



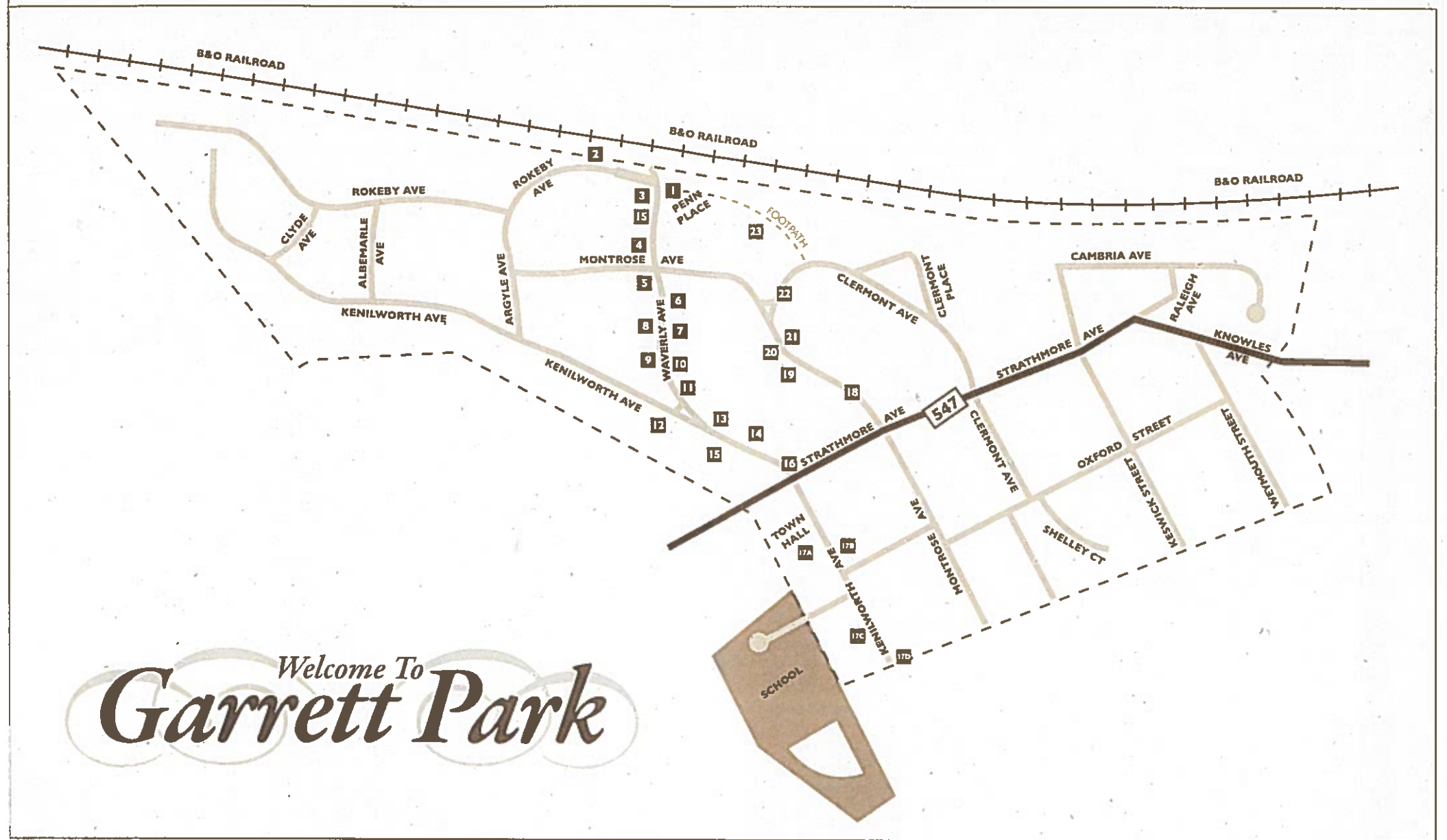
The History & Architecture of Garrett Park, Maryland

A Walking Tour

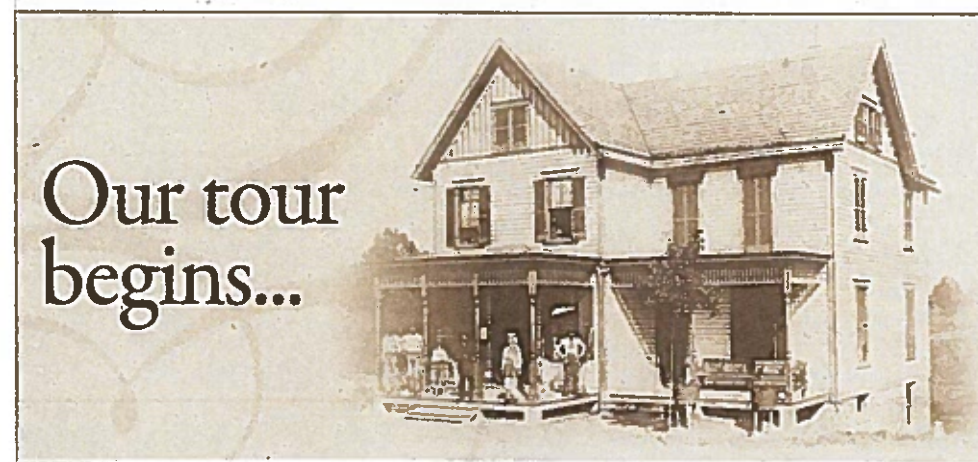
Garrett Park began life as a railroad suburb; a place where residents could live in the cooler and cleaner environment of the countryside, but still get to the city for work and cultural activities. The town was developed by the Metropolitan Investment and Building Company (MIBC), a group of over 500 Washington investors.

Grandiose plans were drawn up in 1887 that included parks, lakes, and a dam on Rock Creek for electricity. The well-preserved 19th century town plan features streets that curve to fit the natural topography and have names from Sir Walter Scott novels.

Within this romantic plan a number of the original Victorian era "cottages" still exist. But the town grew more slowly than planners had hoped. Over the years, empty lots have gradually been built upon so that Garrett Park now illustrates a variety of architectural periods and styles. This guide is designed to give the reader a small taste of the history and architecture of Garrett Park.



Welcome To *Garrett Park*



Our tour begins...

1 4600 Waverly Avenue:

The tour begins in front of Penn Place, the first and only commercial building in Garrett Park. The structure originally served two functions. The eastern half contained a general store with a meeting hall above it. The western half was the residence of the store keeper. Today the former store is the main room of the Black Market Bistro. The two small rooms across the hall were the shop keeper's parlor and dining room. The dumbwaiter that served the basement kitchen can be seen in the old dining room. The store was one of the first buildings erected by MIBC about 1888. It had the town's first telephone installed in 1896. From 2002-4, the Town restored Penn Place and built a new rear addition. The building, named for beloved post master Lina Penn, houses the Town's Post Office in the basement and Town office on the top floor.

2 Railroad Waiting Shed:

The B&O Railroad opened its Metropolitan Line in 1873 and encouraged the development of towns along its tracks; more people meant more business for the railroad. It even waived the freight fees for people moving household goods out from the city. In 1893, the town got a fine train station, similar to the one that still exists in Kensington. Despite protests by residents, the B&O tore it down in 1960. The present Victorian era waiting shed was found abandoned in Laurel, MD. It was moved to Garrett Park in 1989 and restored.

3 4601 Waverly Avenue:

This little structure was built to house the post office in 1923 and served that purpose until 1928. It was then converted to a house.

4 & 5 4609 & 4701 Waverly Avenue:

Waverly Avenue, leading up the hill from the train station, has the greatest concentration of early houses in Garrett Park. These two houses were illustrated in the 1887 promotional brochure for Garrett Park. They were the first homes in the town and served as models for the kinds of houses that MIBC planned for its new suburb. Both are examples of late Victorian "cottages," although their decorative wooden details were long ago sheathed with easy-to-maintain siding, and they have been expanded by additions and larger porches. Like many homes in Garrett Park, 4609 was initially used as a summer house. The owners entertained guests and sometimes rented out the entire house to families who wanted to vacation in the country. The building behind it is the original carriage house, long ago converted to a house. It served as the studio where the popular romantic novelist Temple Bailey wrote her 1923 novel *The Dim Lantern*, which is set in a fictionalized version of Garrett Park.



4702 Waverly Avenue:

Early Garrett Park prided itself as the home of intellectuals, artists and musicians. The Wilson family who originally owned this house hosted many musical evenings, and Jennie Cooper Wilson went on to sing with the Metropolitan Opera. Later owners made the house a center of the Bahai faith - a tolerant Persian sect in which they were fervent believers. This house too has been enlarged over time. The lovely stone patio is made from the foundations of the old kitchen that was replaced by the present two-story rear addition.

4710 Waverly Avenue:

This 1889 house holds a very special place in the history of Garrett Park. In 1898 the house was purchased by Grace Spriggs and family. The Spriggs soon began construction of a privy vault with the intention of having an indoor toilet. Because of an outbreak of typhoid fever on the East Coast, and the fear that it may have been caused when wells were contaminated by septic systems, the other residents of Garrett Park signed a petition of protest. When the Spriggs refused to desist, the town went to the state legislature and obtained a charter of incorporation. Anticesspool officials were elected, and their first order of business was to disconnect the Spriggs' sanitary plumbing. And so began the history of the incorporated Town of Garrett Park.



4709 Waverly Avenue:

Snuggled among the Victorian cottages of Waverly Avenue is a house which illustrates the unique development history of Garrett Park. Less than 40 houses were built between 1887 and the time that MIBC finally ceased to exist in 1910. Over the ensuing years, the remaining vacant lots have been filled in with a variety of houses representing the architectural trends of the 20th century. This house is an example of a Techbuilt House. Designed by Carl Koch in 1952, the Techbuilts were prefabricated frame houses assembled from modular panels that could be delivered on a truck. The post and beam construction allowed for flexible interior layout. The Techbuilt system was one response to the pent up need for housing that followed World War II. The modern exterior, inspired by International Style architecture, must have appealed to Garrett Parkers. There were six Techbuilt houses erected in Garrett Park and a number of other "knockoffs" that imitated their modern lines.

4711 Waverly Avenue:

MIBC provided craftsmen to build houses for new residents. The designs for some of those houses came from architectural journals of the day. This house, built in 1890, is based on a plate from the 1887 issue of *The Scientific American Architect and Builder*. Behind this house is one of the Town's finest remaining carriage houses. It was remodeled in 1976 as an artist's studio.



4716 Waverly Avenue:

With its intersecting roof gables, corner turret and wrap-around porch, this 1892 house is one of the finest examples of the vernacular Queen Anne style erected in Garrett Park. The style emphasized verticality, asymmetry, and the use of a variety of decorative wall treatments. This house has been "uncovered" by its present owners. Asbestos shingles were removed to reveal the rich Queen Anne details of the original house. These are further highlighted by the multi-colored paint scheme.

4720 Waverly Avenue:

This walking tour covers most of the area that has been designated as a Historic District by Montgomery County. This house was built in 1997 with the guidance of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission. It is designed to blend with its Victorian era neighbors.

11002 Kenilworth Avenue:

The core of this house is a 1924 Sears "kit" house, purchased from a Sears Catalog. All the components were shipped by train to Garrett Park and hauled by horse and wagon to this site. This is the oldest of several Sears houses in town.



10925 Kenilworth Avenue:

This 1891 house was built for Dr. Beverly T. Galloway, one of a number of Agriculture Department scientists who lived in Garrett Park. The town's large lots provided plenty of room to indulge in ornamental gardening. This house is a simpler version of the prevalent Queen Anne style. It also retains its two side lots, illustrating the expansive grounds that once surrounded all of Garrett Park's Victorian houses.

10909 Kenilworth Avenue:

Also built in 1891, this house was the town's social center when it was owned by the Allen Family. "Rose Villa" took in summer boarders, and Mrs. Allen organized parties and cultural activities to entertain her guests. In 1899, Rose Villa served as the summer retreat for the Secretary of the Turkish Legation. With its combination of clapboards and shingles, its tall turret, its spacious porch, and its complex roof, it is an excellent illustration of the architectural preferences of its day. The handsome outbuilding, erected in 1897, housed the stable, laundry and servants' quarters.

10902, 10906 & 10908 Kenilworth Avenue:

These houses are examples of the smaller bungalows that were built in Garrett Park in the 1920s and 30s. Often sheathed in stucco or shingles, these houses were usually only one or one-and-a-half stories tall, but could vary greatly in size. Look for an excellent example of a large bungalow at 4605 Waverly near the end of this tour. It illustrates a popular expression of this style, in which the main roof sweeps down to cover a wide front porch supported on heavy piers.



10903 Kenilworth Avenue and 4709 Strathmore Avenue:

These small houses are examples of Garrett Park Chevy Houses which will be discussed later in the tour.

Strathmore Avenue:

This street, originally known simply as the County Road, connects Garrett Park with Rockville Pike. In 1913, it was realigned to meet Knowles Avenue coming from Kensington. The recent street lights, curbs, and crosswalks are an attempt to "calm" the growing volume of traffic that makes it difficult to get from one side of town to the other. The original town plan referred to the north side of Strathmore as the Villa Section where the winding streets followed the hilly landscape. South of Strathmore was the Village Section, a flatter area that was laid out on a grid plan. If you continue south on Kenilworth Avenue, you will pass the 1897 Chapel (now the Town Hall), then the simple houses of two of the MIBC construction superintendents (10807 and 10706), and eventually come to the original one-room school house, now part of the house at 10701 Kenilworth.



10905, 10909, 10910, 10912, 10915 & 10919 Montrose Avenue:

These six houses are examples of the "Chevy Houses" that were built in Garrett Park during 1924-26. They represent the second major phase of building in town. The 4M Company (composed of retired WWI officers whose names began with "M"), purchased MIBC's unbuilt lots and began to erect modest houses for first-time home buyers. The small size of the new houses created consternation in town. The developers agreed to build only the largest version of their advertised models and to leave a vacant lot between houses to reduce the density. The original houses were very compact with a Murphy bed in the living room and built-in benches and a table in the dining nook. Although the plans were similar, these little cottages had varied roof and porch shapes. All four porch styles can be seen on this block. The 4M Company developed a unique marketing campaign for its Garrett Park houses. Each house came with a built-in radio, and the purchaser could also buy a Chevrolet for his garage on his mortgage - hence the name "Chevy House." 39 Chevy Houses were built before the economic downturn. Most have been enlarged over time.



10918 Montrose Avenue:

32 houses were built in Garrett Park from the end of the Chevy House period until the beginning of World War II. Many, like this house, were versions of the Colonial Revival style.

10922 and 10926 Montrose Avenue:

Only four of Garrett Park's original Victorian homes have been lost over the years - all of them to fire. In 1903 an oil stove ignited a fire here that spread to the adjoining house. Only heroic efforts by volunteers who doused embers on nearby roofs kept the fire from consuming more of the town. In place of the burned houses, these two Four Square style homes were erected in 1908 and 1910. They reflect a simpler symmetrical style with low hipped roofs and one-story porches that became popular across the country around 1900.

10923 Montrose Avenue:

Contrast this house with the Four Squares across the street to see how styles changed at the turn of the 20th century. This 1891 house was also based on plans published in *Scientific American's Architects and Builders Edition*. It is labeled as "A Twenty Five Hundred Dollar House."



The Intersection of Montrose Avenue and Clermont Avenue:

This is a good place to observe elements of the town plan of Garrett Park which has changed little since 1887. The avenues that curve to follow the topography and the little parks at their intersections reflect the influence of 19th century Romantic landscape design. Even the street names, which come from Sir Walter Scott novels, emphasize this Romantic connection. The streets themselves were a great source of pride. They had a macadam surface and stone gutters and were far superior to the rutted muddy streets of most distant suburbs. Noted horticulturalist, William Saunders, consulted with MIBC on plantings for the town. Trees were planted that would eventually provide green arches above the streets. In 1977 as the original Town trees began to die, the entire town was designated an arboretum. Since then, plantings on the streets have been carefully selected to contribute to Garrett Park's sylvan heritage with a wide variety of trees and shrubs.

Porcupine Woods:

From the 1950s through the 1970s, Garrett Parkers struggled to preserve their small town's integrity in the face of encircling development and increased traffic. This natural woodland was shown as a public park on the original 1887 map of the town. The land, however, had passed into private hands, and in 1965 there was a proposal to build townhouses on the property. After a long battle, the Town was able to obtain an Open Space Grant to purchase the land and preserve it as a park. The name comes from the mascot adopted by the Town during these embattled years. The porcupine is normally a docile creature, but can become very prickly when attacked.

The Post Office:

Our circular route brings us back to Penn Place and the Garrett Park Post Office on its lower level. Although residents can choose to get home delivery from Kensington, most prefer to rent postal boxes and thus keep alive their local post office. The daily trip to collect the mail provides a chance to meet neighbors and catch up with news on the Town bulletin board. Residents recognized that this central hub was an important element in fostering the strong community spirit for which Garrett Park is known. They have fought through the years to prevent the loss of this cherished institution.

Garrett Park was incorporated in 1898 and is governed by a mayor and council, supported by a variety of active civic and cultural organizations. The town has long been aware of its unique history and has promoted that history with house and garden tours, walking tours, written histories, and anniversary celebrations. The entire Town of Garrett Park was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 in recognition of the town's little altered 19th century plan and the interesting variety of buildings that resulted from its incremental development. In 1992, a small historic district, consisting of Waverly and Montrose Avenues between the railroad tracks and Strathmore Avenue, was designated by Montgomery County. The houses within this district and a few other individually listed residences are protected under County law: changes to these buildings must be reviewed by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission.

In 1993, the town became the first in Montgomery County to have a residential overlay zone. This special zone regulates the size of new and expanded houses and was designed to preserve the open space and park-like quality that have long characterized Garrett Park.

To learn more about the history of Garrett Park, look at the town's web site: <http://www.garrettpark-md.gov>. Several books on the town's history can be purchased at the Town Office on the top floor of Penn Place. The town also maintains an archive of historical materials, including old maps, photos and documents. Visit or call the Town Office at 301 933 7488 to make arrangements to use these materials.

The entire town was made an arboretum in 1977. In the past 30 years many interesting specimens of trees and shrubs have been planted along town streets and in the parks. A companion walking tour brochure describing old and new trees in Garrett Park has been produced by The Arboretum Committee and is available free from the Town Office.

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