J. Hennessey, "The American Home Study Plan for May 1949, *American Home* 41 (May 1949), 39.

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wall at different levels). In 1949, Freeman offered in Bethesda a "longer, lower and less boxy" model with ribbon windows, an extra bedroom but no expansion attic, designed by Sweeley, Heap & Gauger.²⁰⁸ It had a recessed front entrance, wide roof overhangs, a rear terrace, a 408-square foot attic accessible from a pull-down stair; the galley kitchen was turned sideways and included a dining nook facing the street. The house had no basement and no garage (a storage cabana for garden tools continued the roof slope in the back, providing privacy for the terrace). The model home featured Alvar Aalto furnishings,

Keyes, Smith, Satterlee and Lethbridge produced for Nathan Shapiro their own version of the streamlined Cape Cod (plate 66).²⁰⁹ Silver Spring's Forestvale was a conventional, gridiron subdivision, and the architects had no say on the site planning. Complying with Shapiro's desire to provide a transformable attic, they designed a high-pitched roof. Red brick, redwood, and glass with white trim were massed to generate a non-traditional composition. The single dormer was treated as a ribbon window. All four bedrooms had cross ventilation, and a free standing fireplace separated the living and dining areas.

By the late 1940s, Montgomery County builders started erecting modernized versions of single-story "ramblers," with distinctive brick chimney walls and non-traditional fenestration. In the *Washington Post*, an advertisement by the Merrimack Engineering Corporation claimed that its New Hampshire Estates homes met the expectations of those who "wondered when the 'modern post-war' house in the home magazines" would come to the D.C suburbs and that they were "Modern in Every Way":

In Feeling ... the outdoors is brought indoors by use of large glass areas.

In Beauty ... clean, uncluttered lines replace fuss doodads and 'gingerbread'.

In Engineering ... the houses use the wintertime heat-saving, summertime heat-eliminating solar plan.²¹⁰

Completed in 1949, Hollin Hills' first houses marked a much more radical departure from tradition than the modernized Cape Cods and ramblers. Charles Goodman was able to achieve a formula that was as avant-garde as one could get in the Mid-Atlantic tract housing market of the late 1940s and early 1950s. His houses featured floor-to-ceiling glazing, sometimes with a geometrical play of

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 122. See also "Distinguished plan gives privacy and convenience to a builder's small house," *Architectural Forum* (April 1950), 154-155. John Normille, "Better Homes & Gardens Five Star Home No.2010. Big enough for a family of four, five or six," *Better Homes and Gardens*, 29 (October 1950), 60-61; "1949 Best Home for Family Living" Regional Award of Merit, *American Builder* (December 1950): 143-145.

²⁰⁹ Advertisement, *Washington Post*, August 19, 1951, R 7. Note that Shapiro mentioned the name of the architects in his advertisements, which was very unusual at the time. Priced at \$18,000 in their fully finished four-bedroom, two-bath version, the Forestvale homes were relatively expensive.

²¹⁰ Classified ad, *Washington Post*, September 11, 1949, F 11. Merrimack built the same type of houses in Bannockburn in 1950 (advertised in the *Washington Post*, December 17, 1950, R 7)

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mullions; low-pitched gable roofs creating a strong sense of triangulation; no attics; play between board and batten painted wood; a nearly square brick wall hosting a fireplace inside; and ingenious planning to vary the placement of houses on the site and thereby gain privacy for the big-windowed houses. Everything was devised to make the houses and lots look more spacious than they really were. Hollin Hills' basic models were transferred, with no major modifications, to Montgomery County in the Hammond Woods, Hammond Hill, and Wheatoncrest subdivisions. Hammond Woods' first section of 58 units opened in November 1950; its model home was decorated with antique furniture borrowed from the early American shop on Wisconsin Avenue. According to the *Washington Post*, the fireplace set in the large brick wall was "more than merely decorative. It is designed to circulate heat. On a sunny day, when the temperature is 50 or so outside, the sun's warmth and the fireplace are sufficient to heat the houses up to 65 degrees."²¹¹

By 1952-53, modern tract housing, in its most temperate or more radical forms, took hold in the Washington region, at a time when demand moved toward larger and more expensive models. This acclimation coincided with the local formation of a "critical mass" of custom-built houses in both "high" and "situated" modernism. An architect who catered to both custom and speculative markets with uncompromisingly modern designs was Joseph Miller. In 1953, his Rosemary Hills group (20 two-story houses) in Silver Spring received design awards from the *Evening Star*-Washington AIA, *Parents Magazine* and NAHB.²¹² Modern became a catchword among Bethesda's realtors. Several builders re-used the formula of the bi-level hillside house that Satterlee and Lethbridge had refined at Holmes Run Acres and Pine Springs - that of a lower "bonus floor" including a recreation room, a bedroom and bathroom, as well as utilities, "slid" under a three-bedroom rambler plan.²¹³ As split levels became popular, several builders strove to give them a modern twist, both outside and inside. Carl Freeman did so in Chevy Chase's Rollingwood Terrace: designed by architect Richard Collins, his "luxury split" had a nearly square footprint and a massive front gable encompassing a carport.²¹⁴ Competitors went for a two-wing composition related to that used by Bennett in Kenwood Park, without equaling the subtlety in massing and fenestration that Keyes and Lethbridge were able to achieve. Modified Cape Cods and ramblers acquired crisper lines, larger windows, and a distinct panelized look, as component construction was more widely adopted. Good examples of this trend can be found in Alvin L. Aubinoe's

²¹¹ Robert P. Jordan, "Antiques Go Modern," *Washington Post*, November 19, 1950, R1. Charles Goodman and Robert Davenport ventured in the upscale Potomac market with the Hollinridge subdivision, Lloyd Road and Glen Mill Road, completed in 1960, which included a little more than thirty houses. See "You get good design from the interplay of structure, solids and glass," *House and Home* (November 1960), 123.

²¹² "Bert Tracy Wins Parents Magazine Award," *Home Builders Monthly*, November 1952, 14

²¹³ See for instance houses built in High Point (near houses Keyes, Smith, Satterlee and Lethbridge designed for Charles Luria) by the Merrimack Engineering Company illustrated in Paul M. Herron, "'Homes of '52' will please Budgeters and Dreamers," *Washington Post*, August 24, 1952, R1 and R 6.

²¹⁴ "Luxury split has dignity and a new plan," *House and Home* (October 1955), 143 and *NAHB Correlator* 9 (July 1955), 200-203.

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Wildwood Manor in upper Bethesda.²¹⁵

By the early 1960s, "contemporary" was a recognized stylistic option, but its cutting edge cultural and visual dimensions had worn off. Many home builders adopted an eclectic and opportunistic approach, which Mr. Bennett did not embrace. A case in point was Swedish-born Bertil Malmsted, head of Torpet Construction Company, Inc. Right after the war, his first ventures in home building were for modest dwellings in Prince George's County. In later years, most of his upmarket output in Montgomery County was traditional. However, in 1961, he opened with great fanfare Dada Woods in Potomac, with radically modern model homes designed by James Hilleary.²¹⁶ A subdivision offering both contemporary models (including by Charles Goodman) and Colonials was Crest Park (1962) in Silver Spring. The objective of one of its builders, Leon Kahn, a lawyer by training, was "to create the atmosphere and the kind of community in which contemporary and traditional is acceptable."²¹⁷

In May 1965, *Washington Post* real estate writer John B. Willmann identified the atrium as the possible new trend on the "styling cycle" of tract houses, after the "Cape Cod Adaptation (1939-to-1947)," "Ranch or Rambler (1947-to-1955)," and the "Split-Level Version (1955-to-1963)." For Willmann, it was "significant that one of this area's leading home builders, Edmund G. (sic) Bennett introduced atrium models last year in his well-received Carderock Springs in Montgomery County." Willmann concluded that it seemed "somewhat unlikely that the atrium house will become highly popular in the mass housing market. But it does offer some interesting possibilities in the use of a small lot to provide outdoor privacy inside the house."²¹⁸ The atrium house is a major icon of High Modernism, of what is sometimes referred to as the Late International Style. A substantial number of custom-designed houses with interior courts were built in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, and attracted significant press coverage. A good example is Philip Johnson's Hodgson Residence in New Canaan, CT, which received an AIA national award in 1956. In California, Joseph Eichler democratized the concept of the small central patio and made his fellow home builders appreciate its advantages: an atrium facilitated cross ventilation and views and the idea of borrowed space; it added natural light without compromising privacy; children could play outdoors under adult supervision. Examples of patio houses were very rare in the Capital Region, however. Charles Goodman designed one for Marvin J. Duncan in Kensington, Maryland, around 1958. It had 4,600 square feet of space on a single level, including a two-car garage and a recessed entry. The

²¹⁵ *Washington Post*, September 18, 1952, R 15.

²¹⁶ Joseph B. Byrnes, "Why Call it Dada Woods," *Washington Evening Star*, June 10, 1961, B-1 and B-15.
Joseph B. Byrnes, "The Home Builders 'Finest For Family Living' Award Winners" *Evening Star*, Saturday, May 27, 1962. The project was a failure, though. Besides the four models homes, the other houses in this 22-unit development are traditional.

²¹⁷ "No 'Conflict of Interest' Seen," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1962, B 29.

²¹⁸ John B. Willmann, "Is Atrium Next? Mass Housing Tends to Follow Cycle of Styling," *Washington Post*, May 29, 1965, D 1.

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asymmetrically placed courtyard was faced by the living room, the master bedroom, and an L-shaped entrance gallery corridor.²¹⁹ The house won an award for residential architecture from the *Evening Star* and Washington Chapter of the AIA. After 1955, home builder magazines presented examples of atrium houses built for year-round family living. In 1956, *House and Home* published a U-shaped custom-made patio house designed by John Johansen in Connecticut, with the same kind of trim found at Carderock Springs.²²⁰ In January 1958, in a series entitled "Tomorrow's House," *American Builder* published a house in Flossmoor, Illinois, with a small pool in its interior courtyard, which was commended for "lend[ing] warmth and privacy" to this "striking house." In May 1959, the *Journal of Homebuilding* illustrated an elegant patio house built by Elliott Noyes in New Canaan.²²¹ In all cases, facades and interiors were strikingly photogenic but the plan itself was far from free-flowing. The impression was that atriums were more appropriate for custom built or upscale tract housing than for less expensive models. Nonetheless, the atrium house remained an enticing, if not exotic, proposition. In 1963, ULI produced a Technical Bulletin on The Patio House. In May 1965, *Practical Builder* reported that "atrium houses are springing up all over the country," illustrating modernist and traditional examples in California, Fort Lauderdale, and outside Detroit. The article highlighted a model that had just been erected by the Home Manufacturers Association in Northern Virginia near Mount Vernon. This "Manufactured House of the Year" was also featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* and *American Builder*.

F. Associated Property Types

²¹⁹ "Restraint and Simplicity Characterize Two A.I.A. Award-Winning Houses," *Journal of Homebuilding* (October 1958), 43.

²²⁰ "Patio in Connecticut," *House and Home* (August 1956), 136-137.

²²¹ "Architect's Informal Family Inspires Prize-Winning Home," *Journal of Homebuilding* (May 1959), 64-65.