

Arlington History Ride



A Self-Guided Tour for Bikers and Hikers

2007 Version

By [Randy Swart](#)

With a lot of help from members of the Historical Society,
Arlington Historian Sarah Collins and
Carol Nation, editor and graphic design artist.

This is a 28-mile self-guided tour with 12 stops. It takes most riders at least four hours. If it seems too long, you can break it into two or more parts. (The Bluemont Trail cuts across the center.) There are a few good hills, but they can be walked.

The tour is best done on a weekend (for bikers or hikers) to include a visit to the Arlington Historical Museum, where we start and end. The museum is staffed by volunteer docents. You can check for the latest on hours of operation or possible group tours on the [Arlington Historical Society Web page](#).

You can check that Web site or you may want to call ahead to the resident caretakers of the Ball-Sellers house at 703-379-2123 to see if this interesting old cabin will be open, normally on Saturdays April-October from 1 to 4pm.

Please: Even though this is a fun outing, wear a helmet! Arlington and Falls Church ordinances require one for riders under the age of 15.

You will need a lock for your bike at Arlington Cemetery and the Abingdon Ruins. **You will need a photo ID** to enter Fort Myer. A drivers license is fine.

Before Leaving

Watch for other trail users on our well-used trails, and keep to the right of the center line. Alert pedestrians when you are about to pass from behind them with "bicycle passing on your left" or something similar. If you tour in a group, ride in single file. As in any urban area, lock up your bike whenever you leave it. Shirts are required in Arlington Cemetery and also should be worn in the two historic buildings. Your shoes should be comfortable for walking. No steel-cleated bicycle shoes are allowed in the John Ball House or the Arlington Historical Museum. In addition to this map and guide, a good street map (such as the Arlington County Bikeway Map and Guide available free from the County will be useful. You can download the map in .pdf format. To get a free printed paper map, call 703-228-3681, email cdenney@arlingtonva.us, or stop at Commuter Stores. A compass might help prevent confusion at some spots. The recommended route was chosen to minimize traffic and hills. If it seems too squiggly, you can use more direct routes on main streets if you do not mind riding in traffic. If you get lost, just ask someone for Directions--Arlingtonians are friendly and will gladly help you.

****Look for this symbol**** to identify the five designated Historic Districts on the tour. The County Web site lists [all of Arlington's Historic Districts](#) and describes the work of the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board in preserving Arlington's heritage.

Start!

The tour starts from the parking lot of the Arlington Historical Museum.



(Click on any photo for a larger version.)

The museum is in the old Hume School, a red brick building built in the 1890s at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Rd. If the museum is open it is worth a visit. Please do not wear shoes with exposed steel cycling cleats in the museum to protect the wood floors. Linger here as long as you wish to see the local history exhibits. There are restrooms and water. The museum is staffed and maintained by Arlington Historical Society volunteers. Be sure to sign the guest book when you enter.

Native American Period

Arlington's first residents whose history we know were Native American Indians, whose history here may date back 12,000 years. Various nomadic clans eventually established villages here, raising some crops and quarrying stone along Four Mile Run. The name they gave to this area was *Nameroughquena* - "The Place Where Fish Are Caught." One of the few native American names that endures in this area is Anacostia, the English colonists' Latinized version of *Necostin*. Although part of the Algonquian Nation, the native Americans here were apparently not affiliated with **Chief Powhatan's** confederation, since they were willing to deal with **Captain John Smith** and his men when Smith visited here in 1608. The tribes who inhabited this area departed about the time the English began to settle in Virginia, squeezed westward by the colonists coming up the Potomac River from the south and war-like Susquehannocks moving down from the north. There is no "Native American" stop on this tour.

Directions: From the museum parking lot, turn right and travel along South Arlington Ridge Road. Just after the intersection of South Lynn Street, you will see on your right a small stone tower. It was once part of the Little Tea House, fondly remembered by long-time Arlington residents as a pleasant place to dine and enjoy the view of Washington in pre-high rise days. Pause at the end of Arlington Ridge Road to enjoy the view from *Prospect Hill*.

Prospect Hill

James Roach built a house here in the 1800s that was destroyed during the Civil War. Roach's quarrying company produced stone for such notable works as the railroad that followed what we know today as the Washington & Old Dominion trail. Quarrying changed the face of the Arlington side of the Potomac River, severely reducing the cliffs that once made Spout Run spout. Arlington Ridge Road once ran beyond here, and was the main high road from Georgetown to Alexandria. *The Pentagon* was built in 1941. Shirley Highway (I-395) followed in the 1950s. The high spires of the Air Force Monument were added in 2006. On a clear day you can see many of Washington's monuments and landmarks from here.

Directions: The tour will now continue down South Nash Street for the longest uninterrupted riding of the day. Turn left onto South Army-Navy Drive' for the long, gentle, downhill ride parallel to 1-395. Turn left on 28th Street South, then right on South Meade Street. At South Glebe Road, cross at the light and take the sidewalk on the other side, turning right. At the first intersection, cross West Glebe Road carefully and turn left onto the sidewalk on the other side. Follow West Glebe to the first traffic light, turning right on Valley Drive. Valley becomes Martha Custis Drive. At Gunston Road, turn right to reach the ramp up to the bicycle-pedestrian overpass that crosses 1-395 toward **the Village at Shirlington**. (The Shirlington area has many eateries for your convenience.) At the other end of the ramp you turn right to stay on the sidewalk and right again at the intersection with South Quincy Street. At the T intersection with Arlington Mill Drive, cross and turn left onto the Four Mile Run Trail. Follow the trail to Walter Reed Drive, turn right for one block, cross South Four Mile Run Drive, and pick up **the Washington & Old Dominion Trail** just on the other side, making a left onto the trail.

As you approach Columbia Pike you will pass on your left across the street the **historical markers for Barcroft and for the site of the old Arlington Mill**, built here by George Washington Parke Custis and destroyed by Union troops during the Civil War. The Mill was purchased after the war and restored by Dr. John Barcroft, who before the war had built his first mill farther out Columbia Pike near the present day artificial lake also named for him. Cross Columbia Pike and continue on the trail.

Here you are passing **the fall line of Four Mile Run**, marking the spot where two geographic regions meet: the Tidewater and the Piedmont. The same fall line extends up and down the East Coast of the United States. In the Potomac River it is marked by Great Falls. Here on Four Mile Run the scale is reduced to some little riffles. After a half-mile, you will pass the observation deck for Sparrow Swamp, then when you see the sign welcoming you to Glen Carlyn Park a path cuts off to the left and downhill to the bridge crossing Four Mile Run. A sign points toward Long Branch Nature Center A sign points toward Long Branch Nature Center. Cross the bridge (reconstructed in 2007) and look to your left for the iron bars protecting the survey marker.

Washington's Survey Tree

George Washington owned nearly 1,200 acres of land in Arlington. This marker is located where a giant oak once stood. It was a corner marker for George Washington's property here where Long Branch meets Four Mile Run. Washington may have intended to develop the land, since he surveyed this area three times in the 1790s. The marker was erected by the Glencarlyn Citizens Association in the early 1900s, and some years later the Daughters of the American Revolution built the fence around it. A section of the oak is on exhibit in the Glencarlyn Public Library.

Directions: Continue through the parking lot and picnic area along Long Branch, climbing the steep hill at the end of the picnic area. Watch for cars on the hill, where

sight lines are only a few feet and bikes tend to wobble. At the top you emerge into Glencarlyn neighborhood. Jog right and then left onto 4th Street South, riding two blocks to the Glencarlyn community house just beyond South Kensington Street.

Glencarlyn

One of Arlington's small communities was developed here by George Curtis and Samuel Burdette in the late 1800s. It was originally named Carlin Springs, but the Post Office insisted that it be renamed in 1896 because there was another town in Virginia with the same name. Thus the name was changed to Glencarlyn, with a new spelling of the Carlin name. (There is still occasional confusion in Arlington about the spelling of the Carlin name.) ****Carlin Hall**** was built in 1892 as a community center (it is Arlington's oldest community center) and has also been used as a school.



The old ****Ball-Carlin Cemetery**** is located between the community house and the brick building that houses the Glencarlyn branch library. The large and handsome house across the street at the corner of 3rd Street South and South Kensington Street was built farther over on Carlin Springs Road and moved here when construction threatened it some years ago. To its left on the north side of 3rd Street South is a beautiful Victorian house built here by Samuel Burdette.



Around the corner on the south side of 3rd Street South is our next destination, the John Ball House at 5620 3rd St. S.

****John Ball House****

This house, **probably Arlington's oldest residence**, was built by John Ball around 1742 and purchased by William Carlin in 1772.



John Ball was one of Arlington's original colonial settlers. William Carlin was George Washington's tailor. The house is a landmark of pioneer Arlington and a rare example of the homes where people of the time in ordinary occupations lived. The original house is the lower section to the left. It was a log cabin that was later covered with siding. It faces away from 3rd Street. The two-story portion to the right was added about 1885. On the east wall (the one facing left) you can see a cutout showing the original logs. The original roof was of clapboard construction rather than shingles or shakes. It was later covered by adding a completely separate second roof above it. The Sellers family donated the house to the [Arlington Historical Society](#) in 1975. It is occupied by a caretaker for the society, and it may be possible to see the interior, usually open on Saturday afternoons from 1 to 4. There is no admission fee, but a donation is appreciated. The house is also open for Historical Society activities at various times during the year. If you did not see the inside, you can ask for the date of the next open house when you return to the museum.

Directions: The next stop is at Carlin's actual springs. (Carlin Springs Road is named for them.) Proceed down 3rd Street South to turn left at South Jefferson Street. At the bottom of the hill on the right is a narrow path back down into Four Mile Run Park. It is very steep at the top, but the slope improves and it widens, continuing downhill. At the bottom to the right you will see a small shelter and a picnic table. Turn right off the path there onto the dirt and walk across the little wooden bridge back into the trees to look for two small (3 feet by 2 feet) stone spring boxes set into the hillside ahead. Those are Carlin's Springs. In 2003 a tree fell over one of the spring boxes, and is still there. The boxes are beginning to deteriorate.

Carlin's Springs



The beautiful picnic spot where you are standing and the area lying immediately downstream were developed by the Carlin family into a picnic park known as Carlin's Springs. The railroad that ran through here (the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire, remembered today as the Washington & Old Dominion) stopped at this point to pick up water for the steam engines. The Carlin family developed an amusement park here in 1872 where Washington residents came by train for Sunday picnics. Carlin's Springs remained a park until developers bought the land during the building of Glencarlyn community. The old buildings were demolished in 1893 but the land was retained as a natural park until acquired by Arlington County in 1943.

Directions: Backtrack past the picnic shelter and turn right when you get to the trail to regain the Washington & Old Dominion Trail. Turn left onto the W&OD and proceed for the next mile on the path. (You will cross under Arlington Boulevard, and now street names will be designated North instead of South.) The path dips to cross under Carlin Springs Road. If you wish, take the sidepath to the street to climb the steep hill to the right to see **Mary Carlin's house**, a nicely preserved log cabin easily identified by the historical marker.



The trail continues past sports fields and a red caboose from the Southern Railroad that marks the spot known as **Bluemont Junction** where once the railroad met another rail line from Rosslyn and a trolley line.



You can stop at the caboose for some rail history on weekends from Sedge Moss, a long time rail fan and bicycle rider who is a piece of Arlington history himself. Further along are tennis courts (stop at the vending machines for soft drinks for lunch if you want them), just before you come to Wilson Boulevard. Cross under Wilson and loop up to the left to Wilson Boulevard sidewalk, crossing Four Mile Run on the bridge.

To your left is the **Bon Air Rose Garden**, a notable garden showcase. Turn left into the rose garden parking lot. This is a great lunch spot, with picnic tables between the rose garden and Four Mile Run, restrooms in the brick building beyond the parking lot, and water available from a fountain back at the tennis courts.



To your right, in the springtime you also will see magnificent azaleas in bloom and a small wildflower garden. (If you need to buy lunch, there are several eateries nearby, both east and west on Wilson Boulevard as you emerge from the rose garden parking lot. Unfortunately they are up steep hills and traffic on Wilson is normally busy.) The rose garden is at its best in mid-June, but is worth a visit at any time if only to see the famous names of those who donated the various bushes around the center circle. It has over 3,000 rose plants of every type and some very interesting hybrids. If you are there for the pruning on a Monday morning you may find roses in the trash cans to take home. There are many other picnic spots farther along the route as it follows the W&OD Trail.

Bon Air and Arlington's Small Communities

At the rose garden, you are in the neighborhood known as Bon Air. Bon Air was an early commuter village, with a trolley stop near here. In 1924 there were 99 trolley stops in Arlington on six lines. The trolleys were the County's first means of transport that did not bog down in the spring mud, and they opened large residential areas to Washington workers. The Metro line that today runs out Fairfax Drive to Vienna follows the same route used by the trolley line to East Falls Church, and Metro has used some of the original trolley stop names. The caboose you saw at Bluemont Junction marks the area where the Bluemont Line met the railroad tracks of the W&OD. Arlington's small independent communities like Bon Air had their own schools, churches and libraries. The County was at that time still largely rural, with small residential communities dotted across it. Population growth did not take off until the 1930s. Each small community had its own street names, and the Post Office Department refused to establish a central post office for the County until something was done about the streets or avenues with the same name, including 11 Washingtons, 10 Arlingtons and 9 Virginias. The County renamed its streets in 1935 with a uniform system of numbered streets and alphabetized names, attempting to impose logic and continuity on this patchwork quilt. (The Civic Federation's page on [Finding Streets in Arlington](#) explains all. People who read it are seldom lost here.)

Directions: Return to the W&OD Trail on the other side of Four Mile Run from the Rose Garden. Take it to the right, and you will soon be alongside I-66. You will pass a wildflower area, some nice willows and then at the top of the hill the Historic Marker for Brandywine Castle, a rock formation that once had Four Mile Run flowing as a "moat" around its base. The construction of I-66 changed all that, and the stream now flows in pipes and flow-control caverns under the highway. Watch out for two right-angle turns at Madison Manor Park, the second marked by a W&OD sign. You will pass under North Sycamore Street and **ignore** the trail's right turn across the bridge, instead continuing straight to North Van Buren Street, where the trail stub ends and you turn right onto this quiet street. To your right you will see a small boundary stone with a two-foot-square iron fence around it. It sits in **Benjamin Banneker Park**.



Take a look at it and its signs, for you will soon be hearing more about it! Turn right onto North 18th Street, left on North Tuckahoe Street, bear left at the top of the hill and immediately right to enter onto the W&OD Trail again. Cross Lee Highway and Little Falls Road. Leave the trail and turn right onto Great Falls Street, then right again at North Dorchester Road on the other side of the first traffic light. Turn left on North Meridian Street. At the end of the block is a park on the left with a sign that reads *West Cornerstone*. Lean your bike against the fence and walk down the path to the stone with the fence around it.

The West Cornerstone: Andrew Ellicott Park



A look at the map shows that this is **the spot where Arlington, Falls Church and Fairfax all meet** at one point. Their boundaries are indicated here by the lines of stones along the ground. This cornerstone marks the western corner of the 10-mile-square capital laid out by **Andrew Ellicott** with the expert assistance of **Benjamin Banneker**

after the great debate on the location of the nation's new capital was solved by allowing both Virginia and Maryland to cede patches of ground for a capital district. The Arlington section of the District was ceded to the District of Columbia in 1801 and became Alexandria County of the District of Columbia. After much complaining by the neglected residents it was finally retroceded to the State of Virginia in 1847. It was known at that time as **Alexandria County**. The county seat and courthouse were located in the City of Alexandria. A new courthouse was relocated in its present location in 1898. The name was changed to Arlington County in 1920 to improve recognition and to avoid confusion between the City and County of Alexandria. In 1932 Arlington County became well known nationwide as the originator of the county manager form of government, still known in political science textbooks as The Arlington Plan.

There were stones similar to this one at each of the four corners of the District, and nine smaller stones on each boundary marked the mile points between. Many of the smaller stones have been lost or displaced over the years, but 32 have been preserved through the efforts of the Daughters of the American Revolution, who built the fence protecting this stone and the others that remain (including the one you just saw one mile from this spot In Banneker Park. That was Southwest Stone #9). The inscription on this stone wraps around two sides, and once read "Jurisdiction of the United States." The date on the back is 1791.

Directions: Turn back along Meridian Street to North Lincoln Avenue, turning left. (Watch for traffic coming from the right over the hill.) Lincoln becomes Fairfax Drive. Turn left on North Westmoreland Street and cross under 1-66. Turn right into 28th Street North. It becomes Little Falls for a time, then crosses Sycamore and reverts to 28th. Turn right on North Powhatan Street. Cross Lee Highway-carefully-and go on to the end of the block, where you will see that 2230 N. Powhatan St. is grander than its neighbors: it is the mansion known as *Maple Shade*.

Maple Shade

This house was built in 1851 by **Captain Henry W. Febrey**, just before the War Between the States.



During the Hall's Hill skirmish, a part of the Battle of Munson Hill, the house was damaged by Union cannon. The damage is still visible inside the house. It offers a reminder that the Civil War was hard on Arlington, with at least **10,000 Union troops** stationed here among a population of only 1,486. Thousands of acres of forests were cut, lest they harbor rebels. Mills, houses and other buildings were destroyed, many dismantled by the invaders for building materials. Productive farmland was reduced substantially. Forts were built, new roads cut and trenches dug. And finally, **Arlington Cemetery** was created from the estate seized from the Custis and Lee families. The war left its mark on Arlington for many years and still shapes some elements of our environment.

Directions: Down the little hill at the end of North Powhatan Street is a narrow gravel path that emerges on 22nd Street North. Turn left on 22nd, then right onto North Lexington. Lexington becomes 16th Street North. Follow 16th for about a mile to North Abingdon Street, turning left, then right onto the little bike trail just beyond 17th Street North. Cross North Glebe Road at the light at 18th Street North, then turn right on North Wakefield Street. Turn left on 17th, and on the left you will see the historical marker for *The Glebe House* at 4727 17th Street North.

****The Glebe****

This house is thought to stand on the foundation of the original Glebe house built here in 1775. A *glebe* was a farm provided to the rector of a parish in the Church of England as a part of his salary. The preacher either farmed the land himself or more likely leased it to a tenant farmer. This glebe was the property of Fairfax Parish, including Christ Church in Alexandria and the Falls Church in the town of that name. After the American Revolution, the Commonwealth of Virginia passed a law providing for the disestablishment of the Church of England in the state, and expropriated all glebes in the state in 1802. The courts held that this glebe was at the time not legally in Virginia, since the land where you are standing had been ceded to the District of Columbia. Virginia was therefore not allowed to seize this glebe.

The original house burned down in 1808, and Christ Church eventually sold the glebe farm in 1815 to buy a rectory in Alexandria. The house was rebuilt as a hunting lodge in 1820. At that time it consisted of just the rectangular section to the right. The Octagon Wing, now the house's main architectural feature, was added around 1850, perhaps by **Clark Mills**, a sculptor of the time. The white teak eagle on the roof was added by **Caleb Cushing**. It was presented to him by the people of Spain in the 1870's in appreciation of his service as U.S. Ambassador there. After many years as a private home, the Glebe was converted in the 1980's to house the offices of the National Genealogical Society, but in 2002 it was put up for sale, and bought by the Ortman family. They have restored the interior, updated the kitchen and added to the back, moving in during 2006. They have also given an easement to the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust preventing any

owner from demolishing the house and subdividing the property. They townhouses to the rear were built on former Glebe House grounds.

Directions: Turn your back on the Glebe and ride down North Wakefield Street, jogging left and right to stay on Wakefield until you reach the end where it meets the **Martha Custis Trail**, named for George Washington's wife. Left on the Custis trail for some nice riding, passing the neighborhood sign that lets you know you are passing **Maywood**, the first neighborhood in Arlington designated as an historic district. Right on Scott Street, then Scott becomes Key Boulevard, then right on Quinn Street and the first left on an unnamed street and right at mid-block onto a Rosslyn Highlands Park trail that takes you to Pierce Street. Follow Pierce to the bottom of the hill and a T intersection marked Fairfax Drive that is actually the service road for Arlington Boulevard. Turn left and continue until you reach Fort Myer Drive and *Dark Star Park*.

Dark Star Park

This park, with its whimsical sculptures, is an example of Arlington's earliest use of public art. **Nancy Holt** designed the park and the sculptures. The whimsy softens the edges of the high rise canyons of the Rosslyn district. In the center of the traffic island there are outlines on the ground beside the poles and balls. On August 1 at 9:31 AM the shadows all line up within the outlines: Stonehenge in Arlington. The time commemorates the signing of the **Rosslyn Farm** deed by the Ross family.

Directions: Take Fort Myer Drive over the bridge and it becomes Meade Street. Pass the **Iwo Jima Memorial** on your left and further over the **Netherlands Carillon**. At the T intersection, turn right to enter the Fort Myer gate. The guard will ask for a photo ID, and where you will leave the Fort (into Arlington Cemetery). Then straight and up the hill to turn left at McNair Road. At the chapel at the top of the next hill turn left on Lee Avenue and enter Arlington Cemetery. **Follow the solid stripe in the road** to the bike rack. Lock your bike and walk along the continuation of Lee Avenue to **Arlington House**, and walk around to the front of the mansion. *(Note: if you are denied access to Fort Myer due to security alerts, turn around and follow the trail along the cemetery wall on your right around to the Cemetery Administration building, lock your bike and walk up the hill to Arlington House)*

Arlington House

The County took its name from this estate in 1920 when it dropped the name Alexandria County to distinguish itself from Alexandria City.



The house was built by **George Washington Parke Custis** (known as "Washington" Custis), a grandson of Martha Custis Washington. Washington Custis was adopted by George and Martha Washington after his own father's death at Yorktown. The house was located on the northern third of the **Abingdon Estate** that Washington Custis had inherited. (The ruins of Abingdon House will be our next stop.) Arlington House was begun in 1802, with the north wing finished in 1803 and the south wing finished one year later. Construction of the middle section was delayed for some years because upon the death of George Washington and the sale of his estate, Washington Custis decided to buy as much of the George Washington memorabilia as he could afford. So the Custis family lived here in the two wings for some years before the center part of the house was finished in 1817. Washington Custis favored the name Mount Washington for this spot, but was persuaded to name it Arlington after the ancestral home of the Custis family south of here in Virginia, that in turn had probably been named for an English town called Arlington. In 1831 a young U.S. Army officer named **Robert E. Lee** married Washington Custis' daughter, **Mary Ann Randolph Custis**, in this house. Lee came here to live with his family between his military assignments. When Washington Custis died in 1857, Lee took up residence here to set the estate straight. The Lees left the house in 1861 shortly after the Civil War began and the house was occupied by Union troops. (Later it was technically seized for non-payment of taxes that in fact Mrs. Lee had paid, but the payment was refused because she could not deliver it in person.)

After the Union forces were routed at the Battle of Bull Run and had fled back to Washington, some of the Union dead were buried here at the order of General Montgomery C. Meigs, who had lost his son at Bull Run and put the cemetery here to make the house uninhabitable for the Lees after the war. During the war, the plight of the freed slaves from southern states living in squalid refugee camp conditions in Washington led to the creation of **Freedmen's Village** on the Arlington estate grounds. Many years after the war, the village was dismantled and its residents relocated. Some current residents of **Arlington View** neighborhood trace their families back to Freedmen's Village.

The Potomac River bridges below you have always been important to Arlington's development. The oldest was built where **Chain Bridge** now stands (far out of sight upstream from here to your left). It was built in 1797 by the merchants of Georgetown in their struggle to dominate the commerce of the area. The first bridge there was washed away several times by floods before replacement by a suspension bridge that hung from huge chains. The chains are long gone, but it is still known as Chain Bridge. The second bridge site was known as **the Long Bridge**, and was built in 1808 where the 14th Street Bridge is today, to your right. Next, the merchants of Alexandria, who were Georgetown's chief rivals, lobbied successfully for the **Aqueduct Bridge**, built in the 1840s on the current site of **Key Bridge** (to your left) to carry the C&O canal in a raised channel across the Potomac and down to Alexandria. **Memorial Bridge** (directly in front of you) was built in 1932 as a memorial to the reuniting of North and South, the reason for the wide sidewalks and ornamental railing that cyclists appreciate. The various other standard Interstate bridges were all built in the 1960s or even more recently.

Directions: Return to your bicycle and follow the stripe down the hill to the bottom, making a left at the wide road toward Memorial Bridge. Get onto the wide sidewalk on the right and continue until you cross the Parkway approach to Memorial Bridge. Turn right at the T immediately beyond the road crossing, cross another off-ramp, bear left where the trail sign points, cross the Parkway and turn right to ride on the trail down the river. Bear right at the second overpass toward Alexandria. Turn left at the sign that says Washington National Airport, and follow that trail through an underpass and on to the Bicycle Parking. Lock your bike and proceed on foot to the Abingdon Ruins, a round trip of .6 miles, or walk your bike, adding .6 to the cue sheet mileage from this point on. **No bicycle riding is permitted in the garage.** Follow the brown signs overhead to Abingdon, crossing the garage toward the airport terminals to the far wall, then turn right, climb or elevator up one level, and continue until you reach the walkway marked *Abingdon Ruins*. Walk up the slope to the historic marker and the fragments of old walls.

Abingdon Plantation

Abingdon plantation was owned for many years by the Alexander family, for whom Alexandria was named. John Parke Custis, Martha Washington's son, purchased the plantation and moved his family to Abingdon in 1778. It was the birthplace of **Nelly Custis**. After her father's death, George and Martha Washington raised Nelly and George Washington Parke Custis. Arlington plantation was carved out of the northern third of Abingdon. Abingdon survived Union occupation during the Civil War and the end of plantation life, but fell into disrepair until it burned in 1930. In 1938 **National Airport** was built, with the runways mostly on fill, moving Abingdon back from the edge of the Potomac and eventually eliminating the spectacular view. The airport was about to replace the ruins with another parking lot when Arlington historian **Eleanor Lee Templeman** raised the alarm in Richmond, provoking hearings on the historical significance of the ruins and leading to their preservation. There are some interesting historic placards to read on the site.



Directions: Retrace your steps to your bicycle, and return to the Mount Vernon Trail. Turn right back toward DC, then after the first overpass take a left marked "**Crystal City**." This trail ducks under the Parkway to a tunnel that emerges at the fountain park in Crystal City. Turn left then immediately right onto 18th Street South. Follow 18th Street for five blocks to the entrance to Virginia Highlands Park on the left. Turn left into the park, then immediately right. A few yards further on, turn left onto the marked bike trail. Pass between two soccer fields, then at the steep uphill turn left again onto a narrower trail that will take you to a right turn onto 16th Street South. Follow 16th Street to the Do Not Enter sign and turn right onto Kent Street South. At the parking lot turn left, then take the second right to climb the hill through the parking lot up to its back entrance on S. Lynn Street. Turn left on S. Lynn. At the intersection of South Arlington Ridge Road, cross onto the left sidewalk to avoid the busy Ridge Road traffic, turning left into the parking lot of the *Arlington Historical Museum*.

That concludes your tour. We hope you enjoyed it!

If you found problems, please [email Randy Swart](#).



This page was revised on: April 10, 2007.