

**POTOMAC OVERLOOK HISTORIC DISTRICT  
BETHESDA, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD 20816**

**MASTER PLAN HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION FORM  
MAY 2021**



 **Montgomery Planning**

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION







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Maryland – National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
 Montgomery County Department of Planning  
 Master Plan Historic District Designation Form

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

Historic Name: Potomac Overlook  
 Current Name: Potomac Overlook  
 Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties #: 35-157

**2. LOCATION OF PROPERTY**

Address Number and Street:  
 7205, 7209, 7211 MacArthur Boulevard  
 5300 Mohican Road  
 6600, 6601, 6602 6604, 6605, 6606 Rivercrest Court  
 6608, 6612, 6613, 6609, 6604, 6601 Virginia View Court  
 6525, 6541, 6551 Wiscasset Road  
 County, State, Zip: Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland, 20816

**3. ZONING OF PROPERTY**

R-90: The intent of the R-90 zone is to provide designated areas of the County for moderate density residential uses. The predominant use is residential in a detached house. A limited number of other building types may be allowed under the optional method of development.

**4. TYPE OF PROPERTY**

- A. Ownership of Property: Private
- B. Category of Property: Private
- C. Number of Resources within the Property

Outstanding		Contributing		Noncontributing	
<u>5</u>	Buildings	<u>12</u>	Buildings	<u>2</u>	Buildings
—	Structures	—	Structures	—	Structures
—	Objects	—	Objects	—	Objects
—	Archaeological	—	Archaeological	—	Archaeological
<u>5</u>	Total	<u>12</u>	Total	<u>2</u>	Total

The five outstanding resources are 7205, MacArthur Boulevard, 6602 Rivercrest Court, 6604 Rivercrest Court, 6525 Wiscasset Road, and 6551 Wiscasset Road. The two non-contributing properties are: 5300 Mohican Road and 6612 Virginia View Court. The fifteen remaining properties are contributing resources.

- D. Listing in the National Register of Historic Places: Potomac Overlook has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places per the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Subdivisions built by Edmond Bennett and designed by Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1956-1973.*



## 5. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Function(s): DOMESTIC/single dwellings

Current Function(s): DOMESTIC/single dwellings

## 6. DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

**Site Description:** Potomac Overlook is located in Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland. The neighborhood was included in the *Comprehensive Amendment to Bethesda – Chevy Chase Master Plan* (approved and adopted 1990).<sup>1</sup> The 8-acre subdivision consists of 19 contemporary-styled homes located approximately two-and-a-half miles to the southwest of downtown Bethesda. Edmund Bennett, John Matthews, and Lloyd Potter platted the subdivision between 1956 and 1958. The subdivision rests on steeply pitched, rocky, heavily wooded terrain with views of the Potomac River and Virginia. The elevation at the base of the subdivision along MacArthur Boulevard is approximately 150 feet and it quickly rises to 250 feet at its apex. The builders and architects utilized the existing topography in the positioning of each house to provide views of the Potomac River valley and add a sense of privacy. At the same time, the topography allowed the homes to be experienced from multiple perspectives as several sides of each dwelling could be seen from different vantage points throughout the community. Therefore, the architects highlighted the simplicity of the overall massing, design, and fenestration of the individual buildings.

Potomac Overlook has an irregular boundary and consists of four homes fronting MacArthur Boulevard and 15 homes facing two culs-de-sac (seven on Rivercrest Court and eight on Virginia View Court). The individual wooded lots range from 9,880 square feet to 28,824 square feet with an average of .39 acres. The circulation network consists of meandering paved roads, no sidewalks, and non-intrusive curved driveways that limited disturbance of the surrounding environment. The minimal demarcations between each property further blend the development with the natural qualities of the area. Stone retaining walls and post and rail fences complement the rustic setting.

### Architectural Description:

Architects Keyes and Lethbridge designed three different contemporary-styled models at Potomac Overlook (see Appendix Six for the original brochure). There are minor variations among each model, however, based on the site conditions and to provide differentiation. The Highview, the smallest of the three models, had four bedrooms and two bathrooms. The builders constructed six Highview houses that each sold for approximately \$27,000. The Valleyview, the intermediate-sized dwelling, had four bedrooms and three bathrooms. The developers built five Valleyview houses (the houses at 6612 Virginia View Court and 5300 Mohican were demolished) that each sold for approximately \$33,000. The Riverview, the largest model, had five bedrooms and three bathrooms. Each house sold for approximately \$35,000. All eight Riverview houses remain standing.

The three different models share many of the same aspects of design including form, massing, and materials. The two-story dwellings with a gable roof have an elongated rectangular plan. The wood-frame buildings rest on a concrete block foundation. The architects exploited the topography by partially burying the first story of the two-story buildings into the slope of the hillside. The first story features a running-bond, multi-colored, textured brick veneer on all but three of the residences. Two of the dwellings, 6604 and 6606 Rivercrest Court, have salmon-colored bricks and the brick at 6600

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan (1990)*, <http://www.montgomeryplanning.org> (accessed August 27, 2020).



Rivercrest Court has been painted gray. A wide, wood band course separates the brick-veneer first story from the wood-clad second story. Twelve dwellings have either mahogany or redwood, vertically orientated, panels of tongue-and-groove siding. Four dwellings feature wood board-and-batten siding and one dwelling has T1-11 board-and-batten siding. Regarding the board-and-batten siding, the two Riverview Models at 6604 Virginia View Court and 6606 Rivercrest Court consists of wide boards and the three Valleyview Models at 6601 Virginia View Court, 6601 Rivercrest Court, and 6613 Virginia View Court have narrow boards.

Fenestration consists of the original single-leaf wood doors, sliding glass doors, single-light windows, and aluminum-sash slider windows in addition to non-historic replacements. The original fenestration typically consisted of single-leaf wood doors with no lights or panels that accessed the entrance to the dwelling. On the other elevations, single-leaf wood doors and sliding glass doors accessed exterior spaces. Several of the original doors on the nineteen houses have been replaced, but the locations and size of the openings remain generally intact. The builders utilized pre-assembled window walls with single-light, glazed openings or one-by-one, aluminum-sash slider windows in a wood window buck (frame). The glazed walls' grid of aluminum, glass, and plywood panels created interesting geometric patterns. These features remain largely intact throughout the neighborhood.

The low-pitched gabled roofs with overhanging open eaves with exposed rafters and fascia allow the homes to blend into the setting. The roofs are sheathed with replacement asphalt shingles. None of the original built-up roofs with white crushed coral topping remain. Internal and gable-end chimneys pierce the roofs. Original bubble plastic-dome skylights remain evident on several houses in addition to later fixed and hinged skylights.

#### *Variations among the Three Models*

The design and floorplan vary between each of the individual houses to respond to site conditions, but all the models have a combination of patios, screened-in porches, open porches, or balconies that connected interior and exterior spaces. In addition, detached or attached carports were optional on the Highview model, but were standard on the Valleyview and Riverview models.

On the Highview houses, the window wall along the second-story living room accessed a cantilevered balcony measuring 4' wide and 16' long. The length of the balconies (on the front or rear elevations) may have varied or property owners extended the balconies to cover a greater percent of the elevation as shown at 7205 MacArthur and 6609 Virginia View Court. At 6541 Wiscasset Road (shown by Bennett in publications) and 6608 Virginia View Court, the balconies had unique wood railings that canted outward along its length and horizontal mesh wiring. The balcony at 6541 Wiscasset Road has been altered, but the one at 6608 Virginia View Court remains intact.

Five of the Highview models have attached or detached carports. The dwelling at 6608 Virginia View Court has an original, unique, partially detached, single carport that features a shed roof supported by wood posts on grade on the south elevation and posts elevated on a brick wall on the north elevation. The extension of the dwelling's roof to the carport's shed roof creates an interesting folded roof form and breezeway. The attached carport at 6609 Virginia View Court may be original to the dwelling, but other carports at 7205, 7209, and 7211 MacArthur Avenue could be later additions. None of these carports are shown on the conceptual site plan, but their general form and characteristics conform to the aesthetic of the neighborhood and do not detract from the overall historic setting.

The Valleyview houses had an open deck instead of a screened-porch that extended off the living room on the gable-end elevation. For example, at 6601 Virginia View Court, two thin inset metal columns from an open patio supported the above deck, which allowed the deck to be partially

cantilevered creating unobstructed corners. Property owners infilled the open patio at an unknown date. On Valleyview houses, the gable-end facing the open deck featured either a brick chimney stack or a brick base with two metal flues that pierced the overhanging eaves of the roof. These chimneys remain evident at 6601 and 6613 Virginia View Court. Property owners demolished the brick base and metal flues at 6601 Rivercrest Court as part of a renovation.

All of the remaining Valleyview houses have different original carports. The house at 6601 Rivercrest Court features a unique, partially detached, flat-roof carport supported by wood posts. The dwelling at 6613 Virginia View Court has a fully detached two-car, gable-roof, carport separated from the house by a retaining wall and stair. The house at 6601 Virginia View Court previously had an attached flat-roof carport on its gable-end elevation. Later property owners filled in the carport and constructed an addition above.

The Riverview models are defined by their attached or partially detached carports. Four of the eight houses have attached carports on one gable end that projects 10' from the face of the building towards the street. The carport continues the existing slope of the gable roof and accesses the upper story of the building. To the rear of the carport is an outdoor storage area that serves as a buffer to a screened-in porch on the rear elevation. A glazed end wall separates the porch from the living room and features a centrally located brick fireplace and chimney stack. This configuration of the carport remains evident at 6600 and 6606 Rivercrest Court and 6525 and 6551 Wiscasset Road.

Three of the eight Riverview houses have partially detached two-car carports. This configuration provided additional interior living space and created an intimate breezeway between the carport and the building. The low-pitch gable roof structure matches the slope of the main house and is supported by wood posts. The carports at 6604 Virginia View Court and 6605 Rivercrest Court both remain intact, but the carport at 6604 Riverview Crest is highly altered and infilled.

The house at 6602 Riverview Crest is listed on the site plan as a Valleyview model, but it is not reflective of the plan and its characteristics correspond to a Riverview model with some modifications. In particular, the rear elevation matches the fenestration pattern seen on other Riverview houses. The design of this house separates itself as there is no projection to an attached or partially detached carport on the upper story. Instead, the architects designed a basement carport from the street for reasons unknown, but likely due to the preservation of the property's topography or at the request of the purchaser.

## **7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **A. Applicable Designation Criteria as described in Chapter 24A: Historic Resources**

**Preservation, Section 24A-3, Montgomery County Ordinance:** Potomac Overlook meets four of the Designation Criteria listed in Section 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Ordinance. See Section J for the complete evaluation.

### **B. Statement of Significance:**

Potomac Overlook is a significant example of a residential development resulting from the collaboration of merchant builder Edmund J. Bennett and the architecture firm of Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon (KLC). This development marked the first major subdivision developed by this collaborative partnership in Montgomery County.<sup>2</sup> Bennett and KLC espoused the

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<sup>2</sup> Bennett and architects Keyes and Lethbridge developed six dwelling at Kenwood Park and four dwellings at Glen Echo Heights prior to Potomac Overlook.



aesthetic design, functional advantages, and untapped commercial potential for modern architecture in tract housing. The contemporary-styled dwellings are recognized as outstanding examples of situated modernism. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) awarded them the “excellence of their cooperative efforts to create better homes and communities for Americans” award in 1961.<sup>3</sup>

Potomac Overlook and the subsequent Bennett and KLC-planned subdivisions in Montgomery County adapted the core principles of modernism to retain a sense of social, geographical, and ideological aspects of a community at a tract-subdivision scale. The subdivision reflected the development team’s recognition of the importance of site development and land planning in creating communities respectful of the natural surroundings, topography, and tree canopy. Bennett and KLC established the identity of Potomac Overlook with the integration of the street layout, location and orientation of the houses, utilization of the topography to showcase aspects of the surrounding environment, design and materials of the buildings, and landscaping. These efforts resulted in a contemporary-styled modernist community built at an economy of scale for middle to upper-middle class residents that set itself apart from typical Colonial Revival-styled subdivision development that clear-cut tree stands and leveled the topography.

**C. Period of Significance:** 1957-1960

**D. Significant Dates:** 1957-1960

**E. Significant Persons:** Pao-Chi and Yu-Ming Pien (1916-2017); Dorothy Gilford (1919-2014); Helen Wilson Nies (1925-1996); and Abraham M. (1914-2007) and Helen W. Sirkin (1958-2011).

**F. Areas of Significance:** Architecture; Community Planning and Development; Conservation; and Ethnic Heritage

**G. Architect/Builder:** Edmund Bennett (builder), John Matthews (builder), Lloyd Potter (builder), Arthur Keyes (architect), Donald Lethbridge (architect), and David Condon (architect)

**H. Narrative:**

***Historic Context: Glen Echo Heights, Bethesda District, and Montgomery County***

At the turn of the twentieth century, Montgomery County experienced profound changes to its pattern of development. The creation of railroad suburbs and then streetcar suburbs connected the area to Washington, D.C. and stimulated growth in the southern sections of the county. Development first occurred near Silver Spring and Chevy Chase and quickly accelerated over the ensuing decades with the construction of a viable sewer system, popularization of the automobile, and the availability of inexpensive land near the nation’s capital.

Bethesda originated as a rural crossroads surrounded by farmland. In 1890, the Chevy Chase Land Company started to develop Chevy Chase, the county’s most influential streetcar suburb, located to the east of downtown Bethesda.<sup>4</sup> While suburban development near downtown Bethesda progressed steadily with the subdivisions of Huntington Terrace (1910), Edgemoor (1912) and Bradley Hills

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<sup>3</sup> “AIA-NAHB,” *House and Home* (April 1961): 184, <http://www.usmodernist.org> (accessed October 14, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Clare Lise Kelly, *Places for the Past: The Tradition of Gardez Bien in Montgomery County, Maryland* (Silver Spring, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2011), 40.

(1912), the southern section of the Bethesda district overlooking the Potomac River experienced slower growth at first.

In 1889, Edwin and Edward Baltzley planned a luxury residential and resort development to be known as “Glen Echo on the Potomac.” The brothers purchased over 900 acres of land, platted the Glen Echo Heights subdivision (where Potomac Overlook would be located 68 years later), chartered the Glen Echo Railroad, and built the Glen Echo Café as part of a larger planned suburban resort.<sup>5</sup> The impressive rustic-styled restaurant opened to much fanfare in 1890, but it burned months later.<sup>6</sup> The Baltzleys platted a hotel named the Monican on the summit of the bluff, 400 feet above the river across from the restaurant (on the present-day site of Potomac Overlook), but it was never built.<sup>7</sup> Residential construction at Glen Echo Heights stalled due to economic panics in the 1890s and false reports of malaria. Two of the stone mansions built by the Baltzleys are listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*; these two are located to the east of Potomac Overlook.<sup>8</sup>

In 1912, J. S. Tomlinson subdivided nearby Cabin John Park (located to northwest of Glen Echo Heights and Potomac Overlook on McArthur Boulevard). Cabin John Park and the later subdivisions associated with county clubs catered to the area’s affluent middle-class. This section of the Bethesda district offered the advantages of both city amenities and pastoral living.<sup>9</sup> Development in Glen Echo Heights, however, remained minimal. Infill of the subdivision occurred primarily between 1935 and 1960.<sup>10</sup> During this time, Montgomery County’s population increased rapidly due to the expansion of the Federal government and opportunity for employment. The number of residents increased from 49,206 to 340,928 between 1930 and 1960.<sup>11</sup>

After World War II, the population growth, paired with liberalized Federal Housing Administration-insured mortgage loans and a lack of adequate housing, led to the rapid construction of single-family planned suburban subdivisions. The war demonstrated to large-scale corporate builders the possibilities offered by large-scale production, prefabrication methods, new building materials, and streamlined assembly methods.<sup>12</sup> In the Bethesda district, merchant builders who developed tract housing constructed over 11,000 units and the area had one of the state’s highest median family incomes.<sup>13</sup> These builders marketed customers on a lifestyle, the integration of homeownership and community. For many individuals, the purchase of such a home was the attainment of the “American dream” as it represented middle-class status, economic prosperity, and familial stability.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Glen Echo Railroad was short-lived, but the area continued to be serviced by the Washington and Great Falls line (later renamed the Washington Railway and Electric Company). William J. Ellenberger, “History of the Street Car Lines of Montgomery County,” *Montgomery County Historical Society* 17 no. 2 (May 1974): 5. Claire Lise Kelly, *Places for the Past: The Tradition of Gardez Bien in Montgomery County, Maryland* (Silver Spring, MD: Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2011), 38, 238, and 254-256.

<sup>6</sup> “Built of Cedar Logs: Glen Echo Café is an Artistic Structure in the Suburbs,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 1890, Proquest; “Costly Café in Ruins,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 1890, Proquest.

<sup>7</sup> Montgomery County Circuit Court, “Glen Echo Heights, Section 1,” Liber JA 11, Folio 71, <https://plats.net> (accessed April 14, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Kelly, *Places for the Past: The Tradition of Gardez Bien in Montgomery County, Maryland*, 254-255.

<sup>9</sup> Isabelle Gournay and Mary Corbin, “Subdivisions built by Edmund Bennett and designed by Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1956-1973,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (2008): E-6.

<sup>10</sup> F. H. M. Klinge, *Property Atlas of Montgomery County, Maryland* (Lansdale, PA: 1931), 12; F. H. M. Klinge, *Property Atlas of Montgomery County, Maryland* (Lansdale, PA: 1941), 13; F. H. M. Klinge, *Property Atlas of Montgomery County, Maryland* (Lansdale, PA: 1949-1953), 12.

<sup>11</sup> United States Census Bureau, “Census of Population and Housing,” <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html> (accessed February 10, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> National Park Service, “Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States,” (2004), E:33.

<sup>13</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-7.

<sup>14</sup> National Park Service, “Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States,” (2004), E:9-10.

After the initial demand for housing was met, a second wave of building occurred in the 1950s that catered to the upper-middle class.<sup>15</sup> In communities such as Potomac Overlook, the residences were larger, had more amenities, and cost more than the tract housing built immediately after the war.<sup>16</sup> A small group of merchant builders in the Washington, D.C. area shifted away from colonial revival, split level, and ranch-styled houses towards modern architecture. The builders recognized the functional planning advantages, aesthetic values, and marketability of contemporary design. In addition, builders such as Edmund Bennett partnered with a young cohort of architects eager to influence the direction of tract housing.<sup>17</sup> Buyers had the option to purchase a residence designed by a prominent architect without paying for a custom-designed house.<sup>18</sup> Potomac Overlook is one of five modern-styled subdivisions developed by Bennett and architects Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon.<sup>19</sup> In the mid-to-late 1960s, modernist-designed tract housing became less common as lenders and buyers raised concerns regarding the resale of non-traditional-styled dwellings.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, these architect-designed subdivision of the 1950s represented a brief period in history where interest in non-traditional design flourished.

### ***Historic Context: Development of Potomac Overlook***

In the early 1950s, Bennett purchased numerous undeveloped lots in Glen Echo Heights including present-day 6220, 6216, 6212, 6210 Wiscasset Avenue. The homes he built on these lots served as one of the precursors for the development of Potomac Overlook. All four dwellings were designed by the architecture firm of Keyes and Lethbridge.<sup>21</sup> The *Evening Star* and the Washington-Metropolitan Chapter, American Institute of Architects, highlighted the house at 6210 Wiscasset Road as part of a series of articles for its Second Annual Residential Architecture Competition. The jury noted the relationship between the indoor and outdoor spaces, the workability of the plan for a family, and its sense of unity and orderliness.<sup>22</sup>

In 1955, Edmund J. and Wilda P. Bennett, John Lee and Mary Jean Matthews, and Lloyd A. and Virginia B. Potter purchased Block 4 (hotel site), Section 1 of Glen Echo Heights from Paul J. and Betty S. McVeary. Bennett purchased a 50 percent interest of the property and served as the primary builder. Matthews and Potter, associate builders, each acquired a 25 percent interest. The property consisted of 8.7 acres.<sup>23</sup> Matthews stated that the joint partners purchased the property after a request from a realtor who lived in Glen Echo Heights.<sup>24</sup> Other developers passed on the site due to its difficult terrain and topography despite the natural beauty of the surrounding environment.<sup>25</sup> Led by Bennett, the builders hired architects Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon for consultation on site layout, design of the buildings, and supervision of construction.

After purchase of the property, the site layout and preparation for the subdivision and construction took two years to complete. Bennett had very specific considerations and requirements for Keyes,

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<sup>15</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-8.

<sup>16</sup> "Potomac Overlook, M:35-157," Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form.

<sup>17</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-2.

<sup>18</sup> Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern* (Silver Spring, MD: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 2015), 118-119.

<sup>19</sup> The other four are New Mark Commons, Carderock Spring, Kenwood Park, and Flint Hill.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly, *Montgomery Modern*, 118-119.

<sup>21</sup> Condon had not joined the architectural firm at that point. Gournay and Corbin, F-63.

<sup>22</sup> Robert J. Lewis, "This Plan Is Clean, Compact," *Evening Star*, August 4, 1956, Newsbank.

<sup>23</sup> Montgomery County Circuit Court, "Paul J. and Betty S. McVeary to Edmund J. Bennett, et al," August 9, 1955, Liber CKW 2099, Folio 241, <http://www.mdlandrec.net>.

<sup>24</sup> Gournay and Corbin, F-62.

<sup>25</sup> American Institute of Architects, "A Portfolio of Homes: Better Homes...USA" *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (January 1960): 56-57.



Lethbridge, and Condon, but was devoted to protecting the land, contours, and trees.<sup>26</sup> The builders and architects established community identity with the “complete integration of street layout, siting, design, varied elevation, color, texture, ... roofing materials, landscaping, and ... finish.”<sup>27</sup> These elements of Potomac Overlook differentiated the community from the typical tract housing designed in Montgomery County.<sup>28</sup>

This ecologically-sensitive and aesthetic approach set Bennett and Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon apart from common builders and architects. The average postwar developer attempted to maximize the number of dwellings on a single piece of land with no regard for the setting. As stated by John C. Keats in *Crack in the Picture Frame Window*:

The typical postwar development operator was a man who figured how many houses he could possibly cram onto a piece of land and have the local zoning board still hold for it. Then he whistled up the bulldozers to knock down all the trees, bat the lumps off the terrain, and level the ensuing desolation. Then went up the houses...the result was a little box on a cold concrete slab containing two bedrooms, bath, and an eating space the size of a broom closet.... There was a sheet of plate glass in the living room wall. That, the builder said, was the picture window. The picture it framed was of the box across the treeless street.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, Bennett and KLC dedicated significant time to the retention of Potomac Overlook’s natural setting. Bennett stated:

I figure we spent a year more on the job than we would have had to if we would just gone in there and flattened everything. Also by flattening we would have got twice as many building sites. We located every major tree on a big topographic map and cranked them all into the plan. Each house was carefully sited.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to respecting the natural topography, tree preservation remained a paramount aspect of the site planning at Potomac Overlook. Architect Francis D. Lethbridge stated the following:

To save the existing vegetation always takes trouble and almost always costs more. The developer can sell the houses even if he doesn’t leave a tree standing, so why should he worry? The answer is—he usually doesn’t. If you’re going to preserve anything of the natural covers...you’ve got to preserve the contours. Lower the grade a few inches, and you scalp it completely. Raising the grade is just as bad. Even the biggest tree is apt to die if you dump soil around it—as little as 6 inches. To adapt yourself to the land as it is, you have to visualize the finished product before you turn a spadeful of earth. You have to plan every element—location of houses, roads, utilities—simultaneously. Everything depends upon having a builder who cares, one who’d find it hard to live with himself if he were known for having loused up the countryside.<sup>31</sup>

The wooded-nature of Potomac Overlook provided practical advantages in addition to moral and emotional benefits to the property owner. The trees provided a sense of privacy and saved the buyer expenses related to landscaping of the property. KLC replaced manicured lawns with natural ground

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<sup>26</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-30.

<sup>27</sup> Brochure for the first phase of Carderock Spring cited in Ibid, E-31.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1957), xiv.

<sup>30</sup> Charlton Ogburn, Jr., “The Battle to Save the Trees,” in the *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 87<sup>th</sup> Congress First Session* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 9563.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

cover cleared of underbrush and bushes. The purposeful lack of fencing further heightened the sense of a natural setting and had the secondary effect of creating a tighter knit community. Former residents raised in the community recall the entire wooded area as their playground with little concern by the property owners for boundaries and remain nostalgic for the sense of exploration and comradery the woods provided.

Bennett noted that the planning process ran into manmade as well as natural obstacles because of his plans to fit the houses into the landscape. He stated:

To avoid regrading, we had to put in driveways with as much as 16-percent grade.... We could get away with it because we were not dependent on FHA financing. (FHA limits driveways grades to 5 percent.) We had to get a waiver from the Department of Public Works for a stretch of street with a 14-percent grade—that took two or three conferences over a period of 3 months. Then there were the sewer lines. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission says that the floor of a basement may not be more than 6 feet below the street, which means the first floor must be 3 feet above the street. But to keep from butchering the land we had to have houses below the street level—and run the sewers through easements along back property lines in the woods. With all the extra cost of hand labor, the commission hated like the Devil to agree to it.<sup>32</sup>

KLC designed the houses at Potomac Overlook to be flexible in plan so that all four sides of the dwelling were aesthetically pleasing from the public view. This allowed for the individual houses to be turned, reversed, or modified to adapt to the topography and requirements of the site.<sup>33</sup> All the while, Bennett and the architects stressed solar orientation with limited active living space on the western exposure and privacy with deliberate placement of large glazed openings.<sup>34</sup>

Bennett and KLC designed the majority of their tract housing with the same approach. Bennett stated “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.”<sup>35</sup> At Potomac Overlook, the architects designed three models. All three were similar in form and massing, devoid of ornamentation, and connected interior and exterior spaces with large expanses of glass, sliding doors leading to balconies, and open or screen porches. The designers, however, relied on the warmth of brick and wood-clad siding, paint schemes, and overhanging roofs to blend with the rustic qualities imparted by the site. In addition, the low-pitched gable roofs recalled traditional forms but allowed for cathedral ceilings and large glazed openings on the gable ends highlighting the geometrical detailing of the design. By utilizing the hillsides, the architects buried the first story and allowed the massing to read as a natural component of the landscape, not a visually distinct obstruction.<sup>36</sup>

At Potomac Overlook, Bennett implemented the mass production and fabrication methods he learned on the west coast to the building trade. He recognized the forthcoming lack of skilled craftsman and inefficiencies with stick-built construction and switched to firms that specialized in particular components.<sup>37</sup> The building program allowed for decreased construction costs coupled with high-quality individual features. Bennett stated the following in the National Association of Home Builder’s *Journal of Homebuilding* regarding Potomac Overlook:

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Mason, Problem Sites, 63.

<sup>34</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-35.

<sup>35</sup> “Carderock Springs Grand Opening Offers Contemporary Home Design,” *Home Builders Monthly* (May 1967), 88, in Gournay and Corbin, E-34.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, E-34 to E-35.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, E-35.

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 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.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Opening and Reception of Potomac Overlook***

Bennett, Matthews, and Potter had immediate success with the opening of Potomac Overlook. In 1957, advertisements for the first model home at 6551 Wiscasset Drive stated the following:

A distinctive community of contemporary homes. Land plans and home designs have been skillfully prepared by the famous award-winning architects Keyes and Lethbridge, AIA. Their plans are being expertly developed by Bennett Construction Company and Matthews and Potter, associated builders specializing in genuinely contemporary homes.<sup>39</sup>

The following year, the National Association of Home Builders bestowed a Neighborhood Development Merit Award and a Design Merit Award citing its platting and house siting that resulted in family privacy and retention of viewsheds.<sup>40</sup> The juries stated that it was conducive to family living, noted the sensitive handling of the land and setting, and acknowledged the difficult circumstances faced to make the subdivision economically viable. In addition, the Potomac Valley Chapter of the AIA conferred an honorable mention in its annual award program. The jury recognized its site plan, high-quality design, and sense of privacy between buildings.<sup>41</sup>

The *Washington Evening Post* stated the following:

Nearby my home is an award-winning subdivision, Potomac Overlook, built on a steep, forested hillside on the Maryland side of the river just above the District of Columbia.... Potomac Overlook is an existing example of what a builder with an active conscience can do when working with lots of between a quarter and a third of an acre on an attractive but difficult site. Most of the trees have been saved—black oaks and tulip trees soaring 30 or 40 feet before branching—and so has much of the original forest floor. This, wrapped around the small lawns, ties the human handiwork into the terrain. The contemporary-style houses, although only 3 years old, look as if they had always been meant to be there.<sup>42</sup>

Robert J. Lewis, Real Estate Editor of the *Evening Star*, noted the following regarding Potomac Overlook:

A key to the successful development plan was the choice of appropriate locations for the house first. Then streets and lot perimeters were laid out to accommodate them to the actual

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<sup>38</sup> "The Challenge in By-Passed Land," *NAHB Journal of Homebuilding* 12 (February 1958), 50.

<sup>39</sup> "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, September 14, 1957.

<sup>40</sup> "Area Project Takes NAHB Top Awards," *Evening Star*, February 1, 1958, Newsbank.

<sup>41</sup> Dean Thomas K. FitzPatrick, "Special Awards Issue," *Potomac Valley Architect* 2 no. 10 (June 1958).

<sup>42</sup> Ogburn, Jr., 9563.

home locations. Houses were then designed for each site in accordance with three basic plans having porch and carport adaptation and siting variations.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Demographics and Original Property Owners***

Edmund Bennett relied upon Potomac Overlook's proximity to Washington, D.C. and its professional workforce to entice property owners to the community. Western Montgomery County had the reputation for its exceptional schools and successful residents. Bennett recognized that purchasers of his homes were from the upper-middle class, often socially liberal and culturally progressive, and favored modernist forms of architecture.<sup>44</sup> He created the following profile in the late 1960s:

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.<sup>45</sup>

In 1957, Bennett priced the three models at Potomac Overlook between \$27,300 and \$34,990.<sup>46</sup> This price point targeted such professionals who did not yet have the disposable income for custom-built modern homes. As a result, the original property owners of Potomac Overlook came from a range of professions including: naval architects, diplomats/foreign service, scientists, authors and journalists, mathematicians, and lawyers (see Appendix Three for list and short biographies of the original owners).

Similar to the rest of the county, home ownership at Potomac Overlook lacked racial diversity due to de jure and de facto housing practices in the twentieth century. Unlike some of the surrounding communities, however, there were no explicit racial covenants. Residents recall an open and inviting community, which included an ethnic and religious diversity (such as Chinese and Jewish residents).<sup>47</sup> In February and March of 1961, the Good Neighbor Campaign conducted a metropolitan-wide survey and asked households to sign a pledge that they would welcome "any person of good character, regardless of race, color, creed or national origin." The survey resulted in 2,566 signatures in the Maryland suburbs. Dr. Joseph Flynn covered 441 homes in seven neighborhoods in western Bethesda. He noted that no African American lived within the immediate vicinity of these seven neighborhoods. Of the individuals he contacted in Glen Echo Heights-Mohican Hills-Potomac Overlook, 39 percent signed the pledge as compared to the 24 percent average for the seven neighborhoods. In addition, 83 percent of those who pledged support allowed for their name to be used.<sup>48</sup> The majority of property owners who signed the pledge from surrounding neighborhoods refused permission to use their names.<sup>49</sup> The surveyor made an interesting subjective correlation between property owners of traditional Colonial Revival and contemporary homes.

One of the most interesting findings was the correlation between the type of architecture and signers. In general, he reported a combination of some of these factors: Flat-roofed contemporary architecture, Volkswagen in the driveway, classical record collection, extensive library with liberal number of paperbacks would almost insure a signature, while

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<sup>43</sup> Robert J. Lewis, "Hillside Houses," *Evening Star*, October 24, 1958, NewsBank.

<sup>44</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-11.

<sup>45</sup> Edmund Bennett, "Economic and Visual Community," *Building Research* 4 (September-October 1967): 47-50 in Gournay and Corbin, E-11.

<sup>46</sup> "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, September 14, 1957, Newsbank.

<sup>47</sup> Susannah Sirkin, interview by John Liebertz, February 3, 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Hearings before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Housing in Washington* (April 12-13, 1962), 367.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 355.



on the other hand, those with white brick colonials, wrought-iron railings, Cadillacs, etc. were very poor signers. Actual results were 21 percent signers among conventional homes against 44 percent signers among unconventional homes—and so, we conclude from that that people who live in glass houses make the best neighbors.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Modern Architecture, Situated Modernism, and Maryland*<sup>51</sup>**

Architectural historians broadly define the Modern movement of architecture by an emphasis of form, honesty in function and materials, the rational and efficient use of space, and simplicity of design in lieu of historical ornamentation. Modernism looked to discard cultural references and create a global design language. The movement incorporated several forms and individual styles (International Style, Brutalism, Expressionism, New Formalism, etc.) that expressed the core principles by different means. These building styles reflected the lifestyles, economy, and technological progress of the twentieth century. An idea that remained consistent across the ideological spectrum was the use of technological innovation and experimentation with building, planning, and landscape design to rethink and improve the way people live.<sup>52</sup>

Historians have reconsidered aspects of the Modern movement and its aesthetic values by looking beyond the landmarks of master architects. They have stressed a vernacular modernism that utilized design principles of traditional urban and suburban forms, perceived the specific regional qualities and needs to enact social change, and emphasized collaborative partnerships between architects, planners, designers and clients. Lesser known architects utilized techniques associated with modernist masters but blended the ideas with traditional values and site-specific environmental conditions to reconcile regional architecture with the functionality of modernism. Dr. Isabelle Gournay, University of Maryland School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation contended that architects operating within Maryland participated in the national modernist movement after World War II with such a lens. Many of these architects could be considered “situated modernists.”<sup>53</sup>

Situated modernists adapted the core principles of modernism to retain a sense of social, geographical, and ideological aspects of a community.<sup>54</sup> Many times, situated modernists utilized the modern movement’s design language, but for different goals. Their designs reflected particular contextual and programmatic requirements that allowed for individuals to identify with their immediate locale and its context (topography, site, viewsheds, materials, etc.), thereby strengthening a sense of community.<sup>55</sup> For example, the purist strived to display the art of construction in an open floor plan while the situated modernist utilized its spatial planning benefits. Modernist architects applied transparent materials to highlight technological innovations, while the situated modernist emphasized transparency to elevate the relationship between the user and the exterior environment.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 352-353.

<sup>51</sup> For more information see: Isabelle Gournay, “Historic Context: Modern Movement in Maryland,” (2017) <http://www.mahdc.org> (accessed April 13, 2020); Gournay and Corbin, E-26.

<sup>52</sup> In the 1920s, the International Style stemmed from the work of master architects including Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier. The style was defined by concrete, glass, and steel construction, simple rectangular massing with flat roofs, glass curtain walls, and an emphasis on volume. In 1932, the International Exhibition of Modern Architecture and its catalogue, *The International Style*, further defined the style with regular volumes, ribbon windows, smooth and uniform surfaces with the rejection of applied ornamentation, windows with minimal reveals, cantilevers and pilasters, modular patterns, and open floor plans. General Services Administration, *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 1960, and 1970s*, <http://www.gsa.gov>; Marvin Trachtenberg, *Architecture, from Prehistory to Postmodernity* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 508; Carol Strickland, *The Annotated Arch* (Kansas City, Missouri: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2001), 133-137; Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 247-253.

<sup>53</sup> Gournay, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 215.

<sup>55</sup> Gournay, 7; Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Rejean Legault, *Anxious Modernisms* (Cambridge, MS: MIT Press, 2000), 21.

<sup>56</sup> Goldhagen and Legault, 306.

The situated modernist pursued the integration of the house and landscape and shifted away from the construction of earlier sculptural modernist buildings that often failed to coalesce with the environment.

In Montgomery County and the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Region, Gournay suggested that a cohort of young architects infused the architectural landscape with examples of modernist buildings including tract housing, commercial, religious, and office buildings in the 1950s.<sup>57</sup> In suburban developments, physical qualities of the site dictated the design process and final product. The situated modernists took advantage of wooded, steep lots, utilized brick and wood materials, and designed their buildings with consideration of the natural environment to create a rusticated, vernacular modern architecture.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Precedents for Bennett and Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon Houses***

After World War II, the increased size of the federal government and Washington, D.C. metropolitan region led to the need for additional housing. Such construction opportunities provided architects Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon and their peers the opportunity to tailor projects to their core set of modernist principles. Trained and influenced by Modernists, the burgeoning architects constructed wood-frame modular units with shallow pitched hipped-roofs, large windows connecting interior and exterior spaces, and carports for the mobile modern lifestyle.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses served as a point of inspiration for a number of merchant builders who constructed modernist-style tract housing. Wright believed that middle-class homes should reflect the user's needs rather than be lesser imitation of grand houses. He applied the principles of organic architecture that focused on the integration of the house and site and utilization of new technologies in innovative ways. The homes altered small house construction nationally as focus shifted to simplified forms and emphasis on spaciousness as one-story plans with horizontal emphasis, flat and shallow roofs, standardized natural materials, window walls, open living areas, patios, and carports entered the mainstream.<sup>59</sup>

Between 1949 and 1966, California developer Joseph Eichler and his collaboration with the architecture firms of Anshen & Allen and Jones & Emmons served as another template for Bennett and Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon. Eichler applied many of the elements of Wright's Usonian design principles to community planning for middle-class tract housing. Eichler's post-and-beam, single-story homes emphasized functional open floorplans, floor-to-ceiling windows, and private outdoor rooms and patios. Bennett replicated Eichler's partnership with successful architects and his media savviness to promote his communities.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Edmund Bennett's other collaborations with Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon***

Bennett and Keyes and Lethbridge's first collaboration occurred at Kenwood Park in Bethesda in 1956. Bennett had acquired 6-lots within the 300-acre subdivision with views of the Kenwood Country Club. Keyes and Lethbridge designed a group of split-level dwellings that emphasized "contemporary design, integration of indoor and outdoor living areas, orientation toward sun and golf course view, spacious room areas..." Kenwood Park served as a precursor to the development of Potomac Overlook between 1956 and 1958. Bennett and Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon proceeded to build Flint Hill in the Bannockburn section of Bethesda between 1958 and 1961. Gournay contends

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<sup>57</sup> Gournay, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Carla Lind, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses* (Washington, D.C: Archetype Press, 1994), 9-16.

<sup>60</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-17.

that the subdivision was not as architecturally distinctive or progressive as Potomac Overlook, but helped to build Bennett's brand and wealth.<sup>61</sup>

In 1962, Bennett purchased one of the largest remaining tracts of land in Bethesda to construct Carderock Springs, a subdivision of 275 modernist houses. In 2008, the National Park Service listed Carderock Springs in the National Register of Historic Places as an example of a residential development that resulted from a collaborative effort between the builder and architects and reflected the exponents of situational modernism. Bennett completed construction of the community in 1967.<sup>62</sup>

After Carderock Springs, Bennett and Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon developed New Mark Commons located in West Rockville between 1967 and 1973. Influenced by the New Towns movements, Bennett created a community of detached houses and townhouses that incorporated open space and provided commercial and recreational amenities including a lake. The National Park Service listed New Mark Commons in the National Register of Historic Places in 2017.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Historic Context: Biographies of Architects and Builders***

#### **Arthur H. Keyes, Jr. (1917-2012)**

Arthur Hawkins Keyes, Jr. was born on May 26, 1917, in Rutland, Vermont. He was the son of Arthur H. Keyes, a wholesale grocer, and Blanche Emery.<sup>64</sup> Keyes graduated from Princeton University with a bachelor's degree of architecture in 1939. During this period, he was influenced by Prairie-Style architecture and the works of Frank Lloyd Wright. He then proceeded to attend Harvard University's Department of Architecture at the Graduate School of Design. Two years prior to his arrival, Harvard hired Walter Gropius as chairman of the department and his protégé Marcel Breuer served as a professor. The pair of modernist architects imparted the tenets of the Bauhaus and International Style in the school's curriculum. Gropius provided the students a foundation on the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the field and Breuer educated pupils on how to design buildings.<sup>65</sup> Keyes earned a master's degree in architecture in 1942. That same year, he received a certificate in naval architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. During World War II, Keyes served in the U.S. Navy as an officer in the Bureau of Ships and ended his naval career in Washington, D.C.<sup>66</sup> Notably, he served on the team that designed the Amphibious Assault Vehicle.<sup>67</sup>

After the war, Keyes served as a draftsman for the architectural firms of Berla & Abel and Dominick & Van Benschoten between 1946 and 1947. At Berla & Abel, he met and worked with architect Francis Donald Lethbridge. Keyes then served as the chief draftsman and field supervisor for Burket, Neufeld, & DeMars from 1948 to 1949. During this period, he also worked on individual commissions.<sup>68</sup>

In 1951, Keyes partnered with architects Nicholas Satterlee and Chloethiel Woodard Smith to form Keyes, Smith, & Satterlee. Soon thereafter, the firm added Francis Donald Lethbridge who had formerly partnered with Satterlee. Four years later, the partnership split when Satterlee and Smith

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<sup>61</sup> Gournay, F-64.

<sup>62</sup> Maryland Historical Trust, "Carderock Springs Historic District," <http://www.mht.maryland.gov> (accessed February 10, 2021).

<sup>63</sup> Maryland Historical Trust, "New Mark Commons," <http://www.mht.maryland.gov> (accessed February 10, 2021).

<sup>64</sup> Vermont, Birth Records, 1909-2008, "Arthur H. Keyes," Ancestry.

<sup>65</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, *Gropius: The Man Who Building Bauhaus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 1836.

<sup>66</sup> American Institute of Architects, "Arthur H. Keyes," Nomination for Fellowship, <https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>67</sup> "Arthur H. Keyes," *Rutland Herald*, June 10, 2012, <https://www.legacy.com> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>68</sup> American Institute of Architects, "Arthur H. Keyes," Application for Membership, June 15, 1949, <https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/> (accessed March 25, 2020).

formed a separate firm. David H. Condon joined the firm of Keyes and Lethbridge in 1957. In 1964, the American Institute of Architects named Keyes an AIA Fellow for distinction in design.<sup>69</sup> The partnership continued until Lethbridge shifted his career focus towards historic preservation. At that time, Colden Ruggles Florance became a partner.<sup>70</sup> The SmithGroup purchased Keyes, Condon, and Florance in 1997.<sup>71</sup> Keyes retired from practice in the mid-1990s.

#### Francis Donald Lethbridge (1920-2008)

Francis Donald Lethbridge, the son of Berry B. and Florence A. Lethbridge, was born on October 5, 1920, in Hackensack, New Jersey.<sup>72</sup> The 1930 United States Federal Census listed Berry as a general contractor in residential construction.<sup>73</sup> Lethbridge graduated from Hackensack High School in 1937.<sup>74</sup> He then studied at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, before enrolling at the University of Colorado School of Engineering.<sup>75</sup> In Colorado, he briefly served as a project engineer for Carl L. Norden.

On August 6, 1942, Lethbridge enlisted in the Navy and served as a fighter pilot.<sup>76</sup> After the war, he graduated from Yale University School of Architecture. In 1947, Lethbridge moved to Washington, D.C., and worked as a draftsman for Berla & Abel. A year later, Faulkner, Kingsbury & Stenhouse hired him as a draftsman and designer. Lethbridge held this position until 1950 when he partnered with Nicholas Satterlee to create Satterlee & Lethbridge. In 1951, Satterlee joined Arthur H. Keyes, Jr., and Chloethiel Woodard Smith. Soon thereafter, Lethbridge joined the firm to create Keyes, Smith, Satterlee & Lethbridge. The partnership split when Satterlee and Smith formed a separate firm in 1955. David H. Condon joined the firm of Keyes and Lethbridge in 1957.<sup>77</sup>

In the 1960s, Lethbridge served as a member of the AIA Residential Architecture Committee, President of the Washington Chapter of the AIA, national AIA vice president, and co-authored *A Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C.* with Hugh Newell Jacobsen. The AIA honored him as a Fellow for distinction in design.<sup>78</sup> During this time, Lethbridge's career focus shifted towards preservation and conservation. He co-founded the National Capital Landmarks Committee in 1964. He established his own firm Francis D. Lethbridge & Associates, Architects and Planners, in 1975. He served as a member of the U.S. Department of State's Architectural Review Board and a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Board of Advisors. He retired to Nantucket, Massachusetts, and died on April 17, 2008.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Less than three percent of AIA's membership are recognized with this honor. American Institute of Architects, "Arthur H. Keyes," Nomination for Fellowship, <https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>70</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-24 to E-25.

<sup>71</sup> Douglas Fruehling, "Top D.C. architects sell to national firm," *Washington Business Journal*, October 28, 1996, <http://www.bizjournals.com> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>72</sup> U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, "Francis D. Lethbridge," Ancestry.

<sup>73</sup> 1930 United States Federal Census, "Donald F. Lethbridge," Ancestry.

<sup>74</sup> United States School Yearbooks, "Donald Lethbridge," Hackensack High School, New Jersey, 1937, Ancestry.

<sup>75</sup> George S. Koyl, *American Architects Directory* (New York: American Institute of Architects, 1962), 416.

<sup>76</sup> Stephani Miller, "Remembering D.C. Modernist and Preservationist Donald Lethbridge," May 21, 2008, <http://www.architectmagazine.com> (accessed March 26, 2020); U.S. World War II Navy Muster Rolls, 1938-1949, "Lethbridge, Francis Donald," Fold3.

<sup>77</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-25.

<sup>78</sup> Lethbridge is named an AIA Fellow in 1966. Gournay and Corbin, E-25; Miller.

<sup>79</sup> Miller.

### David H. Condon (1916-1996)

David Holt Condon, the son of Holt E and Marcie W. (nee Coolidge) Condon, was born on March 14, 1916, in Pasadena, California.<sup>80</sup> His father worked as a shop foreman in tile manufacturing.<sup>81</sup> After graduating from John Muir High School in 1934, Condon enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley where he graduated with a bachelor of arts in architecture. He then worked at the offices of Harold J. Bissner and Whitney R. Smith in Pasadena where he prepared preliminary designs, presentation, and working drawings for residential and commercial buildings.<sup>82</sup>

During World War II, he served in the military as an assistant to the officer-in-charge of Air Base Facilities Section between 1941 and 1945. He assisted in the overall planning of Naval Air Base requirements, recommendation on new building construction, and inspection of air base facilities. In 1945, he served as the Officer-in-charge of Base and Mobile Equipment, Staff of Commander Air Force, Pacific Fleet, at Pearl Harbor. Here he supervised work involving modification of assemblies of advanced air base equipment for establishment of new bases and expansion of existing bases with periodic trips to forward areas to determine detailed requirements.<sup>83</sup>

At the conclusion of the war, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked for Charles M. Goodman Associates as an associate from 1946 to 1952. He prepared preliminary designs and presentation sketches, produced working drawings and supervised construction. Notable projects included Hollin Hills, Virginia, and the United States Embassy at Reykjavik, Iceland. In 1952, Condon joined the firm of Keyes, Smith, Satterlee & Lethbridge as a designer. He prepared design and presentation work and was in charge of working drawing production and site work for housing and apartment buildings and other redevelopment projects. Condon briefly left the firm to work as a designer for Ronald S. Senseman in 1955. He was in charge of design for numerous buildings types and redevelopment projects for Southwest Washington, D.C. In 1957, he became a partner of Keyes and Lethbridge with the formation of Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon.<sup>84</sup>

Condon had a lesser role in the design and planning of Potomac Overlook compared to Keyes and Lethbridge. He joined the firm after most of the planning and design phases of the subdivision. Potomac Overlook was neither listed under his achievements in architectural design nor for projects he bore primary responsibility.<sup>85</sup> In 1967, the AIA named him a Fellow. He was a member of the Cosmos Club, the D.C. architectural licensing board, and a national panel of consultants for the former Public Housing Administration. After 37 years at the firm, Condon retired at his home in Chevy Chase, Maryland. That same year, the AIA gave him its highest honor, the Centennial Award, in recognition of his design achievements and his role as a mentor to the succeeding generation of architects. Condon died on July 14, 1996.<sup>86</sup> The SmithGroup purchased Keyes, Condon, and Florance in 1997.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> United States, Social Security Applications and Claims Index, "David Holt Condon," Ancestry.

<sup>81</sup> 1930 United States Federal Census, "Holt E. Foreman," Ancestry.

<sup>82</sup> American Institute of Architects, "David Holt Condon," Application for Corporate Membership, <https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/> (accessed March 25, 2020); American Institute of Architects, "David Holt Condon," Nomination for Fellowship, <https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> American Institute of Architects, "David Holt Condon," Nomination for Fellowship, <https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/> (accessed March 25, 2020).

<sup>86</sup> Claudia Levy, "Award-Winning Architect David H. Condon Dies at 80," *Washington Post*, July 23, 1996, Proquest.

<sup>87</sup> Douglas Fruehling, "Top D.C. architects sell to national firm," *Washington Business Journal*, October 28, 1996, <http://www.bizjournals.com> (accessed March 25, 2020).



### Edmund J. Bennett (1920-2013)

Born in the District of Columbia in 1920, Edmund J. Bennett was the son of James V. and Marie (nee Zorbach) Bennett. James Bennett served as the Director of Federal Prisons and advocated for penal reform.<sup>88</sup> Marie immigrated to the United States from Hungary at the turn of the twentieth century and graduated from a four-year university. In the 1920s, shortly after the birth of Edmund, the couple moved from the District of Columbia to 119 Leland Street, Bethesda.<sup>89</sup>

Bennett attended Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School and Mercersburg Academy (college preparatory school) in Pennsylvania. He briefly attended Brown University before transferring to Stanford University where he received a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Political Science in 1942.<sup>90</sup> In California, he worked for the U.S. Bureau of Standards, Bureau of Aeronautical Instruments Research.<sup>91</sup>

During World War II, Bennett enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps (predecessor of the U.S. Air Force) in 1943.<sup>92</sup> He then returned to civilian work at the U.S. Bureau of the Budget and then the Department of State. Bennett received a master's degree in public administration from American University.<sup>93</sup> The military recalled Bennett to active duty for the Korean War. Between 1951 and 1953, he worked as a Deputy Executive Officer of the Psychological Strategy Board. He resigned from active service in 1961.<sup>94</sup>

After a brief career in the federal government, Bennett shifted his focus to residential construction. Bennett utilized his government and military experience in the construction of his communities. His adeptness in planning and organization, production and financial management, and merchandising led to his nationally elevated status among merchant homebuilders.<sup>95</sup> In 1953, he acquired the capital to start his construction company. Bennett purchased two adjacent lots near Bethesda Country Club, one for his own residence and one for seed money. For the design of the homes, he approached architect Francis Donald Lethbridge to modify one of his existing plans, thereby establishing the foundation of an ongoing professional relationship with the architect.<sup>96</sup>

Bennett's construction firm had several names over his twenty years in the industry:

- Bennett Construction Company (1954-1962);
- Bennett & Matthews Construction Company (1962-1965); and
- Edmund J. Bennett Associates (1965-1975).<sup>97</sup>

In collaboration with Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon, Bennett's significant modernist suburban neighborhoods in Montgomery County included:

- Kenwood Park (1956);

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<sup>88</sup> "James V. Bennett, Reformer, War Prisons Bureau Chief," *Evening Star*, November 21, 1978, NewsBank.

<sup>89</sup> 1920 United States Federal Census, "Marie Bennett," Ancestry; 1930 United States Federal Census, "Marie Bennett," Ancestry; 1940 United States Federal Census, "Marie Bennett," Ancestry.

<sup>90</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-26.

<sup>91</sup> U.S. World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947, "Edmond John Bennett," Ancestry.

<sup>92</sup> World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1936-1946, "Edmond J. Bennett," Ancestry.

<sup>93</sup> Megan McDonough, "Edmund J. Bennett, nature-conscious community planner, dies at 93," *Washington Post*, April 5, 2013, Proquest.

<sup>94</sup> At the time Bennett built Potomac Overlook, his payroll included an administrative assistant, field supervisor, four carpenters, and three utility men. In the 1960s, however, his firm quickly increased as it included 75 persons and 300 subcontractors. Gournay and Corbin, E-27 to E-28.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

- Potomac Overlook (1956-1958);
- Flint Hill (1958-1961);
- Carderock Springs (1962-1966);
- Carderock Springs South (1967-1969); and
- New Mark Commons (1966-1971).<sup>98</sup>

Bennett held numerous leadership positions at the local and national levels. These positions included:

- President of the Suburban Maryland Builders Association;
- Director of the NAHB Research Institute; and
- NAHB Environmental Design Committee Member.<sup>99</sup>

Bennett continued to develop other detached houses, town houses, and garden apartment units in Columbia, Maryland, and Northern Virginia. He sold his construction company to American Cyanamid in 1971 and retired from the industry in 1978.<sup>100</sup> He moved to Tucson, Arizona, where he lived until his death on March 10, 2013.<sup>101</sup>

#### John L. Matthews (1920-2011)

John Lee Matthews, the son of James A. and Anne M. Matthews, was born in Akron, Ohio, on November 22, 1920.<sup>102</sup> In the 1930s, the Matthews family moved to Washington, D.C. John Matthews graduated from Western High School, studied engineering at Catholic University, and worked for Pennsylvania Central Airlines (who later merged with United) at National Airport.<sup>103</sup> During World War II, he served as a surveyor in the army artillery division in Italy and received a Bronze Star.<sup>104</sup>

Matthews returned to the Washington, D.C. area and worked for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, as a surveyor for a Silver Spring, Maryland, engineering firm, and finally as an operator of a sawmill potentially run by Lloyd Potter. He transitioned his career to residential building and constructed his first residence near Potomac Overlook in the early 1950s. He partnered with Potter and learned the building trade project by project.<sup>105</sup>

At Potomac Overlook, Matthews entered into a venture with Edmund Bennett who sold him 11 of the 19 lots to construct the dwellings designed by the collaborative efforts of Bennett and Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon.<sup>106</sup> Matthews built and purchased the home at 6604 Virginia View Court. By 1962, when he formally partnered with Edmund Bennett, Matthews had constructed close to 50 custom homes in Virginia and Maryland.<sup>107</sup> He continued to specialize in contemporary-styled dwellings.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> McDonough.

<sup>102</sup> Ohio, Birth Index, 1908-1998, "John Mathews [sic]," Ancestry.

<sup>103</sup> United States, World War II Draft Cards Young Men, "John Lee Matthews," Ancestry; John B. Williams, "Contemporary Homes Built to fit "Bethesda Family Profile," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1962, Proquest.

<sup>104</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-29.

<sup>105</sup> Gournay and Corbin, E-29.

<sup>106</sup> The deed records show that Bennett Construction Company and Matthews and Potter sold 9 lots and 11 lots, respectively, to individual property owners.

<sup>107</sup> John B. Williams, "Contemporary Homes Built to fit "Bethesda Family Profile," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1962, Proquest.

Matthews lived at Potomac Overlook and remained active in the neighborhood's affairs until his death on December 22, 2011.<sup>108</sup>

#### Lloyd Alden Potter (1917-2016)

Lloyd “Buzzy” Potter, the son of Alden and Charlotte (nee Waugh) Potter, was born in Cherrydale, Arlington County, Virginia, in 1917. Both of his parents earned masters degrees from the University of Minnesota prior to moving to the Washington, D.C., region. The family purchased a 35-acre farm along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. In 1939, Potter graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park, with a bachelor of science in agriculture. After the Capital Beltway displaced the family farm, Potter shifted careers to residential construction. He primarily built homes at Potomac Overlook and Glen Echo. Potter lived in Potomac, Maryland, until his death on November 24, 2016.<sup>109</sup>

### **I. Designation Criteria:**

The Potomac Overlook Master Plan Historic District meets five Designation Criteria as listed in Section 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Ordinance.

#### **1.A Historical and cultural significance. The historic resource has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation.**

Potomac Overlook is associated with the continued suburban development of Montgomery County in the late 1950s. The expansion of the Federal government and shifting of employment centers outside of the capital, liberalization of the Federal Housing Administration-insured and Veteran Affairs-insured mortgage loans, and housing shortages led to the construction of single-family planned suburban subdivisions primarily for white-persons in Montgomery County. The population of the county increased from 164,401 in 1950 to 340,928 in 1960. Potomac Overlook represents a second phase of suburban development that catered to the middle and upper-middle classes. This subdivision and similar developments leveraged the professional expertise of site planners, architects, landscape architects, and engineers to develop large tracts. In addition, Potomac Overlook allowed for middle-class residents to afford modernist architecture in a natural setting absent a unique architect-designed house.

#### **1.C Historical and cultural significance. The historic resource is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society.**

Several of the first owners at Potomac Overlook remained in the community for an extended number of years. Many of these owners influenced local, state, and national affairs. This report highlights the contributions of the following four owners: Pao-Chi and Yu Ming Pien (7205 MacArthur Boulevard); Dorothy Gilford (6602 Rivercrest Court); Helen Wilson Nies (6604 Rivercrest Court); and Abraham M. and Helen W. Sirkin (6525 Wiscasset Road). Their achievements reflect the following themes: Asian American heritage, Jewish American heritage, women's history, law, and mathematics, science, and engineering. The houses associated with these individuals are listed as outstanding resources in the historic district. There are no other sites in the county that reflect their contributions. In addition, the Master Plan for Historic Preservation lacks

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<sup>108</sup> “John L. Matthews,” *Washington Post*, January 12, 2012, Proquest.

<sup>109</sup> “Lloyd Potter,” *Washington Post*, December 4, 2016, Proquest.

sites designated for these themes. For detailed biographies of each individual see Appendix Two.

**2.A Architectural and design significance. The historic resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.**

Potomac Overlook embodies the distinctive characteristics associated with situational modernism and contemporary-styled architecture. Bennett and KLC's adapted the core principles of modernism and built-upon regional and national residential developments to retain a sense of social, geographical, and ideological aspects of a community at Potomac Overlook. The subdivision is noteworthy for its: 1) detailed residential site planning that respected and conserved the existing topography instead of the typical razing and flattening of the landscape; 2) preservation of the natural environment and tree stands; and 3) systematic layout of buildings to connect interior and exterior spaces, provide viewsheds, and privacy within the community. The development featured the "crispest, most geometrical detailing of all houses designed by KLC for Bennett...and where the use of building components is most clearly expressed on the outside."

Bennett and KLC utilized contemporary-styled architecture at a tract-level scale. Contemporary houses fit with the ideological goals of the designers but adapted to the challenging site parameters and steep terrain at Potomac Overlook. The houses reflect contemporary-styled architecture associated with the mid-twentieth century. Stylistic elements include: 1) rectilinear plan and horizontal emphasis; 2) low-pitched gabled roofs with wide overhanging eaves; 3) construction with natural materials (wood and multi-textured brick veneer); 4) preassembled window walls; 5) integration of interior and exterior spaces; 6) balconies, open terraces and patios, and screened porches; and 7) attached or detached carports.

**2.B Architectural and design significance. The historic resource represents the work of a master.**

Potomac Overlook represents the collaborative effort of master architects Arthur H. Keyes, Jr., and Francis D. Lethbridge and builder Edmund J. Bennett. This subdivision and future communities designed and constructed by the development team resulted in local and national attention. In addition, all three men had distinguished careers and were leaders in their respective professions. Keyes and Lethbridge were elected as Fellows of the American Institute of Architects in the 1960s. Associate Professor Isabelle Gournay in the National Register Documentation Form called Bennett the "[Joseph] Eichler of the East" and recommended that his works be appreciated in a similar context.

**J. Conclusion:**

The Potomac Overlook Historic District retains excellent integrity as a cohesive residential neighborhood platted and constructed from 1957 to 1961 by Edmund Bennett.<sup>110</sup> The integrity of location and setting are intact and reflects the developer and architects' conservation of the landscape

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<sup>110</sup> Integrity is the ability for a property to convey its significance. Resources must retain essential physical characteristics that enable it to convey its historic identity. These physical characteristics help define both why and when a property is significant. There are seven aspects or qualities that define integrity: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. These aspects are utilized by staff in the evaluation of properties for listing in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

in the planning process. Property owners have retained the character defining open, natural landscape and tree stands associated with the community. In addition, ninety percent of the contemporary-styled houses remain in their original location. Viewsheds of the Potomac River valley remain intact from a majority of the houses (dependent on the season). Infill of the surrounding single-family zoned developments continued after the platting of Potomac Overlook and do not detract from the overall setting of the neighborhood.

The design, workmanship, and materials that define the historic district are sufficiently intact to reflect the vision of Edmund Bennett and KLC. The subdivision continues to be defined by its sensitive site planning, conservation of the topography and landscape, and collection of contemporary-styled houses. The houses retain their side-gable, low-pitched roofs, use of natural materials, preassembled window walls, and open patios, balconies, and screened-in porches that connected interior and exterior spaces. The infill or enclosure of these interior spaces by later property owners allowed for expanded-living space and limited impact to the community's setting. In addition, the majority of attached, semi-detached, or detached car ports remain in place. There are few instances of non-historic carports or carports converted to garages or interior living space. Demolition of entire buildings occurred at only two sites within the district.

Because of the continued cohesiveness of the overall subdivision undertaken by Bennett and KLC, the historic district retains integrity of feeling and association as a representation of a successful collaborative effort between a merchant builder and architectural firm during the mid-twentieth suburbanization of Montgomery County.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING/GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Property Land Area:** 325,394 square feet

**Account Number(s):** 00503081, 00505477, 00506528, 00504358, 00506860, 00507022, 00509726, 00504837, 00507385, 00507066, 00505581, 00506222, 00502645, 00502064, 00507751, 00504291, 00502111, 00508607, 00503924

**District:** 07

**Environmental Setting Description:** The Potomac Overlook Master Plan Historic District is in Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland. The subdivision is bound by MacArthur Boulevard to the west, Mohican Drive to the south, Wiscasset Drive to the south and east, and single-family dwellings to the north and west.

**Environmental Justification Description:** The environmental setting incorporates the original boundaries of the subdivision as platted between 1956 and 1958.

## **9. PROPERTY OWNERS**

See Appendix Four for list of property owners and addresses.

## **10. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: John Liebertz, Planner Coordinator, Historic Preservation Office  
Kacy Rohn, Senior Planner, Historic Preservation Office

Date: February 2021



## 11. MAJOR SOURCES CONSULTED

American Institute of Architects. "A Portfolio of Homes: Better Homes...USA." *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (January 1960).

Ancestry.com [numerous].

*Evening Star* [numerous].

Goldhagen, Sarah Williams. *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

Gournay, Isabelle and Mary Corbin. "Subdivisions built by Edmund Bennett and designed by Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1956-1973." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (2008).

Hearings before the United States Commission on Civil Rights. *Housing in Washington*. April 12-13, 1962.

Jane C. Sween Research Library and Special Collections, Montgomery History.

Montgomery County Land Records, <http://www.mdlandrec.net>.

Ogburn, Jr., Charlton. "The Battle to Save the Trees," in the *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 87<sup>th</sup> Congress First Session*. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961.

*Washington Post* [numerous].

**APPENDIX ONE:**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

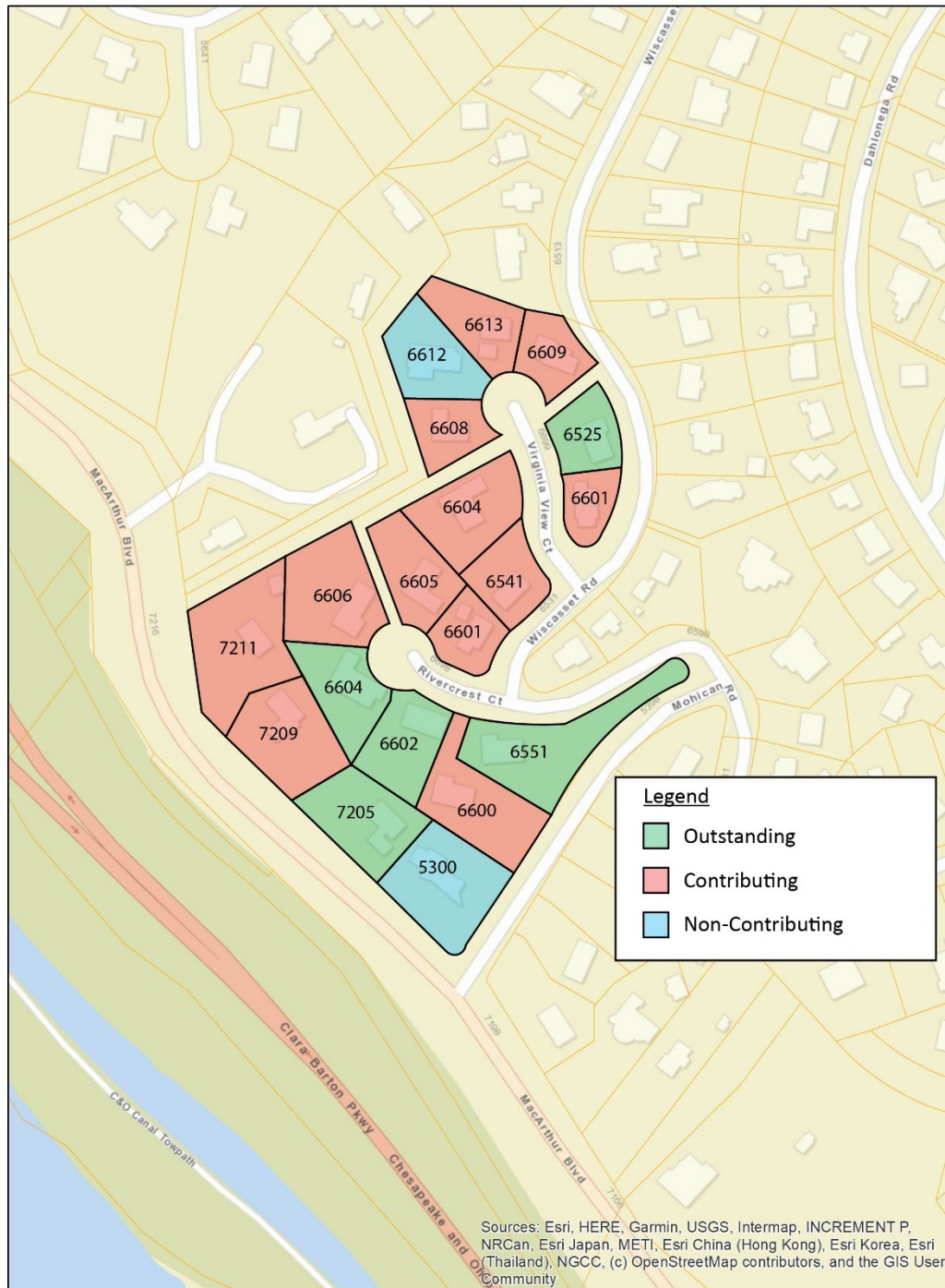


Figure 1: Environmental setting showing the outstanding, contributing, and non-contributing resources.

**APPENDIX TWO:**  
**BIOGRAPHIES ASSOCIATED WITH OUTSTANDING PROPERTIES**

## **Pao Chi and Yu Ming (nee Hu) Pien**

Pao Chi “Pete” and Yu Ming Pien purchased 7205 MacArthur Boulevard in 1958 and owned the property until 1985. Their achievements reflect the county’s Asian American heritage, women’s history, and excellence in science and engineering.

Pao Chi Pien was born November 26, 1916, in a rural farming village in Jiangsu Province, China. He became the first in his family to attend and graduate from college. In 1943, as a midshipman in the Chinese Navy, he traveled with a group of officers to Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, and then sailed to San Pedro, California.<sup>111</sup> The officers attended Swarthmore College, where they trained alongside their American counterparts in the U.S. Navy’s V-5 and V-12 officer training programs. After two semesters, the Chinese officers earned an English language certification and went on to further education at either the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) or at the Naval Academy. Swarthmore College honored their time at the college with the installation of a dry fountain, including a Chinese stone lion and a plaque listing the officers’ names.<sup>112</sup> Pien then earned a master’s degree in naval architecture and marine engineering from MIT. In 1951, he received a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from The Ohio State University.<sup>113</sup>

While completing his doctorate in Ohio, Pien met his future wife, Yu Ming Hu. Hu was pursuing a medical residency at the Fairview Park Hospital in Cleveland.<sup>114</sup> She was born November 7, 1917, to a wealthy Chinese family and received a rigorous education, culminating in her graduation from St. John’s University School of Medicine in Shanghai in 1944 (see Figure 2).<sup>115</sup> In 1948, she emigrated from Shanghai and arrived at the port of San Francisco alongside many young Chinese students bound for colleges and universities across the country.<sup>116</sup> In China, she had trained as an obstetrician, but she later retrained as an anesthesiologist. After her marriage to Pao Chi Pien in 1951 and the couple’s move to Maryland, Yu Ming served at a number of local hospitals, including Georgetown University Medical Center, Children’s Hospital, and Adventist Hospital.<sup>117</sup> Dr. Hu, who continued to use her maiden name professionally, was one of only a few women physicians on the original staff of Holy Cross Hospital, which opened in 1963 as a new facility offering modern medical care where new treatments and technologies were piloted.<sup>118</sup> She continued working as a practicing physician into her 60s.<sup>119</sup>

Pao Chi Pien spent his entire 30-year professional career as a naval architect at the David Taylor Model Basin (DTMB) in Carderock, built by the U.S. Navy in 1939 to design and test novel ship models. He was an innovative and influential engineer, winning awards from the Navy Bureau of Ships, the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers, and from the commanding officer of the DTMB, who in 1960 presented Pien with the first annual David Taylor Award. His internationally influential research shaped the field of engineering and included an innovative theoretical hull form dubbed the “Pienoid” for its

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<sup>111</sup> California, Los Angeles Passenger Lists, 1907-1948, “P C Pien,” October 24, 1943, FamilySearch.

<sup>112</sup> Swarthmore, “1943 U.S. Navy V-5 and V-12 Programs on Campus,” <https://www.swarthmore.edu/a-brief-history> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>113</sup> “Pao Chi “Pete” Pien,” *Washington Post*, June 23, 2017, Proquest.

<sup>114</sup> California, U.S. Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1959, “Yu Ming Hu,” September 21, 1948, Ancestry; Natalie Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 29, 2020.

<sup>115</sup> Natalie Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 29, 2020; China Medical Board, Inc., “Personal Data,” Record Group 1, Box 74, Folder 523, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY.

<sup>116</sup> California, U.S. Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1959, “Yu Ming Hu,” September 21, 1948, Ancestry

<sup>117</sup> Natalie Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 29, 2020.

<sup>118</sup> Holy Cross Health, Inc. “Celebrating a Legacy of Trust: 1963-2013 Holy Cross Hospital,” (2013); Edward Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 30, 2020.

<sup>119</sup> Natalie Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 29, 2020.

inventor.<sup>120</sup> He was recognized with a National Science Foundation Fellowship in 1961, which he used to study naval architecture in Tokyo (Figure 1).<sup>121</sup> In retirement, Pien spent a further 30 years privately devising improvements to the internal combustion engine and filing patents for new inventions.

The Pien family arrived in the United States at a time of shifting attitudes towards Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans. In 1943, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, easing longstanding restrictions on Chinese immigration and nationalization. Between 1940 and 1950, a growing number of Chinese Americans were employed as engineers and technicians and were hired by the armed forces and defense industries.<sup>122</sup> Pao Chi Pien's career reflects these expanding opportunities, as he became a respected engineer and civil servant at the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Ships. His achievements in engineering and his prominence in the field of naval architecture point to his significance as an influential figure who expanded scientific knowledge and advanced marine and military technology.

The Pien family raised three children in the household: Natalie (b. 1952), Paul (b. 1953), and Edward (b. 1955). The Pien children grew up in a mostly white community, with few Chinese families or gathering places outside of Chinatown in Washington, D.C. At a time when immigrants were expected to assimilate, the parents strove to ensure that their children fit in among their peers. Neighbors and acquaintances had little familiarity with Chinese culture and at times lacked cultural sensitivity.<sup>123</sup> Despite this, the Pien children recall a close-knit neighborhood and warm connections with nearby children and families.<sup>124</sup> The family's experience as first and second-generation Chinese immigrants, especially at a time when few Asian-American families yet lived in the county, embodies a significant and underrepresented element of the county's social and cultural heritage.

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<sup>120</sup> Marshall P. Tulin, "International Seminar on Wave Resistance, February 3-9, 1976," *Scientific Bulletin* 1 no. 1 (1976): 29.

<sup>121</sup> United States Department of the Navy, Office of Naval Research, "DTMB Scientist Wins BuShips Award," *Naval Research Reviews* (June 1961): 18-19.

<sup>122</sup> "From Exclusion to Inclusion, 1941- 1992: Immigrants and Refugees," Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Congress, Office of the Historian and the Office of Art and Archives, United States House of Representatives.

<https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/APA/Historical-Essays/Exclusion-to-Inclusion/Immigrants-and-Refugees/>

<sup>123</sup> Edward Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 30, 2020.

<sup>124</sup> Edward Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 30, 2020; Natalie Pien, interview by Kacy Rohn, December 29, 2020.





Dr. Pao C. Pien (see inset) is the winner of the Bureau of Ship's first annual award for scientific achievement. RADM R. K. James, Chief of BuShips, (left) presents the award to Mr. Jacques B. Hadler who accepted it in absentia for Dr. Pien.

Figure 1: Dr. Pao Chi Pien receives the first annual Bureau of Ships (BuShips) Scientific Award, 1961.  
Source: United States Department of the Navy, *Naval Research Reviews* (Washington, D.C. June 1961).



Figure 2: Dr. Yu Ming Hu, 1944 graduate of the St. John's University Medical School in Shanghai.  
Source: St. John's University School of Medicine, Transcript of Records: Hu Yu Ming. China Medical Board, Inc. Records, Record Group 1, Box 74, Folder 523. Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY.

## **Dorothy Morrow Gilford**

Notable statistician Dorothy Morrow Gilford resided at 6602 Rivercrest Court with her husband and fellow statistician, Leon Gilford, from 1958 to 2008. As a high-level official in federal research programs, her leadership shaped national projects and policies, particularly in the fields of defense and education. Her achievements in mathematics and her pioneering role as a woman leader in the civil service reflect aspects of the county's social and cultural heritage.

Gilford served as one of the first Heads of the Probability and Statistics Program at the Office of Naval Research (ONR) (1955-1962) and Director of ONR's Mathematical Sciences Division (1962-1968). She later was employed by the National Center for Education Statistics (1969-1974) and the National Academy of Sciences (1975-1994).<sup>125</sup> Her achievements were recognized with the Federal Woman's Award in 1965 and with her selection as a Fellow in numerous professional societies, including the American Statistical Association, Institute of Mathematical Statistics, American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Royal Statistical Society.<sup>126</sup>

Cold War-era policy priorities shaped Gilford's career in public service. The 1957 Soviet Union launch of the Sputnik satellite and implied technological superiority spurred an intensive national focus on enhancing American scientific and technological capabilities and improving educational standards, especially in science and math, in order to meet national defensive needs. This national imperative is reflected in Gilford's research efforts throughout her career.

Dorothy Gilford was born Dorothy Jeanne Morrow in 1919 in Ottumwa, Iowa. She primarily spent her childhood in the Seattle area and entered the University of Washington to major in mathematics (Figure 1). She excelled in the program despite being counseled by the only woman professor in the mathematics department that it was not a good career for women.<sup>127</sup> After earning her master's degree, she applied to eight Ph.D. programs and was offered a fellowship at each, a reflection of both her talent and of the reduced competition during World War II.<sup>128</sup>

Gilford pursued doctoral studies at both Bryn Mawr College and Columbia University, and held a teaching position at George Washington University. She completed her dissertation in mathematics but was informed that the subject-matter expert had left Columbia University, and she was never awarded a Ph.D.<sup>129</sup>

She returned to Washington, D.C. and in March 1950 married Leon Gilford, a statistician and civil servant. Gilford was born in 1917 to a Jewish family in Warsaw, Poland, as Leon Ginsberg. He immigrated to the United States in 1922 and grew up in Brooklyn.<sup>130</sup> By 1930, he had become a naturalized citizen, and by 1940 used the surname Gilford. In May 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in World War II.<sup>131</sup> After the war, Gilford was hired by the U.S. Census Bureau at a time when the Census was implementing new methods of enumeration and quality control that utilized statistical sampling. The work of Census Bureau staff during this time, including Gilford, helped the Census Bureau

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<sup>125</sup> "A Conversation with Dorothy Gilford," Edward J. Wegman and Wendy L. Martinez, *Statistical Science*, 2007, Vol. 22, No. 2, 291.

<sup>126</sup> *Statistical Reporter*. United States Office of Management and Budget, Statistical Policy Division, 1968. 213.

<sup>127</sup> A Conversation with Dorothy Gilford, 292.

<sup>128</sup> A Conversation with Dorothy Gilford, 293.

<sup>129</sup> A Conversation with Dorothy Gilford, 294.

<sup>130</sup> 1930 United States Federal Census, "Dorothy Gilford," Ancestry; 1940 United States Federal Census, "Dorothy Gilford," Ancestry.

<sup>131</sup> United States World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, "Leon Gilford," May 21, 1942, FamilySearch.

gain recognition in the field of statistics.<sup>132</sup> Gilford helped shape the 1950 and 1960 decennial censuses and by 1960, led the Bureau's Operations Research Branch.<sup>133</sup> He later served in research leadership positions with the U.S. Tariff Commission and the Atomic Energy Commission, and spent time in private practice with government contractors including Operations Research, Inc., based in Silver Spring, and the COBRO Corporation, based in Wheaton.<sup>134</sup> He was a member of the Washington Statistical Society and in 1963 was elected as a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, two years after his wife received the honor.<sup>135</sup>

Dorothy Gilford's career in Washington was marked by progressive promotion into leadership positions. After early work with the Navy Medical Research Institute, the Civil Aeronautics Administration, and the Federal Trade Commission, she joined the Office of Naval Research in 1955.

At ONR, Dorothy Gilford oversaw a research budget of over \$18 million and directed research considered significant to the defense of the nation.<sup>136</sup> Noteworthy projects included work to ensure the reliability of the Navy's electronic equipment and contributions to the development of the UGM-27 Polaris missile, the Navy's first submarine-launched nuclear-armed ballistic missile.<sup>137</sup> The Polaris was a significant advancement which immediately enhanced the U.S. military's Cold War strategy of nuclear deterrence.<sup>138</sup>

On March 2, 1965, Dorothy Gilford was awarded the Federal Woman's Award, an annual award given in recognition of top women in federal service. At the White House ceremony, President Lyndon Johnson spoke to the importance of hiring women to serve in high-level public office and praised her for her efforts to attract young people, particularly women, to enter scientific careers.<sup>139</sup> Two years later, President Johnson signed Executive Order 11375 in 1967, formally prohibiting sex-based discrimination in the federal workforce.

Dorothy Gilford left ONR in 1968 amid changes spurred by the Mansfield Amendment, which prohibited the Department of Defense from spending any funds on research or special projects that did not have a "direct and apparent relationship to a specific military function."<sup>140</sup>

Gilford accepted a new position with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1969, where she led the National Center for Education Statistics. There, she initiated new national studies of education policy and practice and managed relationships with political appointees.<sup>141</sup> In 1974, she began work at the

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<sup>132</sup> John G. Keane, "Census Bureau Research: To Date," in Proceedings of the First Annual Research Conference, Bureau of the Census, 1985.

<sup>133</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "1960 Census: Processing the Data," 59.

<https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/04201039ch7.pdf> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>134</sup> "News and Notices," *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics* 31, no. 4 (1960): 1219-254, JSTOR; United States: Division of Statistical Standards, Bureau of the Budget, *Statistical Reporter* (1974): 100; "News and Notices," *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics* 31, no. 4 (1960): 1219-254, JSTOR; Committee on Ways and Means, *Recent Studies of the AFDC Quality Control System and the Need for Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989).

<sup>135</sup> Rich Allen and Joseph Conklin, "Washington Statistical Society Past and Present: 1896 to 2012," (Washington Statistical Society, 2012), <http://washstat.org/documents/12book.pdf>; "New ASA Fellows," *The American Statistician* 17, no 4. (1963): 26-27.

<sup>136</sup> Federal Woman's Award Citation, Quoted in "Personal News," *The American Statistician* 19 (1965): 2.

<sup>137</sup> U.S. Naval Institute, "Polaris Program," <https://www.usni.org/press/oral-histories/polaris-program> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>138</sup> The National Security Archive, "How Much is Enough?: The U.S. Navy and Finite Deterrence,"

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb275/index.htm> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>139</sup> The American Presidency Project, "Remarks at the Federal Woman's Award Ceremony,"

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-federal-womans-award-ceremony> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>140</sup> Philip M. Boffey, "Mansfield Amendment Not Yet Dead," *Science* (November 6, 1970), <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/170/3958/613> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>141</sup> A Conversation with Dorothy Gilford, 298.

National Academy of Sciences. Her work there influenced national education policy through the development of new statistical tools to study educational attainment in response to nationwide concerns over math and science learning.<sup>142</sup> Gilford spent 19 years with the National Academy before retiring.

Upon her death in 2014, Gilford made a bequest to the University of Washington that allowed the Department of Statistics to establish the Dorothy Morrow Gilford Endowed Chair of Statistics, which in part provides support for women in the department.<sup>143</sup>

Dorothy Gilford's long career as a prominent statistician and her leadership of numerous public research programs shaped national policy in the areas of defense, education, and health. She began her career in mathematics at a time when few women chose the field, and worked through a period of professional expansion for women to earn recognition by the President for her role in encouraging young women to enter fields of science and math.

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<sup>142</sup> A Conversation with Dorothy Gilford, 299.

<sup>143</sup> Nancy Joseph, "Pioneering Women in Mathematical Sciences," <https://artsci.washington.edu/news/2018-07/pioneering-women-mathematical-sciences> (accessed February 9, 2021).





*Mortar Board Scholarship Award*  
**DOROTHY JEANNE MORROW**

Figure 3: Dorothy Jeanne Morrow as a student at the University of Washington, 1939.  
Source: U.S., School Yearbooks, 1880-2012, "Dorothy Jeanne Morrow," (University of Washington, 1939), Ancestry.



### **Abraham M. and Helen W. (nee Ball) Sirkin**

Abraham M. and Helen W. (nee Ball) Sirkin purchased the house at 6525 Wiscasset Road in 1958.<sup>144</sup> The Sirkin family owned the property until 2011.<sup>145</sup> The Sirkins are significant at the local, state, and national level. Abraham, as Chief of Information of the U.S. Marshall Aid Mission, and Helen, as an economic analyst, both contributed to the success of the Marshall Plan after World War II. In 1953, Abraham joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) where he advocated for freedom of the press and human rights when stationed in South India and Greece. Helen left the workforce to raise their children, but supported the mission of the USIA and her husband when stationed overseas. She encouraged local women's organizations, agricultural development, and engaged in cultural exchanges. During the Nixon and Ford administrations, Abraham served as the USIA's representative to the State Department's Policy Planning Staff where he helped craft proposals supporting human rights as a central tenet of U.S. foreign policy. Beyond the couple's professional work, Helen was a passionate supporter of the design and preservation of Potomac Overlook. She had a critical role in the Covenants Committee and preservation of the community in the 1990s.

Abraham Sirkin, the son of Isaac and Liebe (nee Heller) Sirkin, was born in Barre, Vermont, in 1914. Isaac Sirkin, originally named Isaak Sackem, was born in Novogrudok, Belarus, (formerly part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russian Empire) in 1861.<sup>146</sup> Liebe Heller was born in Dzyarzhynsk, Belarus, (formerly known as Koidanova) in 1875.<sup>147</sup> The couple had their first three children in Baranavichy, Belarus.<sup>148</sup> Abraham Sirkin recalled that his family owned a small textile-dyeing factory, but left the country after a second wave of anti-Jewish pogroms in the early 1900s. Isaac emigrated from Rotterdam, Holland, on May 23, 1902, to New York City. After the month-long journey, he arrived in New York and recognized that the area had become overpopulated with Jewish immigrants seeking employment. He decided to move to Barre, Vermont, where eventually he established a dry goods store.<sup>149</sup> In 1911, Liebe and their three children immigrated to the United States.<sup>150</sup> The couple had their fourth child, Abraham Meyer Sirkin, on May 8, 1914.<sup>151</sup>

The Sirkins were one of less than ten Jewish families in Barre, Vermont.<sup>152</sup> Abraham remained in Barre until the death of his father in 1927.<sup>153</sup> He then moved in with family in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York, in order to attend synagogue services for Yud Bias Chodesh, the year of mourning for a parent.<sup>154</sup>

After briefly returning to Vermont, the Sirkins permanently moved to New York where Abraham attended Townsend Harris Hall High School on the campus of City College. In 1931, he enrolled at Columbia College. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1935 and enrolled in the School of

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<sup>144</sup> Montgomery County Land Records, "Edmund J. Bennett and Wilda P. Bennett to Abraham M. Sirkin and Helen W. Sirkin," Liber 2431, Folio 511-512, <http://www.mdlandrec.net> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>145</sup> Montgomery County Land Records, "David Sirkin and Samuel Sirkin to Michael J. Petrilli and Meghan E. Mullan," Liber 41897, Folio 49-58, <http://www.mdlandrec.net> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>146</sup> Vermont, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1790-1954, "Isaak Sarkin," Ancestry.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Anna, Rebecca, and Rosa were born between 1900 and 1902. Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Abraham Sirkin, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, May 29, 1997, Library of Congress.

<sup>150</sup> 1920 United States Federal Census, "Helen Sirkin," Ancestry.

<sup>151</sup> "Abraham Meyer Sirkin," Vermont, U.S. Birth Records, 1909-2008, Ancestry.

<sup>152</sup> There were less than 10 Jewish families in Barre, Vermont. Isaac, an observant orthodox, however, closed his store on Friday night for Shabbat and wouldn't reopen until three stars were visible on Saturday evening. Abraham Sirkin, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, May 29, 1997, Library of Congress.

<sup>153</sup> Vermont, U.S. Death Records, 1909-2008, "Isaac Sirkin," Ancestry.

<sup>154</sup> Abraham Sirkin, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, May 29, 1997, Library of Congress.

Journalism. At Columbia, he worked for the Columbia Spectator and as the campus correspondent for the New York Post.<sup>155</sup>

After leaving school, Sirkin was a freelance journalist and then worked for the County of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. In 1941, the United States drafted Sirkin for World War II. Sirkin utilized his writing skills whenever possible and through his contacts with the New York Post received an invitation from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt for tea and celebrated New Year's Eve, December 31, 1941, at the White House. Sirkin served overseas at New Caledonia (French territory in the South Pacific) as a logistician for personnel and cargo before assignment as a historian for the Transportation Corps. He then transferred with the South Pacific Base Command to the Philippines when the war ended. Unlike many returning soldiers, Sirkin stayed in Japan first as the Public Information Officer to the Southern Command in Kyoto and then as the Chief of the News Division in MacArthur's Headquarters in Tokyo. In 1947, he retired from the military as a Major but served in the same position as a civilian for another year. Here he led the first media tour of Hiroshima and Nagasaki where the United States dropped atomic weapons. In 1948, Sirkin proceeded to London as the Chief Information Officer for the Marshall Plan. He stayed in London when the Marshall Plan ended and joined the U.S. Information Agency as a Deputy Public Affairs Officer. During this period, he met his wife Helen Winsor Ball, an economic analyst with the Marshall Plan.<sup>156</sup>

Helen Ball was the daughter of Robert N. and Mary B. (nee Winsor) Ball. She was born in Woodstock, Ontario, Canada, but raised by her mother in Connecticut. After attending boarding schools, she enrolled at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts. In 1946, she received a bachelors' degree in economics, one of only eight graduates with this degree in her class of 108 students.<sup>157</sup> After graduation, she briefly worked at the United Nations before accepting a position as the Director of the Student Division of the United World Federalists. The national organization advocated that world peace could be created and maintained only under a world federal government capable of preventing armed conflicts and direct jurisdiction over the individuals within its authority.<sup>158</sup> Her success with the organization led to her hiring as an economic analyst for the Marshall Plan in London. Ball met Abraham Sirkin at a work-related event in 1949. After she converted to Judaism, the couple married in July 1951. Ball left her position to raise their children full-time.<sup>159</sup> In 1957, the Sirkins returned to Washington, D.C.

The couple purchased their house at Potomac Overlook when they returned. The proximity of the property to Washington, D.C. paired with the natural qualities of the landscape attracted the Sirkins to the subdivision. The family joined the Adras Israel Congregation in Washington, D.C. and remained active members. In addition, the Sirkins were aware of a lack of openness, opportunity, and acceptance in other nearby subdivisions that had restrictive covenants barring the sale of properties to Jewish persons.<sup>160</sup> In comparison, Potomac Overlook was an accepting community. A group of mothers at Potomac Overlook organized "house school" to share the responsibility of preschool activities.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Abraham Sirkin, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, May 29, 1997, Library of Congress; "In Memory," *Foreign Service Journal* 84, no 4. (April 2007): 78-80; Yvonne Shinhoster Lamb, "Behind-the-Scenes Diplomat Championed Human Rights and Ethics," *Washington Post*, January 21, 2007, Proquest.

<sup>157</sup> Susannah Sirkin, unpublished biography of Helen W. Sirkin emailed to Montgomery Planning, February 8, 2021; Wheaton College, "Nike Yearbook," (1945), <http://www.e-yearbook.com> (accessed February 9, 2021).

<sup>158</sup> "Helen Ball Speaks," *The Pan Pax Fax*, 1947, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum; Gilbert Jonas, "One Shining Moment: A Short History of the American Student World Federalist," (New York: iUniverse.com, Inc. 2001).

<sup>159</sup> Susannah Sirkin, unpublished biography of Helen W. Sirkin emailed to Montgomery Planning, February 8, 2021.

<sup>160</sup> Susannah Sirkin, interview by John Liebertz, February 3, 2021.

<sup>161</sup> Susannah Sirkin, unpublished biography of Helen W. Sirkin emailed to Montgomery Planning, February 8, 2021.

At USIA, Sirkin served as the Long-Range Planning Officer until 1961. He produced the draft contents of the U.S. Exhibition in Moscow including the kitchen where Khrushchev and Nixon had their famous “kitchen debate.” Between 1963 and 1966, Sirkin served as the Director of the U.S. Information Service in Madras, South India. He supervised a staff of 125 individuals and managed U.S. cultural centers in the region. The entire family moved to India where all four children attended local schools, an atypical selection for Foreign Service families.<sup>162</sup>

After returning to the United States to study Greek, Sirkin accepted a posting as the Public Affairs Officer in Athens in 1967. Over the next five years, he attempted to establish safe cultural spaces for students and the opposition party and supported the free press. Col. George Papadopoulos, the ruling dictator, attempted to have him removed from the country due to his activities.<sup>163</sup> When in Greece, Helen Sirkin continued her interest in the arts and supported artists, singers, scholars, and journalists.<sup>164</sup>

Sirkin returned to Washington, D.C. to finish his career. He worked as a member of Policy Planning Staff in the State Department between 1972 and 1974 but continued as a consultant in the position after retirement. He coordinated policy among various agencies, served on delegations to the United Nations, and wrote papers advocating against the country’s relationship with dictatorial regimes. As a consultant between 1975 and 1981, Sirkin continued to author papers on human rights in foreign policy and science and technological issues.<sup>165</sup>

As Abraham Sirkin finished his career, Helen Sirkin started a new chapter of her professional life. She received a Master’s degree in Education and Human Development from George Washington University in 1980. She taught as a tutor and reading specialist at the Lab School, Hine Junior High School, and the Maryland Psychiatric Institute. In addition, she assisted in the creation of the Women’s Investment Club that supported women in managing their own finances. Later in life, Helen utilized her life-long passion for Asian culture and volunteered as a docent at the Freer-Sackler Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian. She provided tours and attended numerous lectures and travel to study Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Persian paintings and sculpture.<sup>166</sup> At Potomac Overlook, Helen pursued the preservation of the community and lead the strengthening and reinforcement of the Covenants Committee in the 1990s and 2000s.

Abraham Sirkin died at 92 years old in 2007. Helen remained at the house until 2010 when she moved to San Francisco for health reasons. She died in 2013.

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<sup>162</sup> “In Memory,” *Foreign Service Journal* 84, no 4. (April 2007): 78-80.

<sup>163</sup> Abraham Sirkin, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, May 29, 1997, Library of Congress; “In Memory,” *Foreign Service Journal* 84, no 4. (April 2007): 78-80; Yvonne Shinoster Lamb, “Behind-the-Scenes Diplomat Championed Human Rights and Ethics,” *Washington Post*, January 21, 2007, Proquest.

<sup>164</sup> Susannah Sirkin, unpublished biography of Helen W. Sirkin emailed to Montgomery Planning, February 8, 2021.

<sup>165</sup> “In Memory,” *Foreign Service Journal* 84, no 4. (April 2007): 78-80.

<sup>166</sup> Susannah Sirkin, unpublished biography of Helen W. Sirkin emailed to Montgomery Planning, February 8, 2021.



Figure 4: Helen Ball, 1947.

Source: "Helen Ball Speaks," The Pan Pax Fax, 1947, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum



Figure 5: President John F. Kennedy speaks with members of the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy including Abraham M. Sirkin, May 18, 1962.

Source: White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Library.



Figure 6: The Sirkin family standing on the deck at 6525 Wiscasset Road, 1966.  
Source: Personal Collection of Susannah Sirkin.



## **Helen W. Nies**

Helen Gladys (nee Wilson) and John Dirk Nies purchased the house at 6604 Rivercrest Court in 1958.<sup>167</sup> The Nies family owned the property until 1998.<sup>168</sup> Helen Wilson Nies is significant at the local, state, and national level as the first woman to serve on the United States Court of Customs and Appeals, the Federal Circuit, and Chief Judge of the Federal Circuit. She left a long-lasting legacy of scholarship by means of her judicial opinions and impacted the legal profession, particularly the advancement of women in the field, through her volunteer activities.<sup>169</sup>

Born on August 7, 1925, Helen Wilson was the daughter of George Earl and Linda Blanche Wilson. She was raised in Birmingham, Alabama, where her father worked as an insurance salesperson. During the Great Depression, the family relocated numerous times and she attended a different school each of her four years of high school.<sup>170</sup> In 1942, at the age of 16, Wilson graduated high school and enrolled at the University of Michigan. She received numerous university scholarships, but earned money by waiting tables, working in the school library, and working in child care. Wilson received a Bachelor of Arts degree in “Letters and Law,” a program that permitted enrollment in law school during the last year of undergraduate school, in June 1946.<sup>171</sup>

Wilson grappled with the period’s societal expectation for women to marry and enter a domestic lifestyle before she continued at the University of Michigan Law School.<sup>172</sup> She was one of ten women in the student body of over a thousand.<sup>173</sup> Wilson joined the following national honor societies Pi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, the Order of the Coif, and was on the Michigan Law Review.<sup>174</sup>

At school, she met her future spouse Captain John D. Nies, Army Air Corps. The couple graduated and married in 1948. She declined the opportunity to be the first woman clerk of the Michigan Supreme Court as the couple moved to Washington, D.C., for joint employment opportunities.<sup>175</sup> Nies secured a position as a legal clerk with the Office of Alien Property in the Department of Justice in 1948 and advanced to an attorney when admitted to the bar.<sup>176</sup>

Two years later, Nies accepted a position in the Office of Price Stabilization as assistant to the Assistant General Counsel before quickly elevating to Branch Counsel, Consumer Durable Good Division. Here she supervised a staff of 6-8 attorneys. In 1952, Helen and John’s professional success allowed them to purchase their first home at Hollin Hills, a mid-century modern subdivision, in Alexandria, Virginia.

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<sup>167</sup> Montgomery County Land Records, “Edmund J. Bennett, Wilda A. Bennett, John Lee Matthews, Mary Jean Matthews, Lloyd A. Potter, and Virginia B. Potter to John D. Nies and Helen W. Nies,” July 14, 1958, <http://www.mdlandrec.net>.

<sup>168</sup> Montgomery County Land Records, “John D. Nies to James F. Heaney and Shari S. Berenbach,” May 28, 1998, <http://www.mdlandrec.net>.

<sup>169</sup> The majority of the *Journal of the Federal Circuit Historical Society* (Volume 8, 2014) contains articles on the life and importance of Judge Helen W. Nies.

<sup>170</sup> *The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit: A History, 1982-1990* (Washington, D.C.: The United States Judicial Conference Committee on the Bicentennial of the Constitution of the United States, 1991): 76.

<sup>171</sup> Herbert H. Mintz, “Federal Circuit Chief Judge Helen Wilson Nies (1926-1996): An Extraordinary Life as Lawyer, Judge, Wife, and Mother,” *Journal of the Federal Circuit Historical Society* 8 (2014): 8.

<sup>172</sup> J. Dirk Nies, “A Life Remembered — My Mother Helen Wilson Nies,” *Journal of the Federal Circuit Historical Society* 8 (2014): 65-66.

<sup>173</sup> *The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit: A History, 1982-1990* (Washington, D.C.: The United States Judicial Conference Committee on the Bicentennial of the Constitution of the United States, 1991): 76.

<sup>174</sup> Herbert H. Mintz, 8.

<sup>175</sup> *The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit: A History, 1982-1990* (Washington, D.C.: The United States Judicial Conference Committee on the Bicentennial of the Constitution of the United States, 1991): 77.

<sup>176</sup> Herbert H. Mintz, 20.



The couple had three children at this home. After the birth of their first child in 1952, Nies resigned her government position and remained at home for nine years. She became an engaged member of the community, where she joined the Hollin Hills Civic Association and prepared a study of the juvenile court detention policies and facilities for the League of Women Voters (Fairfax, Virginia). The growth of the family, however, necessitated moving the family from Virginia to the newly created subdivision at Potomac Overlook, Montgomery County, Maryland. In Montgomery County, she continued her civic activism by serving as Chair for Brookmont Elementary School Parent Teacher Association, reviewing county ordinances, preparing covenants and easements to preserve scenic areas, and establishing a playground.<sup>177</sup>

At Potomac Overlook, Nies quickly became known for her annual neighborhood Fourth of July celebrations. Her son recalled:

American flags flying, red, white and blue bunting hanging from our second floor porch, great food, the families of the neighborhood celebrating together the birth of our nation. I remember the music and the singing under the stars after all the hamburgers and hot dogs and barbequed chicken were gone, and the liquid refreshment was being served.<sup>178</sup>

In 1961, Woodson, Pattishall, and Garner hired Nies on a part-time basis. She specialized in trademark, copyright, and unfair competition law. Nies became a resident partner three years later when she returned to the workforce full-time. While taking on larger responsibilities professionally, she continued to be active within the community as the president of the Mohican Hills Citizens Association, counsel to the Wider Opportunities for Women, and officer and trustee of the Potomac Valley League. In 1967, Nies successfully challenged the U.S. Army and stopped the practice of the hazing of new officers at the Fort Bragg training program.<sup>179</sup>

In 1978, Howrey & Simon hired Nies to expand the firm's intellectual property practice focused on federal court litigation, but she remained heavily involved in law societies and associations. This included: Chair, Patent, Trademark and Copyright Law Section, Bar Association of the District of Columbia (1975-1976); Board of Directors, Patent, Trademark and Copyright Law Section, Bar Association of the District of Columbia (1976-1978); Board of Directors, Trademarks Division, Patent, Trademark, and Copyright Law Section, American Bar Association (1977-1978); Board of Directors, American Patent Law Association (1979-1980); Board of Directors, United States Trademark Association (1976-1978); Board of Directors, Women's Car Association of the district of Columbia (1978-1980); National Coordination Committee for Trademarks (1979-1980); member, United States Department of Commerce Public Advisory Committee (1976-1980).

The legal profession recognized her accomplishment through numerous awards including the: Woman Lawyer of the Year Award by the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia (1980); University of Michigan Athena Award given to an outstanding alumna; and the New Jersey Jefferson Medal presented to an individual who made exceptional contribution to the field of intellectual property law (1991).

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter nominated and the United States Senate confirmed Nies to serve as a judge on the United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals (CCPA). Two years later, she became a Circuit Judge when the CCPA joined with the United States Court of Claims to form the United States

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<sup>177</sup> J. Dirk Nies, 68.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>179</sup> Herbert H. Mintz, 23.

Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.<sup>180</sup> In 1990, Nies was raised to Chief Judge of the Federal Circuit, the first woman to serve in a chief judgeship of that court or either of its predecessors. She became a Senior Judge in 1994, but tragically died in a bicycle accident two years later.

Judge Nies was a role model for many women of her and subsequent generations. In her questionnaire for judgeship, Nies stated the following:

Moreover, I felt an obligation to make the considerable effort to be a candidate. There is a need in our society at this time for women of appropriate age, experience, and standing to be considered for high positions, and this can only come about if such women are willing to serve. I do not wish any special consideration because I am a woman, but from the enthusiastic encouragement and endorsement I've received from my male and female colleagues, I have come to believe I may be qualified for the Court.<sup>181</sup>

At her investiture, the President of the Women's Bar Association of Washington, D.C., stated the following:

...Helen has served as an example for all us. She has shown us how to combine a successful career with a family life. She has gracefully and competently broken new grounds for all women, and she does once again here today.<sup>182</sup>

Maryland Senator Charles Mathias added the following:

Helen Nies has been a pioneer woman, one who entered the practice of law at a time when it wasn't easy for women to do that. Not only entered it, but she has been successful at it, and has made a great record, a record that is recognized by the President of the United States to be elevated to the Federal bench.<sup>183</sup>

Judge Nies' legacy continues through the Helen W. Nies Memorial Scholarship instituted by the Federal Circuit Bar Association to encourage the participation of women lawyer's in the intellectual property field.

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 10.



Figure 7: Judge Helen W. Nies.  
Source: Federal Circuit Historical Society.



Figure 8: Helen W. Nies with two of her oldest children, John Dirk and Nancy, at 6604 Rivercrest Court, 1959. In the background is 6601 Rivercrest Court.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.

**APPENDIX THREE:**  
**SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE ORIGINAL PROPERTY OWNERS**

Address	Name	Short Biography
<b>5300 Mohican Rd.</b>	William Custis and Phyllis Deming Cooper	William Cooper served as an examiner in the U.S. Patent Office.
<b>7205 MacArthur Blvd.</b>	Pao-Chi and Yu Ming Pien	<p>Pao Chi “Pete” Pien emigrated from China, attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and worked as a Naval Architect at David Taylor Model Basin for 30 years. Upon retirement, he spent the next 30 years improving the internal combustion engine.</p> <p>Yu Ming Hu emigrated from China and pursued a medical residency in Cleveland. While she first trained as an obstetrician, she later retrained as an anesthesiologist. After her marriage to Pien, she gained employment at several local hospitals and was one of the few women physicians at Holy Cross Hospital when it opened in 1963.</p>
<b>7209 MacArthur Blvd.</b>	John H. and Martha Holdridge	John H. Holdridge was an American diplomat, expert in Asian affairs, and served in the foreign service for 38 years. He was an ambassador to Singapore and Indonesia under presidents Ford and Reagan, respectively. Martha Holdridge continues to own the property.
<b>7211 MacArthur Blvd.</b>	David and Ruth Ann Williamson	<p>David Williamson had a distinguished government career. He joined National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) soon after it was created in 1959 and elevated his position, serving as a top policy adviser to a succession of administrators. He retired in 1982 as an Assistant Administrator for Special Projects.</p> <p>Williamson then became a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington where he authored monographs on defense and technology issues. He returned to NASA in 1987 and retired three years later. Williamson died in 1992. Ruth Williamson continues to own the property.</p>
<b>6600 Rivercrest Ct.</b>	Richard and Carol E. Kenyon	Dr. Richard Kenyon was an executive of the American Chemical Society. He served on government advisory committees and carried out foreign assignments to promote international scientific communications.

Address	Name	Short Biography
6601 Rivercrest Ct.	Alan and Jane Otten	<p>Alan Leonard Otten, the son of Nathan and Amy Otten, was born on August 22, 1920, in New York City. His father worked as a hospital administrator and his mother was a school teacher. Otten graduated from City College of New York and received a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University in 1942.</p> <p>During World War II, Otten enlisted and served as a censor in the Army and press officer with the photographic reconnaissance group. At the end of the war, he married Jane Mantell and joined the Wall Street Journal. He specialized in taxation and government spending along with national politics. As a White House reporter, he covered major events from the Nixon and Kennedy administrations.</p> <p>In 1966, Otten started a weekly column titled "Politics and the People" that ran for 12 years. In addition, he was <i>The Wall Street Journal's</i> Washington Bureau Chief from 1968 to 1973. Otten proceeded to spend several years as a national correspondent before relocating to London as the European Bureau Chief from 1978 to 1983. After he returned to the United States, his focus shifted to long-term demographic trends and bioethical issues. He retired in 1990, but wrote a column and served as a consultant until 1999.</p> <p>Former colleague Robert Novak noted "He was the model of the political reporter who went beyond the superficial.... Alan Otten made <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> a serious paper for political coverage." The New York Times attributed Otten for using the term "pro-choice" for the first time in print. In 1975, Otten wrote "...both right-to-life and pro-choice forces agree the abortion issue is going to be around for a long time." Other colleagues noted that Otten served as a mentor to other reporters over the years. He died in 2009.</p> <p>Jane Ruth Mantell was the daughter of Max and Lillie (nee Bachner) Mantell. She was born in New York City on June 6, 1920. Mantell graduated Barnard College where she studied psychology and completed her degree at 19</p>

Address	Name	Short Biography
		<p>years old. She married Dr. Robert R. Malach in 1940, but the couple divorced soon thereafter. After World War II, Mantell married Alan Otten on October 11, 1946. She was a successful free-lance journalist and author. One of Otten's better known works was <i>When your Parents Grow Old: Information and Resources to help the Adult Son or Daughter Cope with the Problems of Aging Parents</i> (1976) which she co-authored with a college classmate. She died in 2007.</p>
	Leon and Dorothy Gilford	<p>Dorothy Gilford served as the first Head of the Probability and Statistics Program at the Office of Naval Research (1955-1962) and she proceeded to serve as Director of the Mathematical Sciences Division (1962-1968). Later employment included the National Center for Education Statistics (1969-1974), Director of Human Resources Studies (1975-1978), Senior Statistician on the Committee on National Statistics (1978-1988), and Director of the Board on International Comparative Studies in Education (1988-1994). She influenced many areas of statistics and mathematics and was ahead of her time in promoting interdisciplinary projects.</p> <p>Leon Gilford served in the War Department (1941-1942) and as a Captain in the United States Army (1942-1946). After the war, he worked as the Chief Operation Branch, US Census Bureau (1946-1960) and then as a Principal Scientist, Operations Research, Inc. in Silver Spring (1960-1971).</p>
6604 Rivercrest Ct.	John D. and Helen Wilson Nies	<p>Helen Wilson Nies was chief judge emeritus of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. In 1948, she started her federal career at the Justice Department. She then worked for the law firm of Woodson, Pattishall and Garner and became partner at the Washington, D.C. firm of Howrey &amp; Simon. In 1980, she was named to the U.S. Courts of Customs and Patents and to the Federal Circuit in 1982.</p>
6605 Rivercrest Ct.	James E. and Elizabeth Knott	<p>James and Elizabeth Knott worked for the Central Intelligence Agency and as an elementary school teacher, respectively.</p>



Address	Name	Short Biography
<b>6606 Rivercrest Ct.</b>	Harold and Pauline Schroeder  *David and Glenna Osnos	The Schroeders lived in Potomac Overlook for a very brief period and staff has no information regarding their lives. David and Glenna Osnos, the present owners and occupants, purchased and have resided at the property since 1961.
<b>6601 Virginia View Ct.</b>	Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., and Patricia P. Eliot	Theodore L. Eliot, Jr. served for 30 years in the United States Foreign Service. His overseas assignments included Sri Lanka, Germany, the Soviet Union, Iran, and ambassador to Afghanistan from 1973-1978.
<b>6604 Virginia View Ct.</b>	John Lee and Mary Jean Matthews	John Lee Matthews was a local builder who constructed Potomac Overlook in a partnership with Edmund Bennett and Lloyd Potter.
<b>6608 Virginia View Ct.</b>	Edward Walter and Frederica Robichek	Edward Robichek served in World War II and then as an economist for the Treasury Department and International Monetary Fund. He remained with the IMF where he served as Assistant Division Chief, Division Chief, and Deputy Director.
<b>6609 Virginia View Ct.</b>	Hugh and Ann Sidey	Hugh Sidey, an American journalist, spent 40 years chronicling 10 presidents for Time magazine starting in 1957. President George H. W. Bush delivered his eulogy.
<b>6612 Virginia View Ct.</b>	Roy Hoopes Jr. and Cora Hoopes	Roy Hoopes Jr. was a biographer, historian, and novelist. He contributed to many publications and held jobs with magazines, newspapers, and federal agencies.
<b>6613 Virginia View Ct.</b>	William M. and Marcia Louise Gilmartin	William Gilmartin was an economist who worked for the World Bank for 30 years before retiring from its Southeast Asia Bureau in 1977.
<b>6525 Wiscasset Rd.</b>	Abraham M. Sirkin and Helen W. Sirkin	Abraham Sirkin served in the foreign service. After serving in the Army during World War II, he started a career in public service, specifically public relations. He worked for General Douglas MacArthur's press office in Japan and was chief of information of the U.S. Marshall Aid Mission in London. He joined the U.S. Information Agency in 1953 under Edward R. Murrow. He supervised cultural centers in India and was a counselor for public affairs in Athens in the late 1960s and 1970s where he

Address	Name	Short Biography
		<p>championed a free press. He then served on the policy planning staff of the State Department during the Nixon and Ford administrations.</p> <p>Helen Winsor (nee Ball) Sirkin received a bachelor's degree in economics in 1946 from Wheaton College in Massachusetts. She moved to New York and worked for the United Nations. Between 1947 and 1948, she was the director of the student division of the United World Economists. She moved to London in 1948 where she served as an economist with the Marshall Plan. Helen received a master's degree in education and human development from George Washington University in 1980.</p>
<b>6541 Wiscasset Road</b>	Howard and Margaret Schnoor	<p>Howard Schnoor was a chief of the government organization branch of the Bureau of the Budget. His work involved the administration of government corporations, the transition of Alaska and Hawaii to statehood, and federal research contracting.</p> <p>Margaret Schnoor was a specialist in health care financing. She worked for the Department of Health and Human Services and later the Hospital Health Plan Corporation of Minnesota.</p>
<b>6551 Wiscasset Road</b>	A. Phillip and Clarice W. Messina	Phillip Messina worked as an architect for the General Services Administration.

**APPENDIX FOUR:**  
**CURRENT PROPERTY OWNERS**

Address	Owners	District	Account Identifier	Property Land Area
5300 Mohican Road	Jonathan N. Eisenberg & Lisa L. Hicks	07	00503081	23,495
6525 Wiscasset Road	Michael J. Petrilli & Meghan Mullan	07	00508607	13,413
6541 Wiscasset Road	Derick W. Brinkerhoff & Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff	07	00502645	11,411
6551 Wiscasset Road	Elizabeth G. Sammis	07	00506528	24,918
6600 Rivercrest Court	Brittany Clark Prelogar & Martin Kus Bart	07	00505477	20,928
6601 Rivercrest Court	Yama Jewayni & Chaudry Rukhsana	07	00507066	10,625
6601 Virginia View Court	John W. Chapman	07	00503924	10,825
6602 Rivercrest Court	Jonathan Nowick & Pauline A. Siple	07	00504358	16,681
6604 Rivercrest Court	Maryam Hashemian	07	00506860	16,167
6604 Virginia View Court	Allen P. Brodnick & Margaret R. Brodnick	07	00506222	19,150
6605 Rivercrest Court	Gary Slayen Family & Lynda Slayen Family	07	00505581	16,182
6606 Rivercrest Court	David M Osnos	07	00507022	21,306
6608 Virginia View Court	Anna Cornelie Atwell Trustee	07	00502064	9,880
6609 Virginia View Court	William A. Stevens & Gabrielle R. Stevens	07	00502111	10,762
6612 Virginia View Court	Brett S. Haan Trustee & Elizabeth A. Wittleder Trustee	07	00507751	16,388
6613 Virginia View Court	Marianne Cecile J. Grosclaude	07	00504291	13,575
7205 MacArthur Boulevard	Constance Kain Milner	07	00507385	19,883
7209 MacArthur Boulevard	Martha J Holdridge et al.	07	00504837	20,981
7211 MacArthur Boulevard	Ruth R. Williamson	07	00509726	28,824

**APPENDIX FIVE:**  
**HISTORIC MAPS & PLATS**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT (Subdivision Plat, MO) Plat 4733, MSA\_s1249\_01247 Date recorded 19561114 Printed 03232020

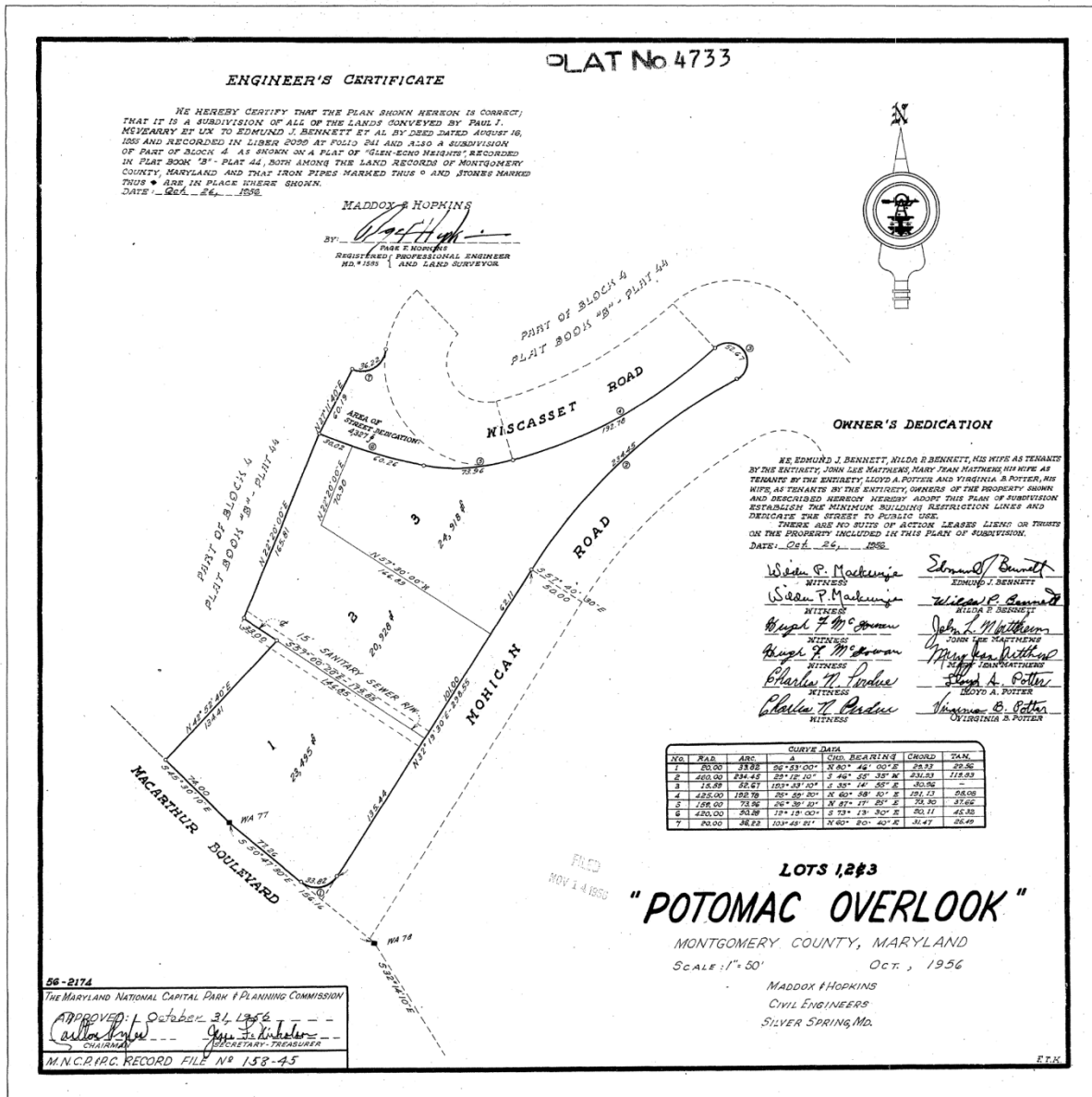


Figure 1: Plat of Lots 1, 2, and 3 of Potomac Overlook, October 1956.

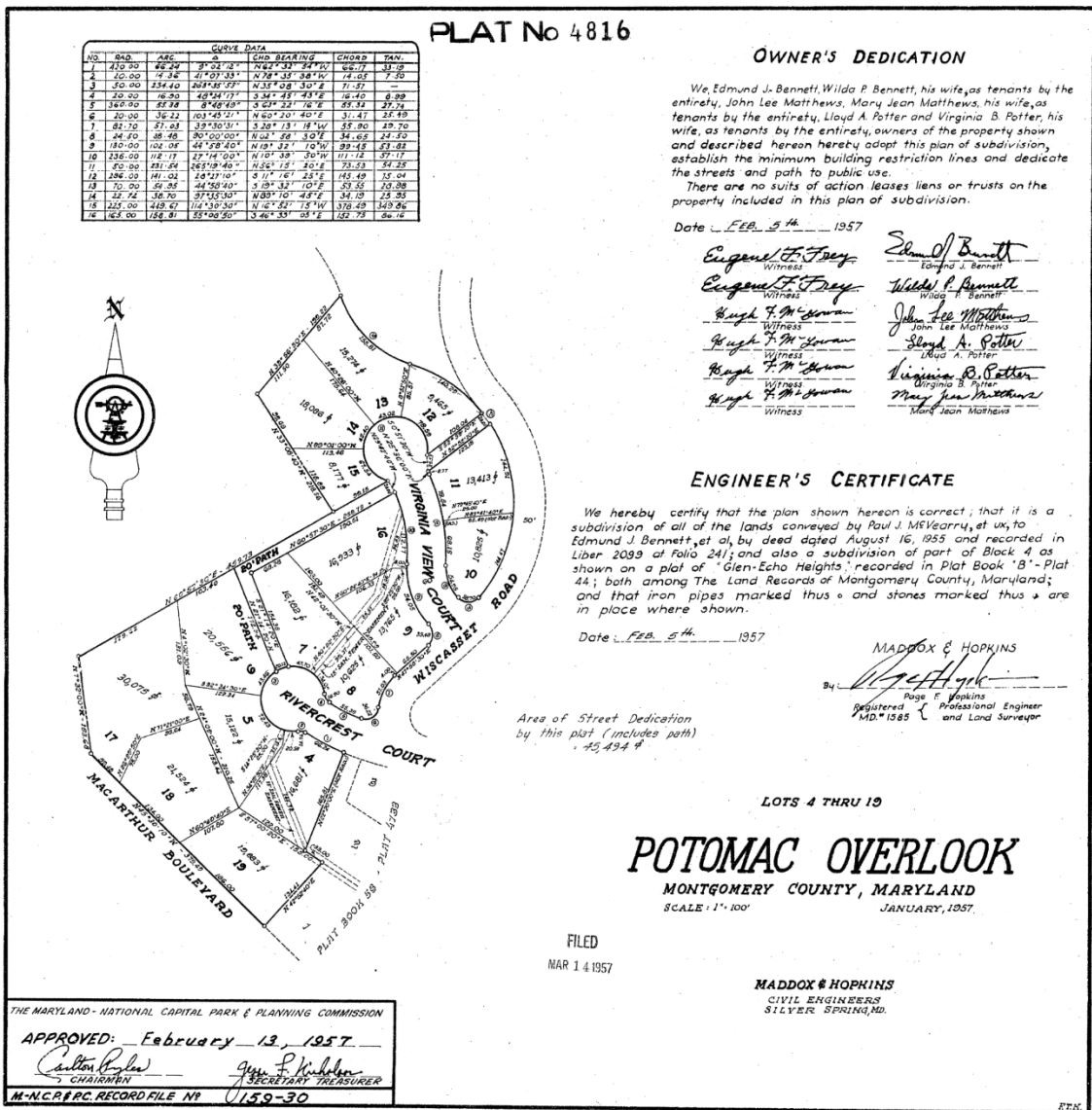


Figure 2: Plat of Lots 4 thru 15 of Potomac Overlook, January 1957.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT (Subdivision Plat, MO) Plat No 5021, MSA\_17248\_012535. Date available: 1957/10/10. Printed: 10/23/2020.

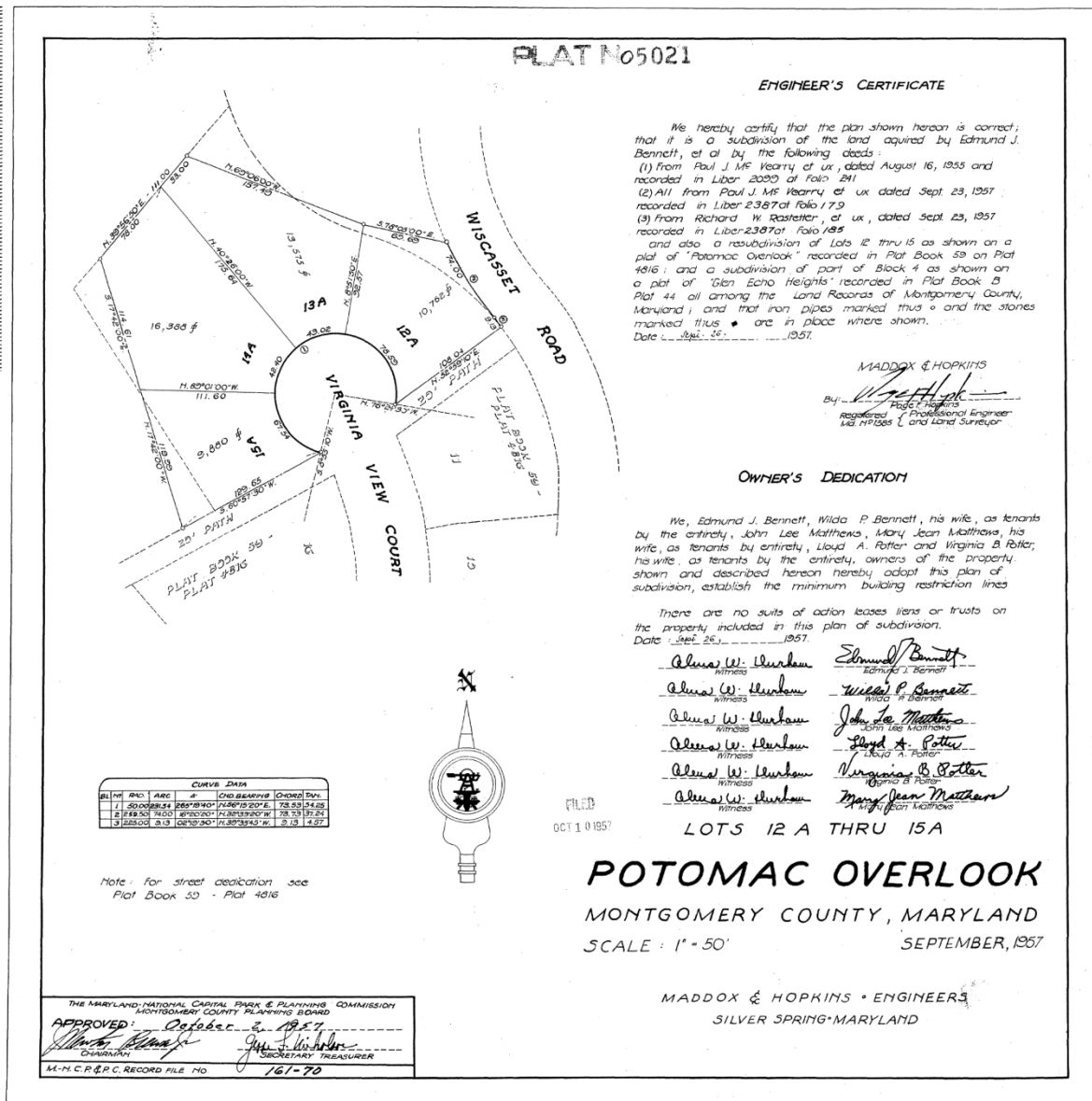


Figure 3: Plat of Lots 12A-15A of Potomac Overlook (resubdivision), January 1957.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT (Submission Date: MO) Plat 5204, NSA, 5/24/9, 01/30/19, Date available: 16650408, Printed: 03/22/2020.

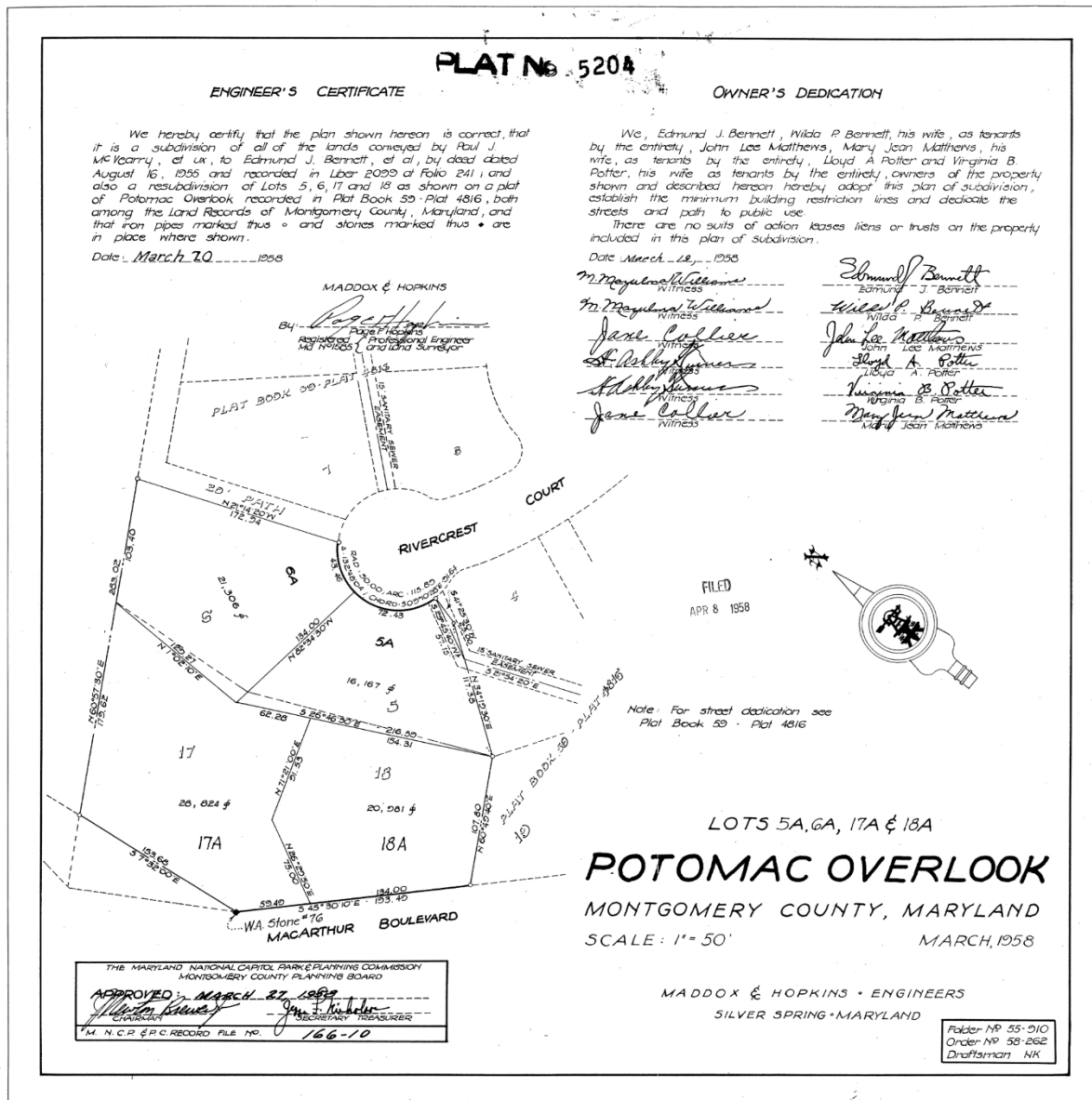


Figure 4: Plat of Lots 5A, 6A, 17A, and 18A of Potomac Overlook (resubdivision), March 1958.

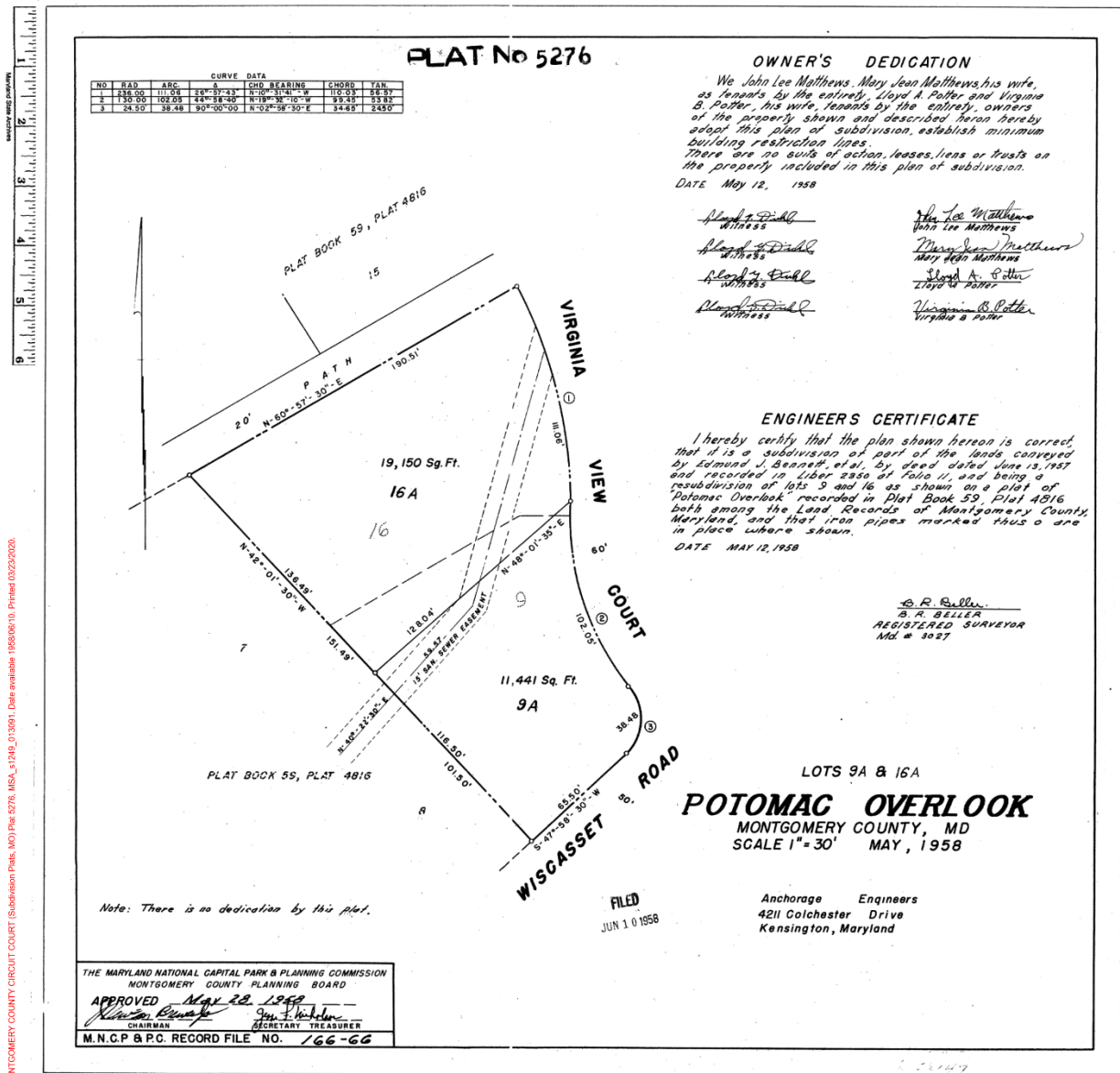


Figure 5: Plat of Lots 9A and 16A of Potomac Overlook (resubdivision), May 1958.

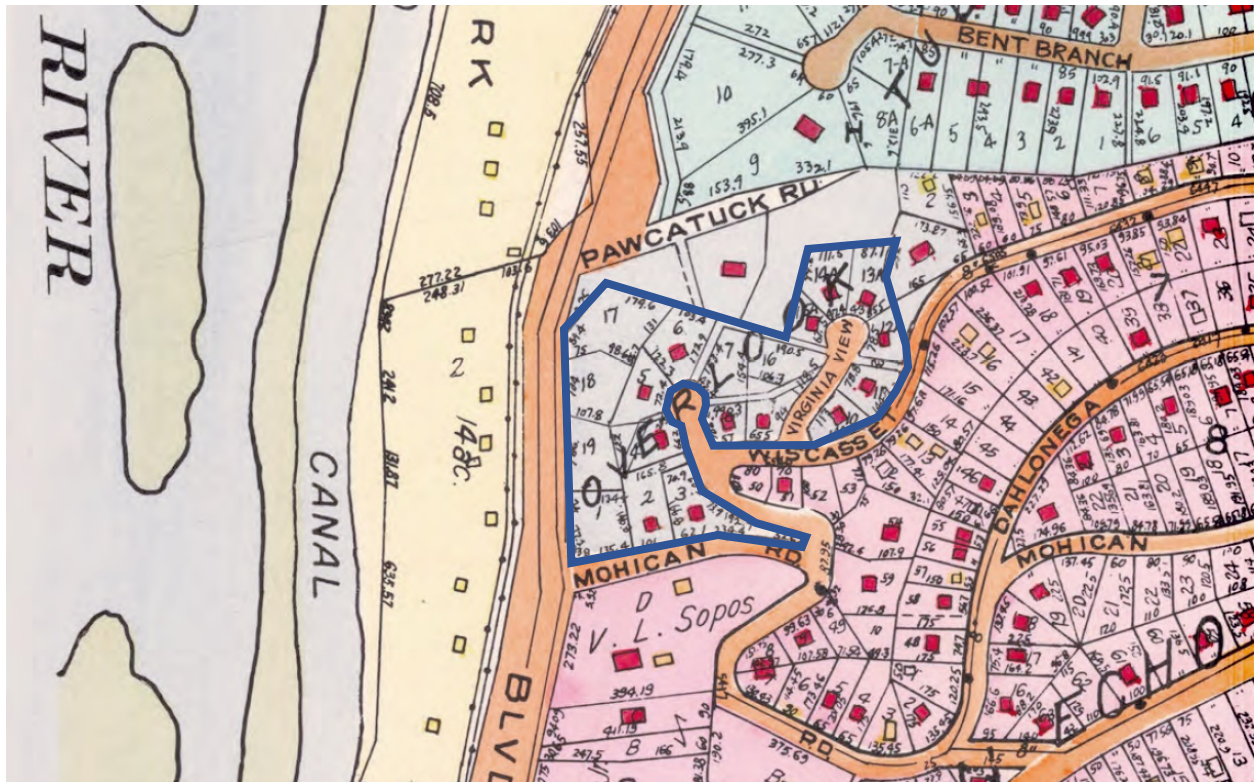


Figure 6: Potomac Overlook, 1959. Most of the dwellings in the subdivision had been constructed except for the buildings along MacArthur Boulevard.

**APPENDIX SIX:**  
**ORIGINAL BROCHURE FOR POTOMAC OVERLOOK**



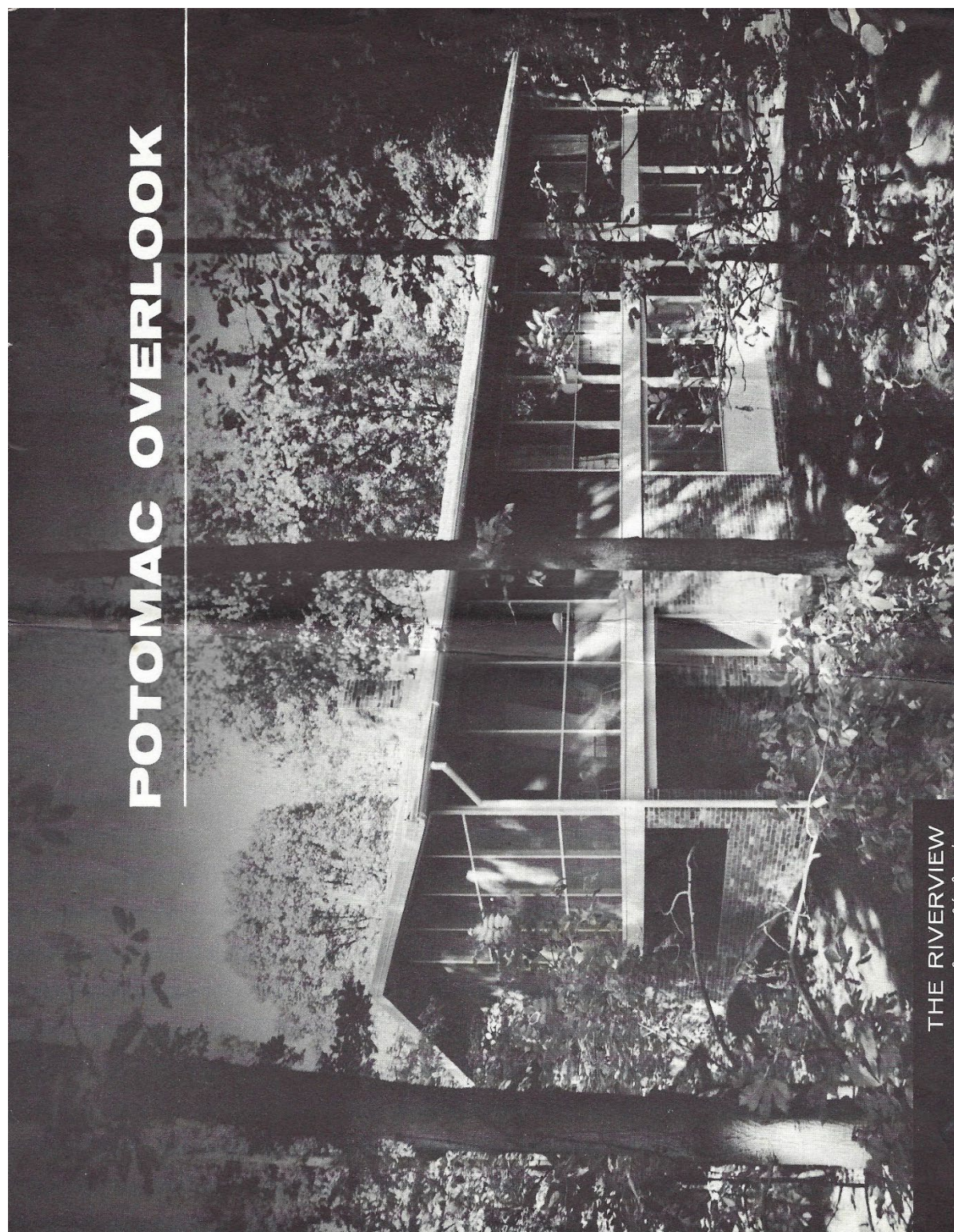


Figure 1: Potomac Overlook Brochure, late 1950s.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.



# POTOMAC OVERLOOK

## THE RIVERVIEW

**GROUND FLOOR PLAN**

**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

See page 1 for photograph

is a new community of distinctive contemporary homes sited high above the Potomac River. The river's broad reaches provide a panoramic view, particularly in the fall and winter when the leaves are down. The magnificent old trees on each lot give the exciting new homes an "old community" atmosphere. It is a carefully planned community limited to nineteen fine residences on lots averaging one-third of an acre in size. You will appreciate the long, painstaking work the architects and developers have done in working out the street and lot and individual site plans to preserve the natural contours, the trees and much natural cover. Paved streets, curbs and gutters and storm sewers are being built to rigid county specifications.

While Potomac Overlook provides a beautiful country-like setting, it is conveniently located in the "close-in" part of the select Bethesda-Chevy Chase area only fifteen minutes from Washington Circle. New public and parochial elementary and junior high schools are close at hand. The Spring Valley and Bradley shopping centers are five minutes by car. Churches are within a few blocks. The Kenwood, Burning Tree and Congressional country clubs are within a three mile radius. And Potomac Overlook is located in Montgomery County, which provides the finest of police, fire, school and other public services.

**THE BUILDERS AND DEVELOPERS**

The development of Potomac Overlook is being directed and carried out by Bennett Construction Company and Matthews and Potter, associated builders specializing in purely contemporary homes. Two years of intensive planning by builders and architects working in close harmony have preceded construction. The builders continue their record of fine contemporary homes constructed in Kenwood Park, Bonnockburn, Mahicon Hills, Wildwood Hills, and other nearby communities.

**THE ARCHITECTS**

The nationally prominent firm of Keyes and Lethbridge, AIA, continue their association with the builders in this new enterprise. The task of land planning, home design and preliminary street and utility engineering was all assigned to the architects to assure integrated planning and preservation of aesthetic values. The architects' wide experience in designing prize-winning subdivisions of contemporary homes in Virginia and Maryland and many fine individual residences as well as other important architectural commissions both in this country and abroad is all brought to bear in the planning of Potomac Overlook. Interior and exterior finishes and color selections have also been made by the architects to achieve overall harmony of design elements.

**HOME DESIGN CONCEPTS**

The three basic designs are all drawn with fresh, crisp architectural styling. The design approach is functional, in a simple contemporary idiom . . . designed for living in the years to come, not the years gone by. Large window areas are employed to properly exploit the delightful woodland and river views. The high ceilings and open planning impart a feeling of spaciousness while still retaining essential privacy of individual areas within the house. The needs of our ever-increasing families have also been kept in mind. Even the smallest design . . . the Highview . . . has four bedrooms and two baths; the two larger designs can have as many as five bedrooms and three baths. All designs include recreation rooms, either a screened porch or open deck, and one or two patios. They are perfect for indoor-outdoor living. Wherever possible carpets are attached to the houses by covered walkways. There is a design to meet every family's needs.

**ENGINEERING DESIGN**

Arnold M. Kronstadt, professional engineer, has designed a zoned heating system with two furnaces and separate thermostats for each floor in the Riverview and Valleyview models. Warm-air ducts for the lower level run under the floor to provide a radiant heat effect in all models. All heat supplies are located on the perimeter walls—the point of maximum heat loss—so that warm air "blankets" the outside walls to give complete comfort. This same perimeter system is also ideal for the addition of central air conditioning; cool air is supplied at exterior walls, the point of maximum heat gain. Air conditioning can be added at reasonable cost. The electric wiring and fixtures are planned and selected to meet all modern requirements.

**FINANCING**

A mortgage loan equal to two-thirds of the sale price is available to qualified purchasers. Purchasers will require one-third in cash.

**FURNISHING OF MODEL HOME**

Mr. Charles Carter, interior designer, of MODERN DESIGN, INC., selected the furnishings, rugs, draperies and accessories for the model home.

Figure 2: Potomac Overlook Brochure, late 1950s.  
 Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.



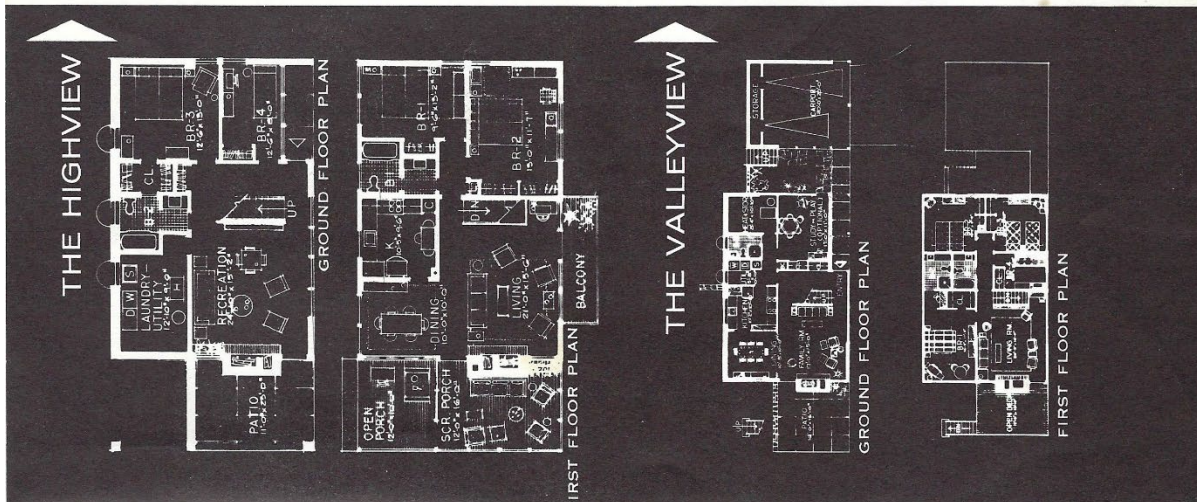


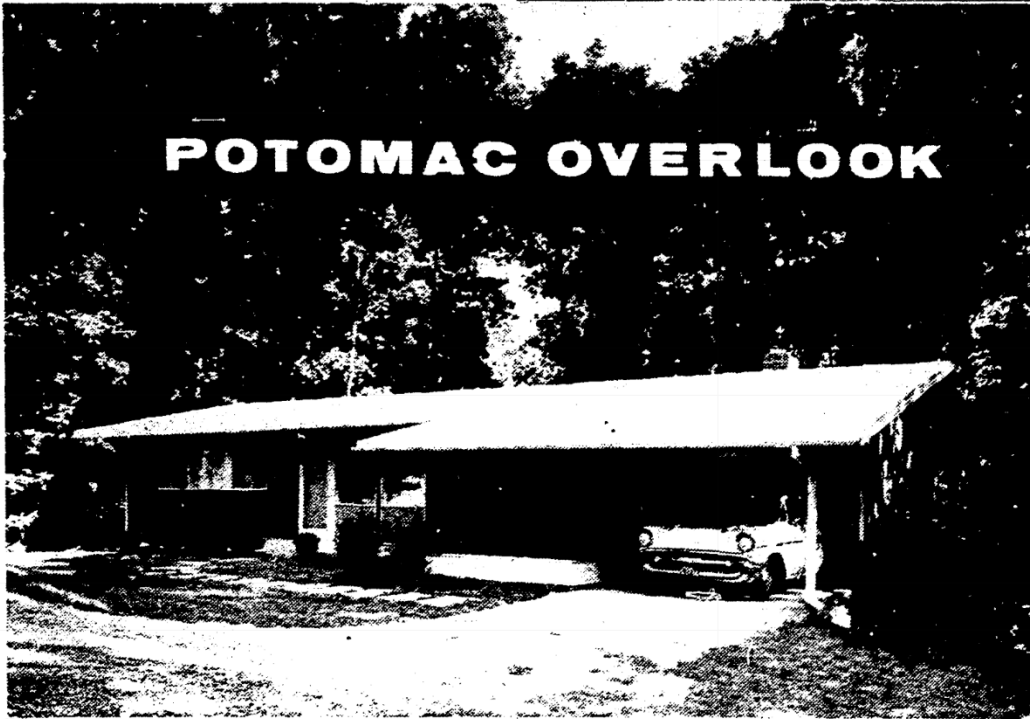
Figure 3: Potomac Overlook Brochure, late 1950s.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.





Figure 4: Potomac Overlook Brochure, late 1950s.  
 Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.

**APPENDIX SEVEN:**  
**HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARTICLES**



A distinctive community of contemporary homes sited high above the Potomac River. Land plans and home designs have been skillfully prepared by the famous award-winning architects Keyes and Lethbridge, AIA. Their plans are being expertly developed by Bennett Construction Company and Matthews and Potter, associated builders specializing in genuinely contemporary homes.

**POTOMAC OVERLOOK** is located only 11 1/2 miles beyond the District line, and offers quick access to downtown. Public and Parochial schools are nearby. The Spring Valley and Bradley shopping centers are close at hand. Three bi-level models are offered, most with river views.

**The RIVERVIEW** (bi-level) has 3 or 5 bedrooms, 2 or 3 baths, carpet, recreation room with fireplace, screened porch, covered patio, huge Westinghouse-equipped kitchen with breakfast space. From \$34,990.

**The VALLEYVIEW** has 4 bedrooms and optional study, 3 baths, recreation room, carpet, deck or living room, covered patio. From \$32,990.

**The HIGHVIEW** has 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, recreation room, screened porch or deck, covered patio, Westinghouse kitchen. Some with carpet. From \$27,900.

This new group of exciting contemporary homes has been carefully sited on beautiful, wooded lots overlooking one-third of an acre.

Model home furnished by

SALES BY

**BENNETT CONSTRUCTION CO.**

OL. 6-5588



OR

**MATTHEWS & POTTER**

OL. 6-8234

ASSOCIATED BUILDERS & DEVELOPERS

DIRECTIONS: Out MacArthur Blvd., right on Mahan Rd., left on Wiscasset to 6551; or out Mass. Ave., left on Mahan Rd., and follow signs.

Figure 1: Advertisement for Potomac Overlook, 6551 Wiscasset Road, 1957.

Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, August 31, 1957, NewsBank.



**BENNETT EXHIBIT**—Bennett Construction Co. is the builder of this Festival of Homes exhibit at 6551 Wiscasset road, Montgomery County. The firm plans 19 three to five bed-

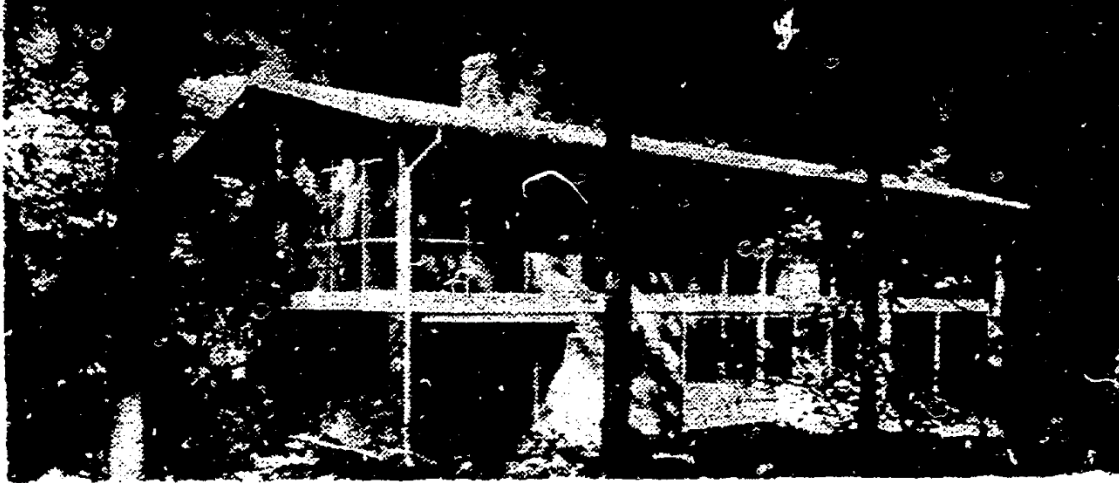
room houses for the Potomac Overlook development there. Minimum price of the houses is \$27,300.—Exhibit Home No. 50 on Map, Page B-2.

Figure 2: Advertisement for Potomac Overlook, 6551 Wiscasset Road, 1957.

Source: "Bennett Exhibit Overlook," *Evening Star*, September 14, 1957, NewsBank.



# POTOMAC OVERLOOK MAGNIFICENT RIVER VIEW



**Your contemporary home in this distinctive, planned community will have a superb view of the Potomac River**

Land plans and home designs have been prepared by famous award-winning architects Keyes and Lethbridge, AIA. Beautiful, wooded lots average one-third of an acre.

POTOMAC OVERLOOK is located only 1 1/2 miles beyond the District line, and offers quick access to downtown. Schools and shopping are nearby. Three bi-level models are offered, most with river views.

All models have recreation rooms, carports, screened porches or decks, 3 to 5 bedrooms, 2 or 3 baths. Prices start at \$27,990.

Directions: Out MacArthur Blvd., right on Mohican Rd., left on Wiscasset to 6551; or out Mass. Ave., left on Mohican Place and follow signs. **Open Daily, Noon to Dark.**

Model Homes Furnished by **MODERN DESIGN, INC.** Chevy Chase Center, OLiver 6-2323

SALES  
BY

**BENNETT CONST. CO., OL. 6-5552 or MATTHEWS & POTTER, OL. 6-5234**

Associated Builders & Developers

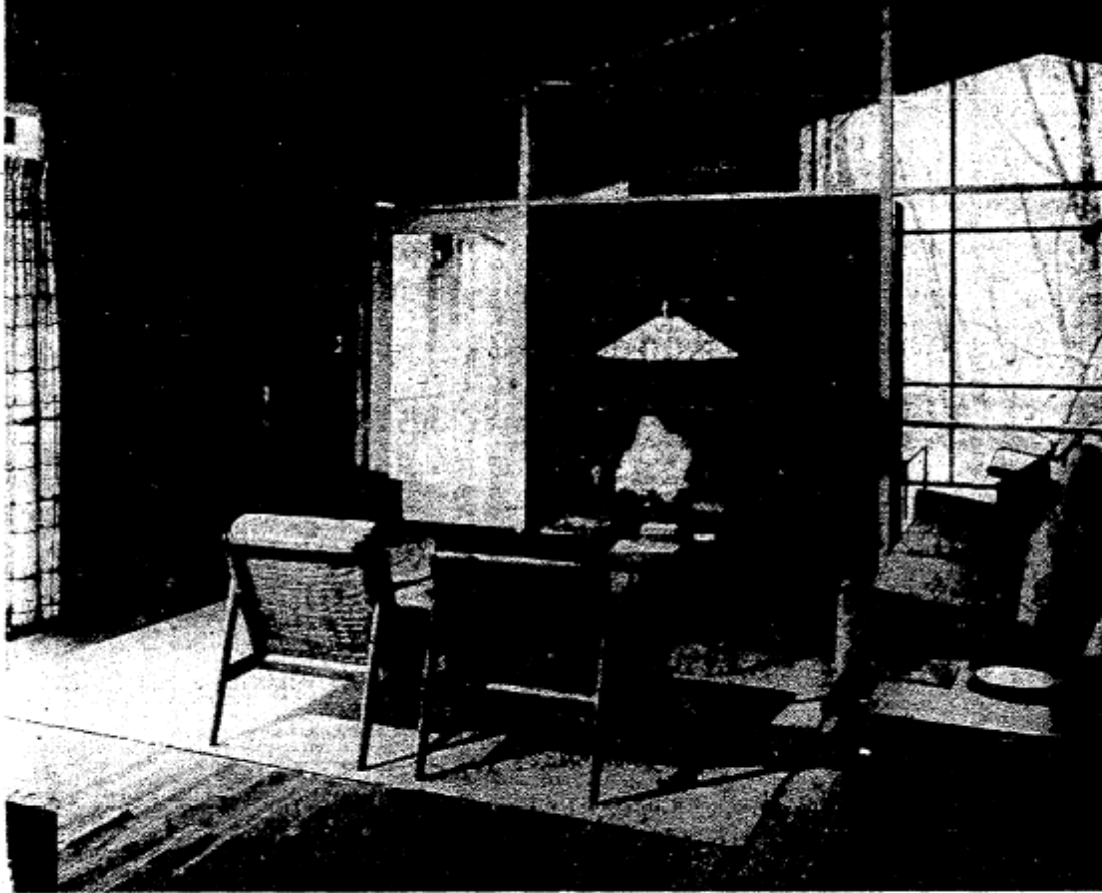
Figure 3: Advertisement for Potomac Overlook, 6551 Wiscasset Road, 1957.

Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, November 16, 1957, NewsBank.

The Evening Star

# Real Estate

B 1



**NEW ON THE SCENE** — Every day offers new examples of residential design. In this house, the living room is level with the street side, and is at the second-story level on the garden side

owing to the slope of the lot. Fireplace is a clearly outlined decorative feature of the room. Builders are Bennett Construction Co. and Matthews & Potter. Architects are Keyes & Leth-

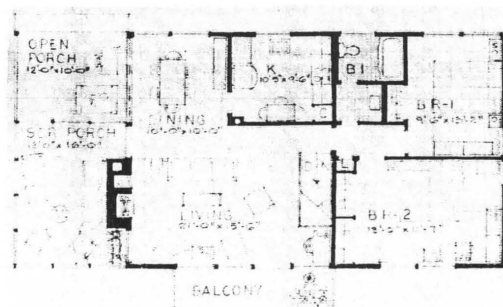
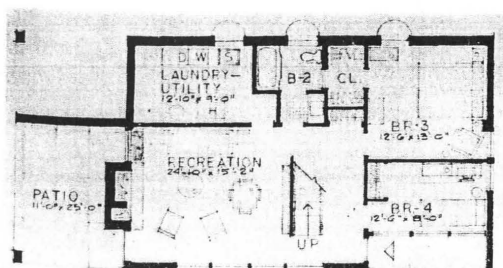
bridge. The house is located at 6551 Wiscasset road, in the Glen Echo Heights area of Montgomery County, Md.

Figure 4: Interior view of 6551 Wiscasset Road, Potomac Overlook, 1957.  
Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, November 23, 1957, NewsBank.





The Highview has a finished lower level and terrace for outdoor living as do all Potomac Overlook houses.



CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

FEBRUARY, 1958

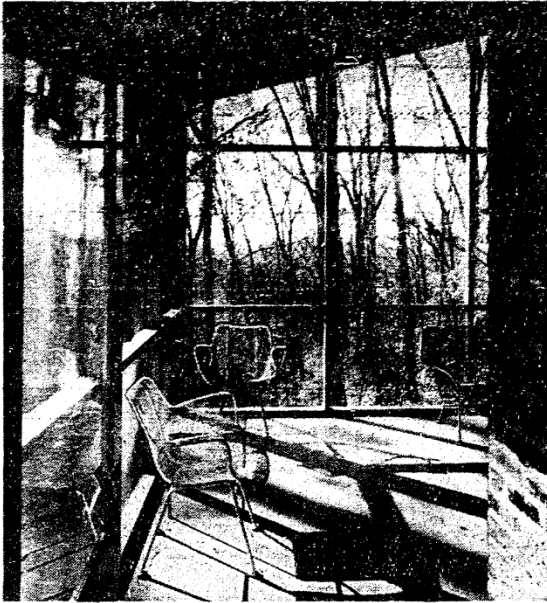
51

Figure 5: Highview model, Potomac Overlook, 1958.

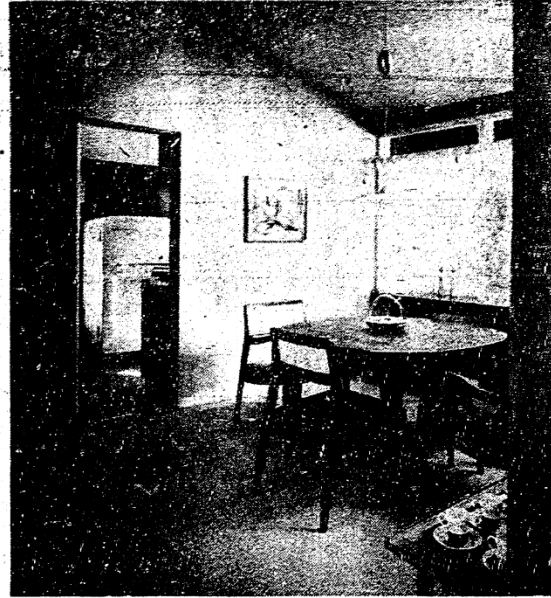
Source: *NAHB Journal of Homebuilding* (February 1958): 51 cited in National Register Multiple Property Documentation.



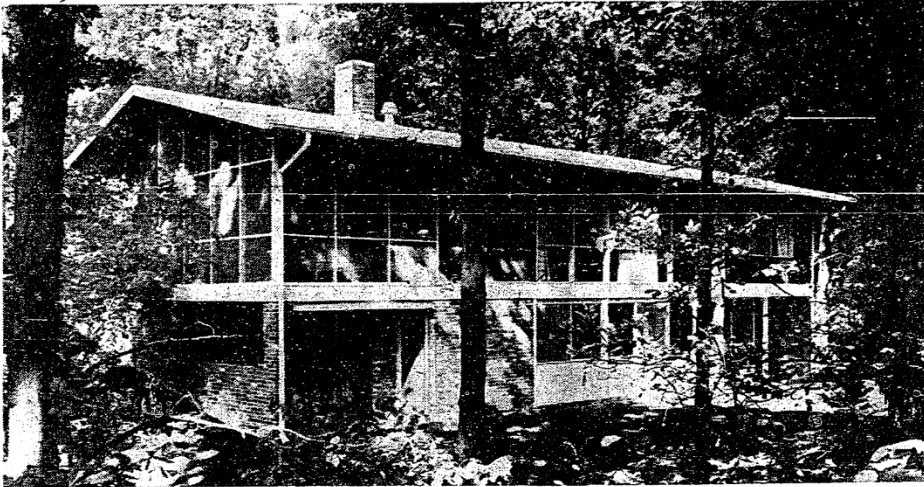
Figure 6: Site plan for Potomac Overlook, 1959, showing the circulation network and model type. Source: *NAHB Journal of Homebuilding* (February 1958): 52 cited in National Register Multiple Property Documentation.



**WON AWARDS**—These are views of a home in Potomac Overlook subdivision, which was the only development in the Nation to win both design and good neighborhood awards in 1957 National Association of Home Builders Nation-wide competitions. Above is screened porch.



**DINING ROOM**—This is the dining room of a Potomac Overlook home, showing kitchen in background. Architects for development were Keyes & Lethbridge. Builders were Bennett Construction Co. and Matthews & Potter. This house has five bedrooms, three bathrooms.



**SITE IS WOODED** — Trees were retained in planning the development.

Homes were sited to avoid excessive change in natural topography.—Photo for the Architect by Robert C. Lautman.

## Area Project Takes NAHB Top Awards

The Potomac Overlook subdivision in Montgomery County, which won both a good neighborhood award and a home design award in National Association of Home Builders Nation-wide competitions last week, is the only development in the country to have won awards in both competitions.

The project is to have 19 homes built by Bennett Construction Co., with Matthews & Potter as associated builders. Architects were Keyes & Lethbridge. The development is located at MacArthur boulevard and Mohican road.

The subdivision won one of seven equal awards in the Neighborhood Development Merit Award Competition, and one of six equal awards in the Design Merit Award Program. Certificates were presented to Edmund J. Bennett and John L. Matthews at the 14th annual NAHB convention in Chicago last week.

The design award judges said of the homes that they

See AWARDS, Page B-6

Figure 7: Recognition of Potomac Overlook for its distinction in the Neighborhood Development Merit Award and Design Merit Award programs from the National Association of Home Builders.  
Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, February 2, 1958, NewsBank.



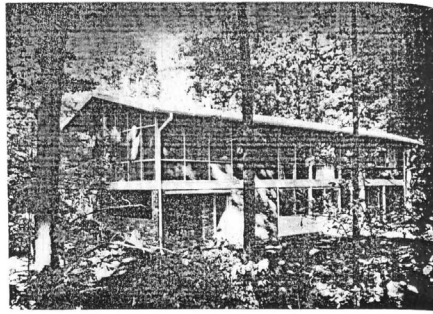
# **POTOMAC OVERLOOK** Bethesda, Md.

**BUILDER:**  
BENNETT CONSTRUCTION CO.  
**MATTHEWS & POTTER,**  
Associate Builders  
Bethesda, Md.

**LAND PLANNER AND ARCHITECT:**  
KEYES & LETHBRIDGE  
Washington, D. C.

Although unusually small — nine acres — Potomac Overlook stands out as a study in the preservation of natural beauty through the careful integration of house and site. This, perhaps, accounts for the fact that the 19-home development won awards in both the Neighborhood and Design Merit contests.

34



Living room on upper level has fireplace inside and on porch.

JOURNAL of homebuilding  
APRIL 1958

The homes, ranging in price from \$25,000 to \$35,000, are well designed and have been skillfully sited to afford maximum privacy in the heavily wooded area. Every care has been taken to keep grading to a minimum and retain the natural contour of the land.

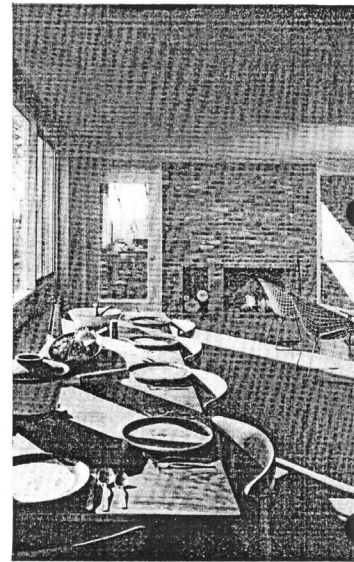
Long drives, large lots and a strong rural setting help to give these homes an estate atmosphere. (This development was presented in the February issue of the JOURNAL.)

## **JUDGES' COMMENTS:**

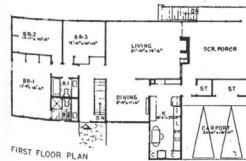
"This project deserves high commendation for skillful site planning on very rugged topography which has resulted in the minimum of street and house grading, a minimum of waste land and an admirable preservation of trees and other natural features. Lotting and house siting is excellent, resulting in family privacy and retention of good views."

## **JUDGES' COMMENTS:**

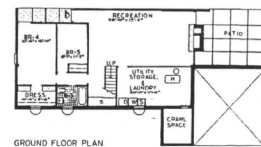
"This is a basic builder plan, conducive to family living. It is straight forward with a number of exceptions and utilizes space quite well. However, a little more study of the interior layout might have resulted in a more useful utilization of the space. It represents a sensitive handling of land in the lot layout and house sitings."



Recreation room on ground level has fireplace, wide windows.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

APRIL 1958

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Figure 8: National Merit Award in Design, Potomac Overlook, 1958.

Source: *NAHB Journal of Homebuilding* (April 1958): 34-35 cited in National Register Multiple Property Documentation.

national award winning...

## POTOMAC OVERLOOK



A distinctive community of contemporary homes sited high above the Potomac. Land plans and home designs by award-winning architects Keyes & Lethbridge, AIA. Located only 1 1/2 miles from the District Line, Potomac Overlook is near the Spring Valley and Bradley Shopping Centers. Three bi-level models are offered, all with river views.

### THE RIVERVIEW

3 or 5 bedrooms, 2 or 3 baths, carport, recreation room with fireplace, screened porch, covered patio, Westinghouse-equipped kitchen and breakfast space. From 35,990

### THE VALLEYVIEW

4 bedrooms, optional study, 3 baths, recreation room, carport, deck off living room, covered patio. From 33,400

### THE HIGHVIEW

4 bedrooms, 2 baths, recreation room, screened porch, covered patio, Westinghouse kitchen. From 27,300

Out MacArthur Blvd., right on Mohican Rd., left on Wiscasset to 6551 or out Mass. Ave., left on Mohican Place and follow sign.

• magnificent river views open daily & sunday

**BENNETT CONSTRUCTION CO.**  
**MATTHEWS & POTTER**



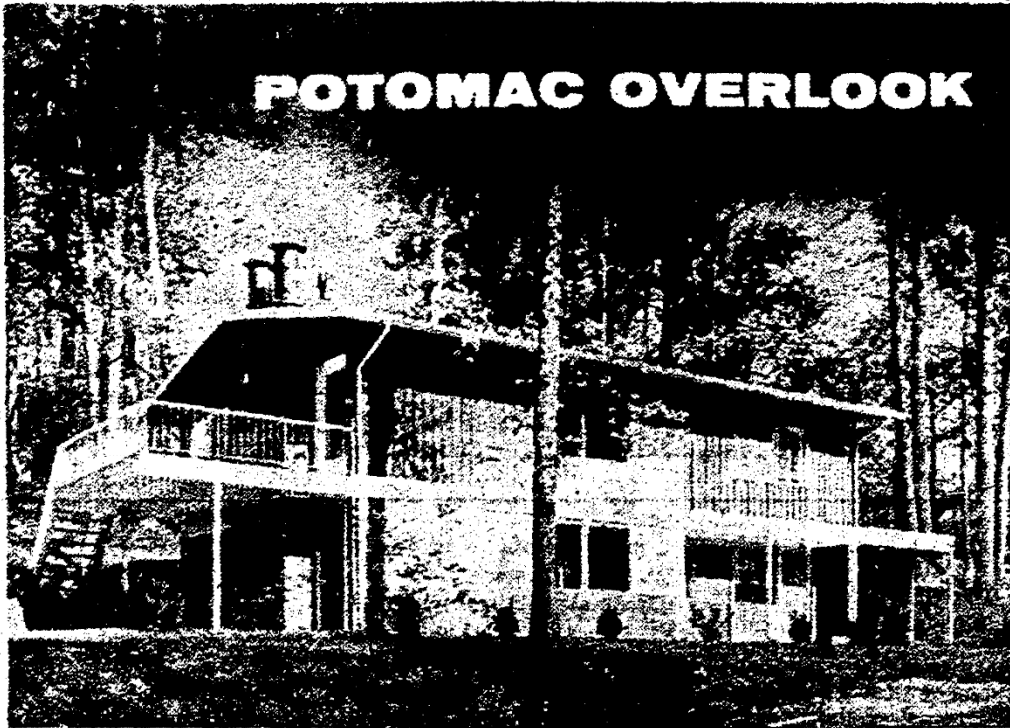
Winner of NAHB awards of merit for residential design and neighborhood development.

OLiver 6-5535

Figure 9: Advertisement for Potomac Overlook, 6601 Virginia View Court, 1958.  
Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, April 19, 1958, NewsBank.



**NATIONAL AWARD-WINNING**



**PRESENTS THE VALLEYVIEW MODEL  
6601 VIRGINIA VIEW COURT**

One of two models available in this national prize-winning community located 1½ miles beyond the District line in Maryland, overlooking the Potomac. The VALLEYVIEW offers four bedrooms, three baths, recreation room, carport, open deck, dining terrace and playroom at \$33,400.

Keyes and Lethbridge, AIA, have also designed the HIGHVIEW model with 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, recreation room, carport, screened porch, two fireplaces from \$29,300. All homes have one-third-acre wooded lots and afford a beautiful view of the river. POTOMAC OVERLOOK is convenient to Spring Valley Shopping Center, schools and country clubs. Community pool one block.

Directions: Out MacArthur Blvd., right on Mohican Rd., left on Wiscasset to Virginia View Ct.; or out Massachusetts Ave., left on Mohican Pl. and follow signs. OPEN TODAY AND DAILY.

SALES BY

**BENNETT CONSTRUCTION CO., OL. 6-5588  
or MATTHEWS & POTTER, OL. 6-8234**

Associated Builders & Developers

Figure 10: Advertisement for Potomac Overlook, 6601 Virginia View Court, 1958.  
Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, June 28, 1958, NewsBank.





Figure 11: Advertisement for Potomac Overlook, 6601 Rivercrest Court, 1958.  
Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, July 18, 1958, NewsBank.





Figure 12: View of 6604 Rivercrest Court under construction, 1958.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.



Figure 13: View of 6604 Rivercrest Court under construction, 1958.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.





Figure 14: View of north (front) elevation of 6604 Rivercrest Court, 1959.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.





Figure 15: View of the west (side) elevation of 6604 Rivercrest Court, 1959.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.





Figure 16: View of the south (rear) and east elevations of 6604 Rivercrest Court, 1959.  
Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.





Figure 17: View of 7211 MacArthur Boulevard and the Potomac River Valley from 6604 Rivercrest Court, 1959.

Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.



Figure 18: View of 7209 MacArthur (foreground) and 5300 Mohican (background) from 6604 Rivercrest Court, 1959.

Source: Personal Collection of J. Dirk Nies.





ROBERT C. LAUTMAN

**Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon**  
*Architects*

**Bennett Construction Company**

**Matthews and Potter,** *Builders*

*Potomac Overlook, Montgomery County, Md.*

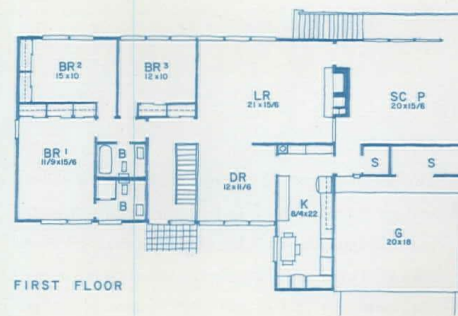
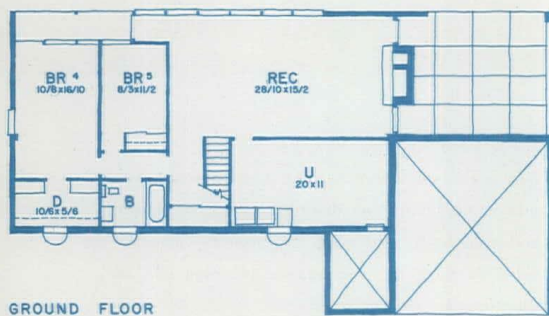


Figure 19: Potomac Overlook, 1960.

Source: "A Portfolio of Homes," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* Vol. XXXIII, No. 1 (January 1960): 56.



57

Most of the houses in this wooded area have a fine view of the Potomac River. The property, which is close to the city of Washington, had been left undeveloped until 1957, because the rough terrain was considered too difficult, despite its natural beauties.

The success of the development shows what intelligence and good design can accomplish. The architects did the land planning, house designs, selection of materials, finishes and colors, and supervision of construction. The houses are \$25,000 and up.

Figure 20: Potomac Overlook, 1960.

Source: "A Portfolio of Homes," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* Vol. XXXIII, No. 1 (January 1960): 57.



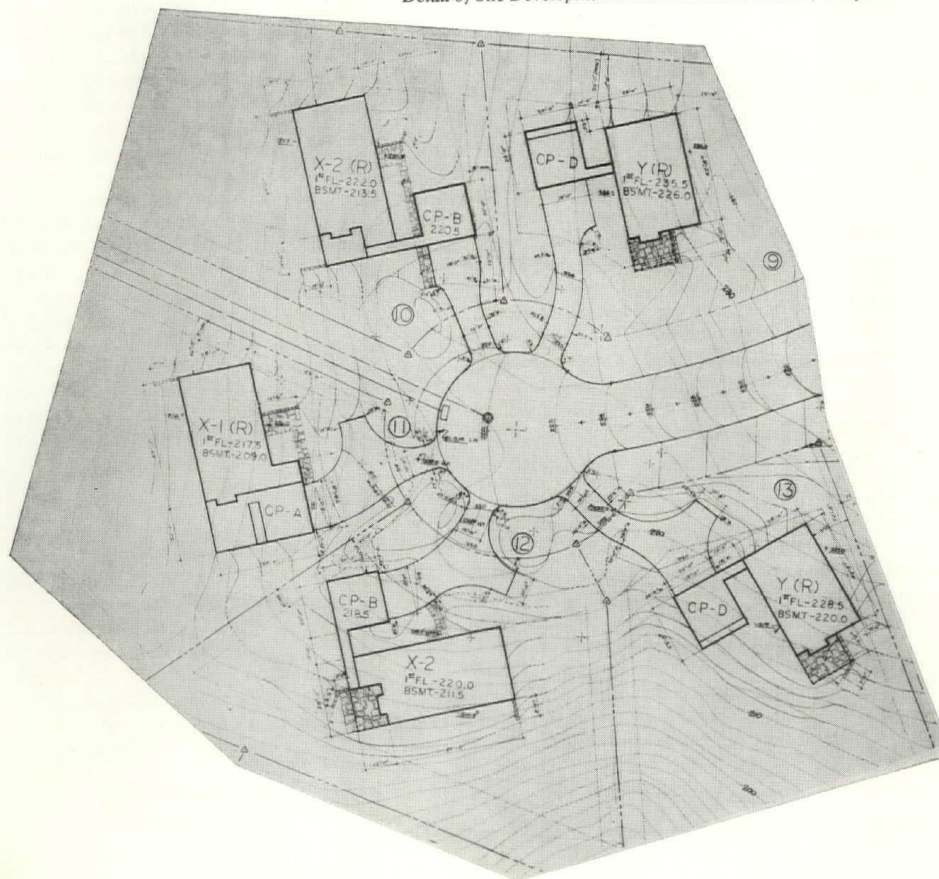
likely to develop a good professional relationship with his builder-client for present and future work. All of this might seem to suggest that few architectural firms are actually prepared to offer builders the type of professional services that they most need. It would also seem to indicate that there is a physical limit to the amount of effective work that can be done by any one firm, restricted necessarily by the number of man-hours per house required to assure adequate professional services. More architects engaged in this work, serving a limited number of builder-clients on a local, first-hand basis is the system most likely to produce the best results.

The indirect benefits that may accrue from an architectural practice providing services for homebuilders might be briefly suggested. One rather obvious possibility is that homebuilders sometimes build or invest in other types of buildings, such as apartments or shopping centers, and need an architect's help in planning such projects. Another is the fact that an architect who maintains a regu-

lar practice in this field is in a better position to qualify for work of a related nature, such as public housing, military housing, urban redevelopment, dormitory and apartment design, as well as research and development in the house construction industry. Good design is so rare, comparatively speaking, in speculative house construction, that any example of architectural merit will shine the more brightly against such a dim background.

To the younger architect intent upon establishing his own practice, it offers a particularly good opportunity, for builders are inclined to be a more adventurous lot than many other clients, more willing to take a chance on new ideas and new architects. The only word of caution on this score that might be offered to one embarking on this sort of work is not to underestimate its complexity. There is a real need for good undergraduate and post-graduate training in the field, for it is painful and sometimes costly to learn it all the hard way, by first-hand experience. ◀

Detail of Site Development Plan, Potomac Overlook, Maryland



35

Figure 21: Detail of Site Development Plan, Potomac Overlook, 1960.  
Source: Francis Lethbridge, "Architecture for the Homebuilder," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* Vol. XXXIII, No. 1 (January 1960): 35.

*See This Week End...*

## POTOMAC OVERLOOK

*Award Winning Community Featured In  
This Week's Saturday Evening Post Page 31*



An exclusive Montgomery County Community in an estate like setting with stately trees and river views only 1 1/2 miles from the District Line. Designed by Keyes Lethbridge and Condon, AIA. Only seven more homes available—from \$32,500.

*Directions: Out MacArthur Blvd. to Mohican Road, right to homes.*

Also showing—finished model home nearby at 6229 Walhonding Road.

*"All homes are in an area rich in natural beauty, with magnificent Azalea Gardens and flowering Dogwoods." DON'T MISS IT!*

### MATTHEWS AND POTTER

Builders & Developers

Figure 22: Advertisement for Potomac Overlook, 1960.

Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, May 21, 1960, NewsBank.

## POTOMAC OVERLOOK



### 6612 Virginia View Court

**THRILLING CONTEMPORARY**—In this award winning community high above the river. Nestled in a wooded setting on a safe cul-de-sac, perfect for children. **CENTRALLY AIR COSDITIONED.** 30-Ft. balcony off spacious living room with Cathedral ceiling. Carport, screened porch. Four bedrooms, den, 3 baths. Dining room, modern kit., breakfast room on entrance level. Near excellent schools. Owner transferred. Immediate possession.

**DIRECTIONS:** Out McArthur Blvd. to Mohican Rd., right to Wiscasset, left on Wiscasset to Second Court and our open sign.

**Open Sunday 2-6**

**(OTHER TIMES CALL MR. MANNING,  
OL 6-9393)**

*Pobiak & Pobiak*

**Realtors**

**OL 2-4000**

**WESTWOOD SHOPPING CENTER**

Figure 23: Advertisement for 6612 Virginia View Court, Potomac Overlook, 1965.  
Source: "Potomac Overlook," *Evening Star*, August 20, 1965, NewsBank.



**APPENDIX EIGHT:**  
**PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 7205 MacArthur Avenue

Eligibility: Outstanding

Model: Highview

Carport: The building had an attached carport located under the second-story enclosed porch. The original owner enclosed the carport for additional interior space and constructed the present semi-attached carport.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain generally intact.



View of the west elevation facing MacArthur Boulevard. Potential alterations include enclosure of the screened-in second-story porch (green dashed line), infill of a first-story carport (red dashed line), and installation of a single-leaf door (yellow dashed line).



View of the north elevation. Alterations include the enclosure of the second-story porch (green dashed line).





View of the south elevation.



View of the east elevation.



View of the semi-detached carport and storage.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 7209 MacArthur Boulevard

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Highview

Carport: Architectural evidence suggests the semi-detached carport is a later addition or significantly renovated. The carport, however, does not detract from the historic setting of the community.

Comments: The building's siting and form remain generally intact. Additions and alterations to the fenestration are evident, but are limited in scope and respect the overall historic setting.



View of the south elevation. Alterations include the construction of a gable roof addition and associated stair and porch on the southwestern corner of the building (outlined in green). Two-thirds of the addition is a full two stories, while one-third of the second story is supported by square wood posts. The semi-detached carport (red arrow) is likely a later addition, but its utilization of the existing topography and design are consistent with the principles of Potomac Overlook.



View of the south and east elevations. Alterations include the construction of a gable roof addition on the southwestern corner of the building (outlined in green). This addition likely created a new primary entry to the building.





View of the east and north elevations. Alterations include the construction of a small square bay addition (green box) and potential infill/reconfiguration of the windows (yellow box).



View of the north and west elevations. Alterations include the construction of a two-story addition on the southwestern corner of the building (yellow box) and connection to a non-historic carport (red arrow).





Detailed view of the west elevation to the north of the addition. Alterations include potential changes to the first-floor fenestration (green box) and size of the balcony (red arrow).



Detailed view of the west elevation showing the two-story addition (yellow box).



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 7211 MacArthur Boulevard

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Highview

Carport: It is unknown if the detached carport was an original feature of this house. The present carport, however, does not detract from the historic setting of the community.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact.



View of the west elevation facing MacArthur Boulevard. The fenestration pattern appears to be original, but there are variations from the other Highview models such as the lack of openings on the western extent (left) of the first story.





View of the north and east elevations. The first story consists of numerous alterations including the addition of a single-leaf door (yellow box). No other Highview models have doors on the gable ends. The location of the historic deck and stair (green box) on the west elevation is original, but features a non-historic balustrade.



View of the west and south elevations.





View of the carport in the northeast corner of the property. It is unknown if this is an original feature of the property, but it adheres to the design principles of the subdivision and does not detract from the historic setting.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6600 Rivercrest Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Riverview

Carport: The original attached carport has been converted to a garage with a roll-up door.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact. All of the brick veneer has been painted.



View of the north elevation. Alterations include the conversion of the former carport to a garage (dashed yellow line).



View of the north and east (side) elevations





View of the south elevation. Alterations include: 1) the removal of a single-light, fixed window and installation of a single-leaf door (dashed yellow line); 2) infill of the patio (dashed red line); and 3) potential enclosure of the second-story screened-in porch (dashed green line).



View of the west elevation. Alterations include the infill of the patio (dashed red line).



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6601 Rivercrest Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Valleyview

Carport: The original two-car semi-detached carport and breezeway remains intact.

Comments: The building's siting, form and general fenestration patterns remain intact. A significant addition was constructed on the south elevation that removed a window wall surrounding a brick chimney stack and metal flues and an infilled a screened-in porch.



View of the west and south elevations. The south elevation (red arrow) has undergone significant alterations due to an addition, but the overall form of the building remains intact.



View of the west and south elevations. Alterations include the enclosure of a former screened-in porch (dashed red line) and second-story addition in the location of a former deck (dashed yellow line).





View of the south elevation. Alterations include the enclosure of a former screened-in porch (dashed red line) and second-story addition in the location of a former deck (dashed yellow line).



View of the east elevation, north of the addition.





View of the north elevation of the dwelling, breezeway, and semi-detached carport.



View of the west elevation and breezeway.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6602 Rivercrest Court

Eligibility: Outstanding

Model: Riverview (Listed as Valleyview)

Carport: Attached.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact. This dwelling is noted on the site plan as a Valleyview model, but lacks the character defining brick chimney stack on a second-story open porch. The design better corresponds to the Riverview model, particularly the fenestration and patios on the rear elevation.



View of the north elevation. Note the below-grade attached carport. All other attached carports in the subdivision directly access the upper story of the dwelling.



View of the west and south elevations. Alterations include the: 1) installation of a window (dashed yellow line); 2) potential enclosure of a screened-in porch and alteration to the design of the window wall — the profile of the mullions has been altered (dashed red line); and 3) construction of a multiple-level balcony and deck on the southwest corner of the building (green arrows).





View of the south elevation. Alterations include: 1) the potential enclosure of a screened-in porch and change to the fenestration pattern (dashed red line); and 2) construction of a multiple-level balcony and deck on the southwest corner of the building (green arrows). The balcony and deck were built in 2009.



View of the east elevation.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6604 Rivercrest Court

Eligibility: Outstanding

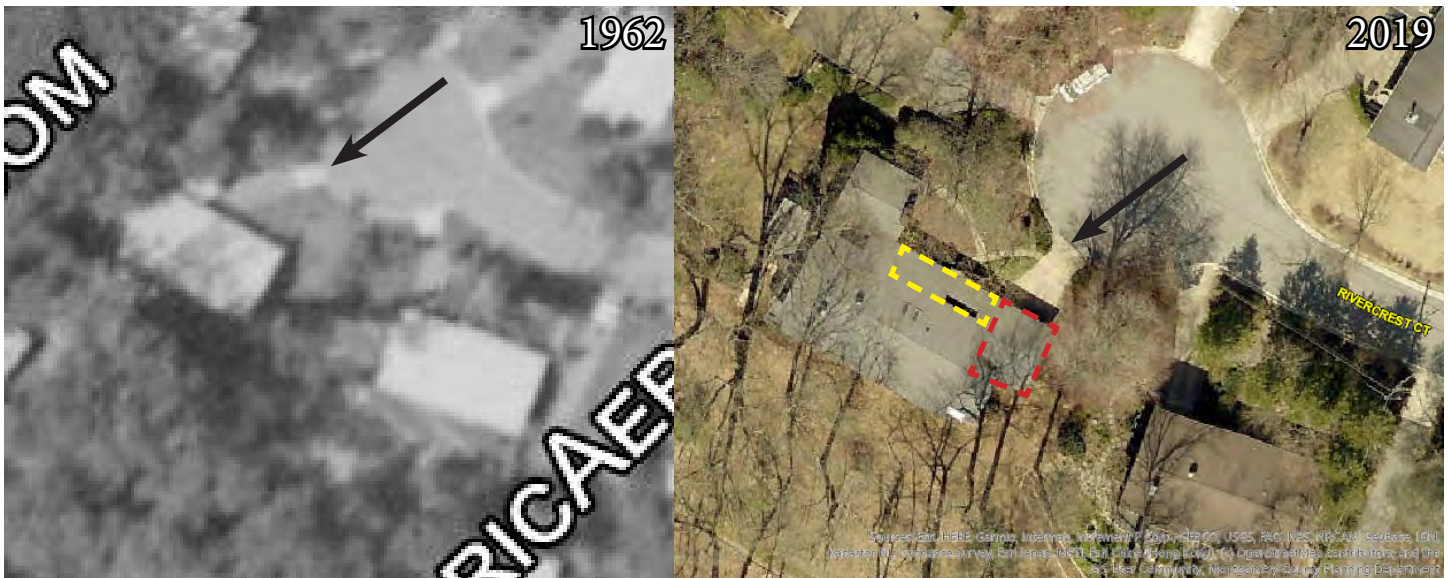
Model: Riverview

Carport: Historic semi-detached carport has been infilled. Present carport is a non-historic addition.

Comments: The building's massing, form, and fenestration has been altered due to numerous renovations. Alterations include the infill of the semi-detached carport on the northwest corner, construction of the new attached carport on the east elevation, and modifications to the roof.



View of the north elevation, 1959. The photograph depicts the original entrance, breezeway, and carport prior to later alterations to the building.



The 1962 aerial on the left shows the original location of the driveway (black arrow) accessing a semi-detached garage on the northwest corner of the dwelling. The 2019 aerial on the right shows the relocated driveway (black arrow) accessing a non-historic attached garage (red dashed line). At the time of the garage addition, the property owners built an addition on the north elevation (yellow dashed line) to create a new entry door and extended the roof for a breezeway. Further alterations to the north elevation (facade) are ongoing due to a renovation project at the time of the survey.





View of the north elevation, 2012. The yellow dashed line is the location of the non-historic garage addition. The red and blue arrows point to the non-historic breezeway and the bump-out for the entry door.



View of the north elevation showing ongoing renovation, 2020. The red arrows points to the infilled breezeway and carport with non-historic brick chimney and fenestration. The yellow arrow points to the current infill of a non-historic breezeway that accessed the current carport for a new primary entry. The addition has a raised shed roof that pierces the slope of the gable roof.



View of the west elevation showing the infill of the original carport (red arrow), infill of the original breezeway (yellow arrow), infill on the screened-in porch (yellow dashed box), and non-historic decks.





View of the south elevation. The red arrows point to the non-historic decks, the yellow dashed box is the infill of an original recessed patio and entry, the green dashed box is the replacement of paired windows with a sliding glass door, and the dashed blue box is the location of later additions.



View of the east elevation showing later additions to the original building. The red arrow points to the original gable roof of the house. This elevation is now obscured.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6606 Rivercrest Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Riverview

Carport: Attached

Comments: The building's siting and form remain intact. Additions and alterations to the fenestration pattern are evident, but have limited visibility from Rivercrest Court.



View of the east elevation. At other Riverview models with attached carports, the width of the gable projection (dashed blue line) consisting of the carport and kitchen was approximately 26' (with roof overhangs). On this Riverview house, however, the gable projection is approximately 36' wide (which is evident in 1962). It is unknown if the design of the carport has changed since its construction.

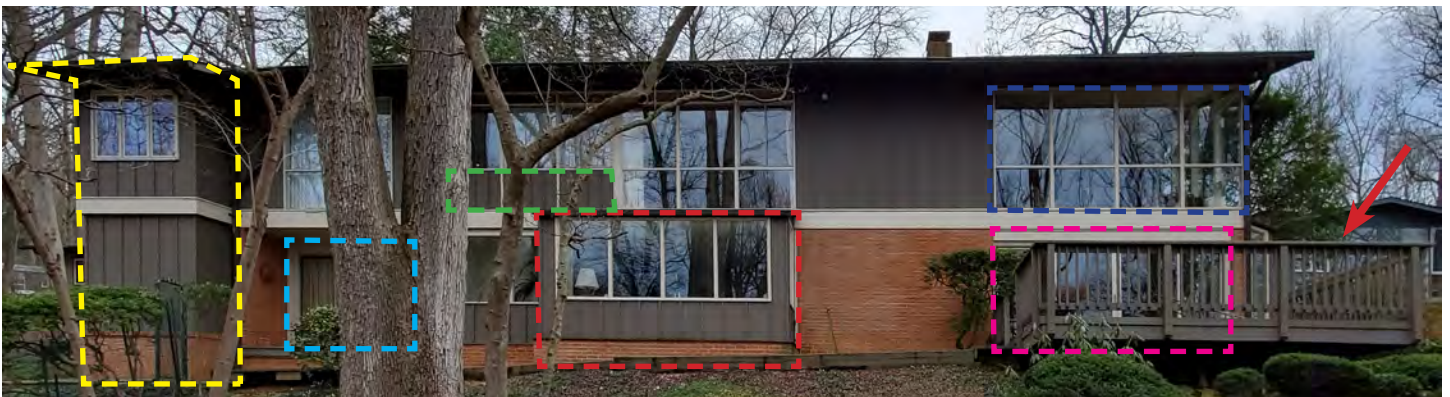


View of the east and north elevations. Alterations include an: 1) addition on the east elevation consisting of a ribbon of windows and single-leaf entry door (dashed blue line); 2) change in the size of the window opening (dashed red line); and 3) addition on the north elevation (dashed yellow line).



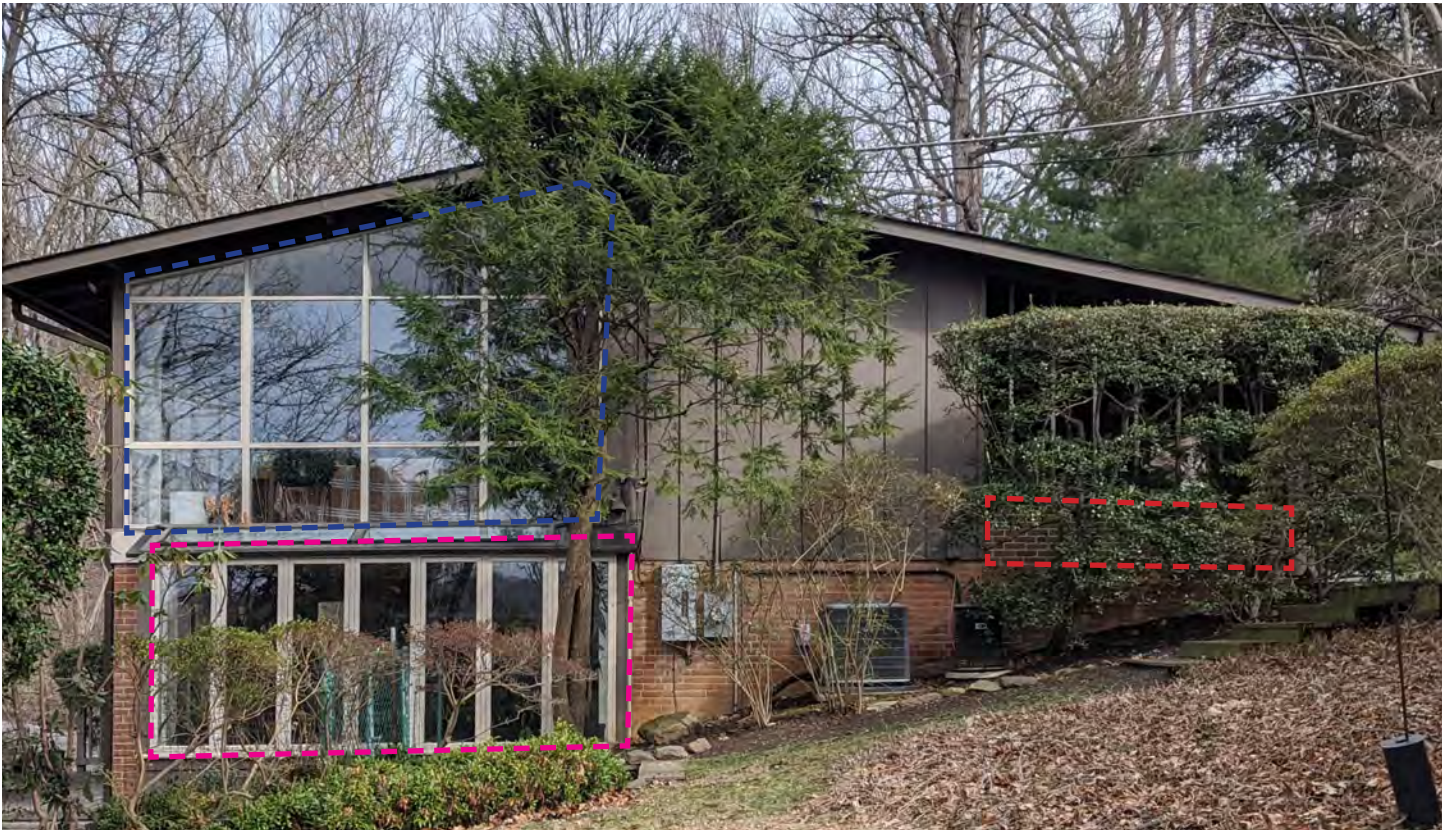


View of the north elevation showing a later two-story addition. The red arrow points to the remaining visible section of the original gable end.



View of the west (rear) elevation. Alterations include: 1) construction of a two-story addition (yellow dashed line); 2) installation of a sliding glass door (dashed blue line); 3) infill of single-pane, fixed windows (dashed green line); 4) one-story bay addition (dashed red line); 5) enclosure of open patio (dashed pink line); 6) potential enclosure of screened-in porch (dashed dark blue line); and 7) construction of a deck (red arrow).





View of the south elevation. Alterations include: 1) enclosure of a open patio with a garden window (dashed pink line); 2) enclosure of screened-in porch (dashed dark blue line); and 3) extension of brick wall that supports wood louvered opening to the partially enclosed section of the carport (dashed red line).



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6605 Rivercrest Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Riverview

Carport: The original semi-detached carport remains intact.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact. All of the brick veneer has been painted.



View of the south and east elevations of the dwelling and carport.



View of the south elevation. The original screened-in porch remains intact. Alterations include the infill of the first-story patio (dashed yellow line).





View of the west elevation. Alterations include the infill of the first-story patio (dashed yellow line).



View of the west and north elevations. Alterations include the infill of the first-story recessed patio and entry (dashed yellow line) and potential installation of a single-leaf door (dashed red line).





View of the north and east elevations.



View of the east elevations and landscaped patio and deck.





View of the breezeway separating the carport and the dwelling.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6601 Virginia View Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Valleyview

Carport: The single-car attached carport has been infilled.

Comments: The building's siting and form remain intact. Significant additions and alterations to the fenestration pattern are visible from Virginia View Court. The character defining window wall encompassing a brick chimney stack with metal flues remains intact on the north elevation.

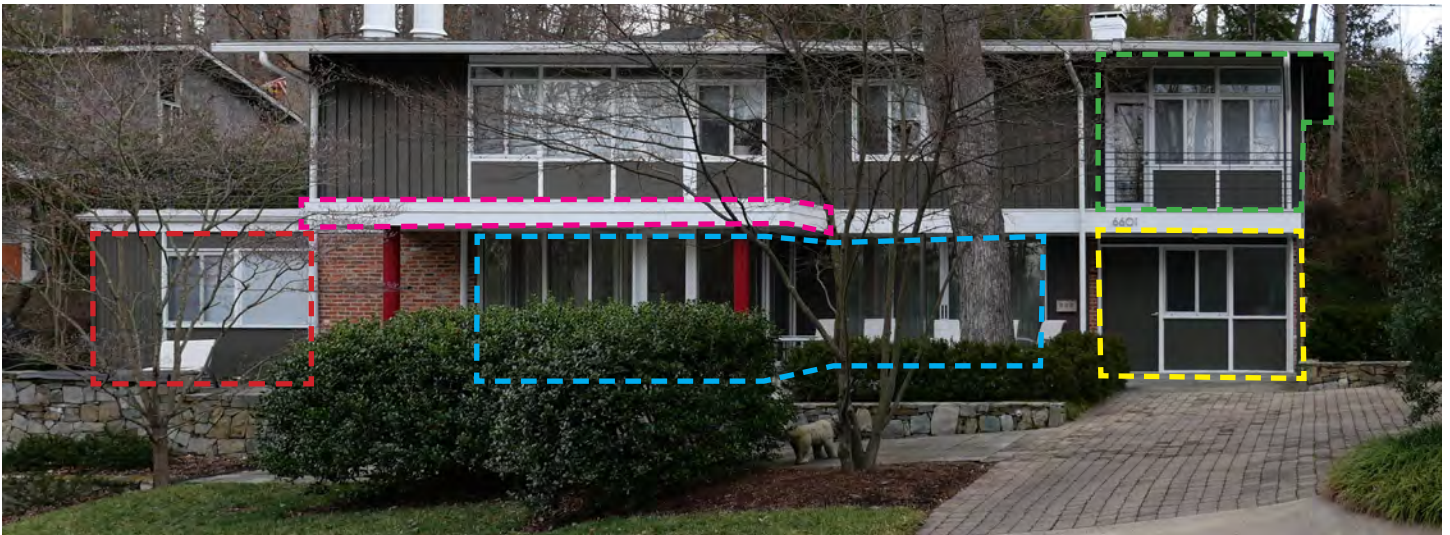


View of the west (front) and north (side) elevations, 1958.



View of the west (front) and north (side) elevations, 2003.





View of the west elevation. Alterations include: 1) the infill of the carport (yellow line); the construction of a second-story addition and balcony above the carport (green line); 3) construction of a single-story, square-bay addition with a central door flanked by full-height, single-light glass windows and changes to the fenestration (blue line); 4) construction of a flat roof canopy supported by metal columns (pink line); and 5) infill of an open patio (red line).



View of the north elevation. Alterations are limited to the infill of the porch (yellow arrow) below the deck and installation of a replacement railing (red arrow).





View of the north and east (rear) elevations.



View of the east and south (side) elevations. The infilled first-story carport is not visible from this view shed, but the second-story addition (yellow line) is evident. The design, massing, and form of the addition compliments the historic building.





View of the south and west elevations. The dashed yellow line is the second-story addition with balcony.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6604 Virginia View Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Riverview

Carport: The original semi-detached carport retains its design and relationship to the dwelling by means of an open breezeway.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact. Unlike the other dwellings, the house featured a uniform colored brick and T-11 siding instead of wood siding.



View of the east (front) and south (side) elevations.



View of the west (rear) elevation. Alterations include: 1) the infill of fixed-light windows with wood panels (blue dashed line); 2) the enclosure of a first-story patio (dashed yellow line); 3) replacement of a window opening with a sliding glass door (pink dashed line); and 4) construction of a deck (red arrow).





View of the south (side) and west (rear) elevations. Alterations include the infill of fixed-glass windows (dashed blue line).



View of the northern extent of the west elevation (left) and view of the north elevation (right). Alterations include the enclosure of the open porch (dashed blue line) and enlargement of a window opening with a sliding glass door (dashed yellow line) to access the non-historic porch.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6608 Virginia View Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Highview

Carport: The original semi-detached carport retains its design and relationship to the dwelling by means of an open breezeway.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact. The house primary entry is accessed by means of a deck on the north elevation of the dwelling.



View of the north and east elevations of the house and semi-detached carport. The red arrow points to an infilled transom.



View of the north and west elevations. Alterations include changes to the fenestration pattern in the northwest corner of the dwelling (dashed yellow box), installation of a flagstone patio (green arrow) accessing the semi-detached garage, and construction of a garden/greenhouse window on the lower story (red arrow).





View of the south elevation. Potential alterations include the infill of the first-story patio (dashed yellow box).



View of the south and east elevations.



View of the south elevation of the semi-detached carport and breezeway.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6609 Virginia View Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Highview

Carport: The attached carport is a non-historic component of the house.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact.



View of the south elevation (red arrow), 1960.



View of the south elevation. The attached carport is a non-historic addition.





View of the south and east elevations. Alterations include the potential infill of the lower windows (dashed yellow boxes) and change to the fenestration with installation of a non-historic door (red arrow).



View of the east and north elevations. Potential alterations include a change to the dimensions of the window opening (dashed blue line), extension of the roof (dashed yellow line), and two minor additions on the rear elevation (red arrows).





Detailed view of the east and north elevations. Potential alterations include extension of the roof (red arrow) and two minor additions on the rear elevation (dashed yellow lines).



Detailed view of the north and west elevations. Potential alterations include the extension of the roof to create a covered patio (red arrow).



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

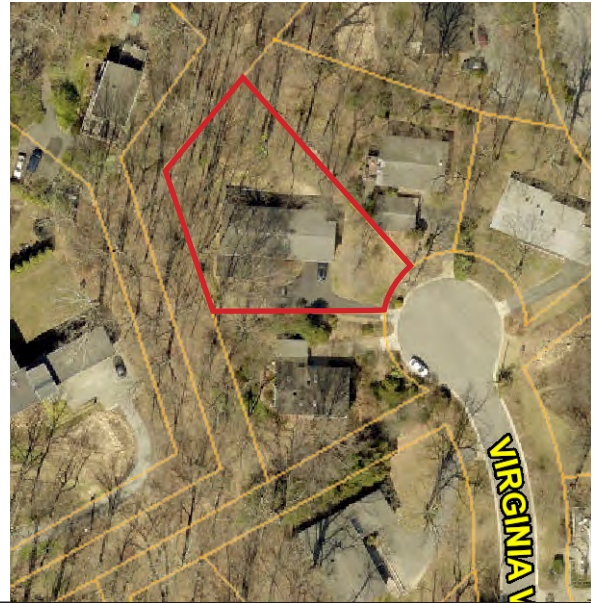
Address: 6612 Virginia View Court

Eligibility: Non-contributing

Model: N/A

Carport: N/A

Comments: In the 1990s, the property owners heavily altered or selectively demolished the building after it sat vacant for a considerable length of time. The present building has a different form with its gable-ell addition, but the massing respects the historic setting.



View of the south elevation, 1965.



View of the south elevation.





View of the south elevation.



View of the north elevation.



## Potomac Overlook Building Analysis

Address: 6613 Virginia View Court

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Valleyview

Carport: The original detached carport remains intact.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and fenestration patterns remain intact. Unlike the other Valleyview models, the character defining chimney consisted of only brick and omitted the metal flues. Alterations include the infill of the patio on the western end of the building.



View of the south elevation (red arrow), 1960.



View of the south elevation.





View of the west and south elevations. Alterations include the infill of the patio (dashed blue line) and replacement of the original porch railing (red arrow). The yellow arrow points to the brick chimney stack which is atypical for this model. The other models had a brick base and metal flue.



View of the west and north (rear) elevations. Alterations include the infill of the patio (dashed blue line) and replacement of the original porch railing (red arrow).





Detailed view of the north (rear) elevation. Alterations include the replacement of the windows with glass block. The size of the window openings, however, remains intact.



View of the north and east elevations.



## Potomac Overlook Photographic Survey

Address: 6525 Wiscasset Road

Eligibility: Outstanding

Model: Riverview

Carport: The original single-car, attached carport has been enclosed.

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and general fenestration patterns remain intact. Alterations by the first property owners include the partial infill of the carport, infill of an open patio, and enclosure of a screened-in porch.



View of the west (rear) elevation facing Virginia View Court, 1960.





View of the east (front) elevation facing Wiscasset Road. Alterations include the partial infill of the attached carport with a single-leaf door and one-by-one slider window (dashed blue line).



View of the west (rear) and north (side) elevations. Alterations include: 1) the construction of two decks on the north elevation (red arrows); 2) infill of an open patio (dashed yellow line); and 3) enclosure of a screened-in porch (dashed blue line).





View of the west (rear) elevation facing Virginia View Court. Alterations include: 1) the construction of two decks on the north elevation (red arrows); 2) infill of an open patio (dashed yellow line); and 3) enclosure of a screened-in porch (dashed blue line).



## Potomac Overlook Photographic Survey

Address: 6541 Wiscasset Road

Eligibility: Contributing

Model: Highview

Carport: None (parking pad)

Comments: The building's siting, massing, form, and general fenestration patterns remain intact. A small foot-bridge connects the parking pad along Wiscasset Road to the main entry of the house. Alterations are limited to the extension of the balcony on the north elevation.



View of the south elevation from the parking pad on Wiscasset Road.



View of the south and east elevations.





View of the east (side) and north (rear) elevations. The red arrow points to an extended balcony with respect to its length and width.



View of the north (rear) and west (side) elevations.



## Potomac Overlook Photographic Survey

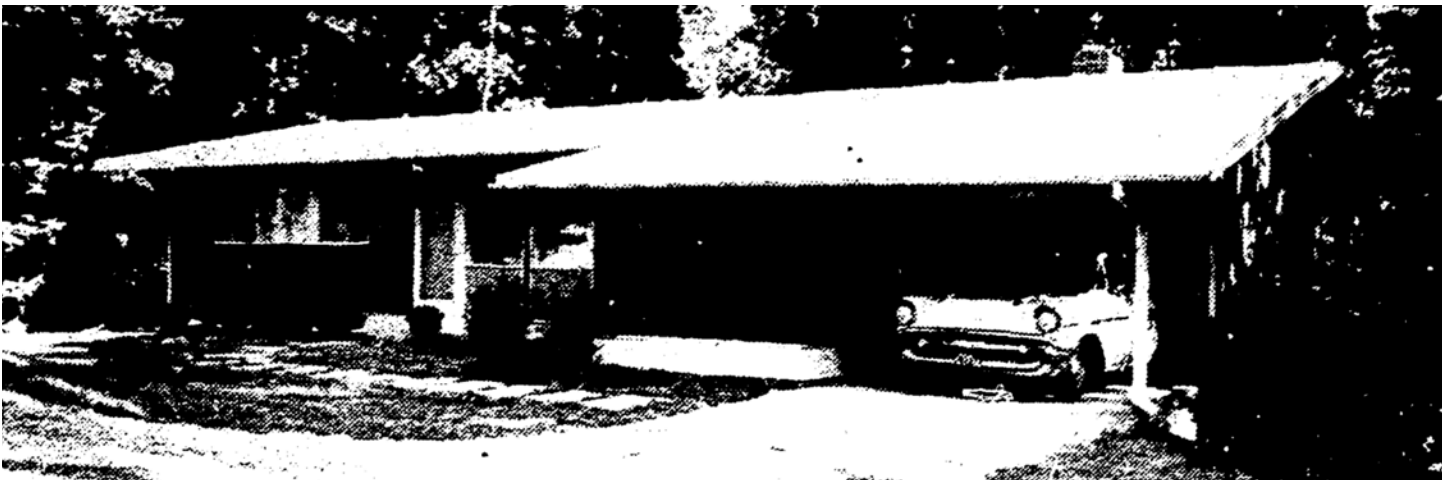
Address: 6551 Wiscasset Road

Eligibility: Outstanding

Model: Riverview

Carport: Attached

Comments: This building was the first house constructed in the subdivision and served as the model home for Potomac Overlook. The house is one of the best preserved in the district with respect to siting, massing, design, form, and fenestration. There are no evident enclosures of patios or porches.



Detailed view of the north (front) elevation, 1957.



Detailed view of the south (rear) and west elevations, 1958.





View of the north and west elevations.



View of the north showing the front entrance.





View of the west elevation.



View of the south elevation.





View of the east elevation.



## Potomac Overlook Photographic Survey

Address: 5300 Mohican Road

Eligibility: Non-contributing

Model: N/A

Carport: N/A

Comments: The Highview model house at 5300 Mohican Road was demolished in 2002. The extant modern-styled dwelling was built the following year.



View of the south elevation.



View of the south and west elevations.



**APPENDIX NINE:**  
**MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES FORM**

**\* For additional information see the Multiple Property Designation Form “Subdivisions built by Edmund Bennett and designed by Keyes, Lethbridge & Condon” at [https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/NR\\_PDFs/NR-MPS-24.PDF](https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/NR_PDFs/NR-MPS-24.PDF)**

M: 35-156  
M: 35-157  
M: 35-158

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

MIHP#s

New Mark Commons M: 26-40  
Carderock Springs M: 29-59  
Kenwood Park M: 35-156  
Potomac Overlook M: 35-157  
Flint Hill M: 35-158

Montgomery County, MD

Constructed between 1956 and 1973

Private access

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."<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> In 1960, a delegation of seventy Swedish architects visited Washington, at the time of a Stockholm



M: 35-156  
M: 35-157  
M: 35-158

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 considerable 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 Arthur Keyes had devised for two Northern Virginia builders.

"SEE FRR Mont 23 FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION."

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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.