

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received **MAY 18 1983**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Takoma Park Historic District

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number No. 7 and 10 for Boundary Description

not for publication

city, town Washington, D.C.

N/A vicinity of

congressional district

Walter E. Fauntroy  
Congressman

state District of Columbia

code

11

county District of Columbia

code 001

**3. Classification**

**Category**

- district
- building(s)
- structure
- site
- object

**Ownership**

- public
- private
- both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
- N/A being considered

**Status**

- occupied
- unoccupied
- work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
- yes: unrestricted
- no

**Present Use**

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military
- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple ownership public and private

street & number

city, town

N/A vicinity of

state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number

6th and D Streets, N.W.

city, town

Washington

state District of Columbia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title District of Columbia's  
Inventory of Historic Sites

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date October 7, 1980

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office

city, town Washington

state District of Columbia

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

It is an area of more than 25 squares in the northwest sector of the District of Columbia, generally bounded by Piney Branch and Blair Roads on the west and north, the District of Columbia/Maryland line on the north to northeast, and Aspen and Maple Avenues on the south. It was founded and developed as a suburb by Benjamin F. Gilbert in 1883. Takoma Park was the first commuter suburb in the area and was originally located on approximately 100 acres of land around the B&O Railroad tracks. Gilbert, in planning his suburb, ignored jurisdictional lines, and the original town of Takoma Park thus is located in the District of Columbia, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, Maryland (Part of Takoma Park, Maryland has been designated a historic district and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.)

### General Description of Architecture

Takoma Park is significant for the quality of its architecture. The suburb was planned with large detached houses set back from the building line and villas and cottages designed in the manner of Jackson's pattern book houses with verandas, large lawns and privacy. The major architectural styles represented in Takoma are the Stick and Shingle styles, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and the Bungalow. The earliest houses were Stick and Shingle styles, an architectural style very popular on the east coast in the 1880's and Victorian Cottage styles. An excellent example of this style in Takoma Park is the Lucinda Cady house, an individually designated Category II landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Variations of Transitional, Colonial Revival and Queen Anne styles followed the Shingle style and provided continuity with their spaciousness, large lawns, and privacy, amenities desired by the middle and upper class residents who moved to commuter suburbs to escape the density of the city. Economic changes throughout the twentieth century resulted in scaled down lots and smaller houses. In large part, these structures are characterized by delightful variations of the bungalows constructed between 1900 and 1925, are set back from the street and are not discordant elements but rather maintain the rhythm and low scale of the detached single family houses which characterize the suburb.

### Boundary Justification

The Takoma Park boundaries have been carefully defined in order that the Historic District reflect, as much as possible, the original 1883 Gilbert purchase and the 1890 Grammar Addition to Takoma Park with the exception of the two block area of Blair Road between Piney Branch and Geranium Street. Although this two block area of Blair Road is not part of the Gilbert or Grammar Addition, it is continuous with the Takoma Park Maryland Historic District. In addition, Blair Road was one of the earliest connecting roads through the area and retains its curving country road quality as well as some visually interesting and early houses which are consistent with those in the early Gilbert and Grammer developments.

(Continued on Form FHR-8-300)

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Local History
<b>Specific dates</b>	1883-present	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Various	

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Takoma Park Historic District a Category II District of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia.

It is historically significant for the following reasons:

1. It was the first railway commuter suburb of Washington, part of a national trend in the 1880's typified by movement from urban areas to developments in green open spaces located along trolley or commuter railroad lines.
2. It was conceived and founded by one developer who sought to embody the ideal qualities of rural life while maintaining a proximity to the city, an American development trend which had its impetus in the late 19th century.
3. It contains religious, educational, and commercial institutions which have been associated with the community throughout the late 19th and present 20th century.

The historic district retains much of its late nineteenth-early twentieth century architectural character and physical design because:

1. It retains its late 19th century rural suburban quality of large, single family homes set amidst tree-filled lawns.
2. It contains examples of Stick and Shingle style houses which are significant representations of the development of the Shingle style house in the 1800's.
3. It contains excellent examples of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Bungalow architecture, all of which are infill but which maintain the rural suburban environment, and complement the original intent of the developer.

(Continued on Form FHR-8-300)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 116 acres

Quadrangle name Washington West, D.C.-MD-VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	8	3	2	5	5	2	0	4	3	1	6	1	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

1	8	3	2	5	5	0	0	4	3	1	5	3	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 

1	8	3	2	4	5	5	0	4	3	1	5	3	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D 

1	8	3	2	4	5	6	0	4	3	1	6	1	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

**Verbal boundary description and justification** It is an area of more than 25 squares in the northwest sector of the District of Columbia, generally bounded by Piney Branch and Blair Roads on the west and north, the District of Columbia/Maryland line on the north to northeast, and Aspen and Maple Avenues on the south. It was founded and developed as (See Form FHR-3-800)

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state	code	county	code
N/A			

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Suzanne Ganschinietz, Architectural Historian

organization D.C. Historic Preservation Office date November 23, 1980

street & number 1133 North Capitol Street, N.E. telephone (202) 535-1294

city or town Washington state District of Columbia

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Carol B. Thompson

title Director, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs date May 18, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Patrick Andrus date 6/30/83  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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As Takoma Park expanded in the late 19th and early 20th century, additions were made in Takoma Park, Maryland. The area immediately around the designated Historic District contains residential housing stock which dates (with very few exceptions) from later expansion of the area and which is not associated with the historic expansion of Takoma Park.

DISCUSSION OF INTRUSIONS

There are approximately 300 structures in the Takoma Park Historic District. The area is residential in character with small scale commercial establishments serving the residents as well as religious and educational institutions. There are three types of structures which can be considered as intrusions in this historic district: (1) commercial structures which include a bakery, catering establishment, funeral home, hardware store, gasoline stations, etc. which were constructed within the last ten to twenty years and which are not sympathetic to the architecture, the scale or the character of the neighborhood (2) light industrial buildings which are located near railroad and Metro right-of-way which are not readily visible from the historic district but are never-the-less non-conforming; (3) apartment houses built within the last ten to twenty years, some on the sites of houses original to the development of Takoma Park. There are approximately twenty-one intrusive structures in the Takoma Park Historic District or 7% of the structures in the Historic District.

SUPPLEMENTARY ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The styles of architecture which highlight the development of this community could be described generally as follows: (1) the earliest houses were primarily combinations of Shingle and Stick style and Pattern Book or "Victorian" cottages or variations on Queen Anne cottages. These houses are mainly of frame and shingle construction with asymmetrical massing and flowing roofs and exhibit a variety of design detail in the treatment of porch piers and brackets, balustrades, cornice detailing and trim. Some examples are 7130 Chestnut Street, 600 Cedar Street, 535 Cedar Street, 517 Cedar Street, and 208 Cedar Street: (2) the turn-of-the-century Transitional House, frequently with Colonial Revival details, was common in this period in American architecture. The facades are frequently symmetrically ordered with Colonial Revival details such as Doric or Ionic piers and period window detail. Some example can be found at 516 Cedar Street, and 521 Butternut Street, (3) the bungalow, a style derivative of 19th century British Colonial architecture in India, was a popular style in the United States from 1900-1925 and is characterized by a low house with a verandah and broad overhanging gables. Some examples of bungalow variations can be found at 7106 Piney Branch Road, 202 Cedar Street, and 410 Aspen Street.

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Some other notable structures in the Takoma Park area are the Takoma Park Library, the Watkins Apartments, the Takoma Theatre, and the residence at 611 Butternut Street. Following are individual descriptions of the above-mentioned structures. They are also described in detail below and are identified on the Sketch Map and by photograph. individual descriptions are from "Takoma-Application for an Historic District" prepared by Terry Dammann and Keith Kinsolving, December 12, 1979.

<u>Address:</u>	<u>Square</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Block</u>
7130 Chestnut Street, N.W.	3184 Orig.	18	

Original Owner: Annie E. Miller (Mrs. Thomas)

Architect or Builder: Fred J. Lung      Date: December 24, 1888

Original Construction Data: Two stories plus cellar, brick foundation, clapboard siding, shingle roof

Est. Original Cost: \$3,800

Outbuildings/Landscape: Spacious tree filled lot.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This elegant Victorian cottage is loaded with gables. There is an unusual gable-on-gable, flanked by a smaller recessed gable on the eastern front facing the street, and this gable has a high diamond-shaped window. Both gables are framed in decorative woodwork. There is a little porch at the center front with arched woodwork into which radiant suns are carved. Access to this diminutive porch is by a door ornamented with stained glass. A small pattern of square leaded glass panes surrounding a larger square in the upper half of each window is the overall theme, and the windows are shuttered.

On both sides of the house there are prominent bay windows. The front porch which wraps around is narrow on the front and becomes wider on the northeast side. The corner space between the porch post columns and the railings are filled with square lattice work. Very wide wooden front steps lead to the entrance door, which is framed by two high small windows filled with stained glass squares. The half-circle wooden arches give a counter rhythmic form to balance the complicated angular roof structure.

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Address: 600 Cedar Street, N.W.

Square  
3172 orig.

Lot  
4

Block  
7

Original Owner: William A. Orton

Architect or Builder: Architect--G.W. Stone  
Builder--E. T. Morris

Date: August 23, 1905

Original Construction Data: Pitched roof, wood

Est. Original Cost: \$4,000

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This symmetrical country house suggests elements of the Carpenter Gothic style with its one angular gable centered in a steeply pitched roof. Its arched window is the essence of simplicity along with the rest of the architectural lines of this house. There is a three-board open railing on the first and second story porches, connected by white square wooden posts. Three columns support the corners of the lower porch, and two columns frame the entrance way. Openness of design, the width and depth of the porch, and the broad entrance stairway emphasize the horizontal rather than the vertical lines.

Address: 535 Cedar Street, N.W.

Square  
3190

Lot  
6

Block

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: One of the most charming of Takoma's Queen Anne Cottages is the white frame house at 535 Cedar Street. The front porch, from its eastern corner to the western bay window is filled with Victorian "gingerbread." The spindle work on the porch balusters is repeated in a smaller pattern at the porch roofline. Delicately swirling brackets support the upper railing, and both upper and lower railings are connected by large wooden support posts. The rhythm of the balustrade is interrupted by an arched entranceway which is further emphasized by the spool and spindle pattern above the arch in each corner. Carved newel posts offer a solid handhold at the top of the porch steps. Above the porch on the second floor is a porch that repeats on a smaller scale most of the railing post and bracket patterns established below. The upper porch is topped by a small shingled gable with a tiny arched window. The combination of the small porch above and the entranceway below, both in the southwestern corner, gives a definitely asymmetrical emphasis to the facade. The western side of the house is further brought into focus by the two-story bay window and its shingled gable projecting from this side of the house. A small arched window sits in the gable, and two small rectangular lattice work windows in the lower stories also help decorate this side view. The decorative treatment of both the southern front and the western side of the house is very appropriate to its corner site.

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Address: 517 Cedar Street, N.W.

Square  
3190

Lot  
2

Block  
12

Original Owner: H. A. Curtis

Architect of Builder: Builder: W. E. Brown

Date: June 30, 1893

Original Construction Data: Frame: Clapboard. Kitchen was in a separate building connected to back of house by covered walkway.

Est. Original Cost:

Condition: Good

Modifications: Three-sided extension on west side.

Outbuildings/Landscape: Spacious yard carriage house

Threats to Site: none

Physical Description: See below

Address: Barn at 517 Cedar Street, N.W.

Square  
3190

Lot  
3

Block  
12

Builder: J.B. Kinnar, W. G. Platt

Architect: F. J. Lung

Date: Nov. 3, 1899

Original Construction Data: Brick and Wood

Est. Original Cost: \$800

Outstandings/Landscape: This was a two-story frame stable for private use. Its purpose was for stabling, including hay and feed storage and wagons. "No horses allowed on second floor."

PHYSICAL DESCRPTION: 517 Cedar Street. Here is an interesting Victorian country style house which sits back and well above the street with several unusual old trees in the yard and two levels of rock and mortar fence. There is a center brick chimney and a four-square house mass of overall clapboard construction. A cross-beamed roof construction gives one very large two-story bay window on the east and west sides. A three-sided extension of the west side, along with its small downstairscolumned porch seems to be a later but compatible addition to the house.

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The present owner reports that Senator Clark from Maine renovated the house, and the original construction, the Kitchen was an outbuilding and was connected to the house by a covered walkway. It was called "Five Pines." An original stable and carriage house, built in 1899 has been restored and acts as a studio.

<u>Address:</u> 208 Cedar Street (originally Oak )	<u>Square</u> 3353	<u>Lot</u> 15	<u>Block</u> 4
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Original Owner: Sue F. Chapman

Architect or Builder: G. C. Chapman      Date: March 1897

Original Construction Data: Frame, clapboard.  
Overlapped front gables

Estimated Original Cost: N/A

Modifications: N/A

Outbuildings/Landscape:

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: Sam Seay House: This is a yellow clapboard house with high pitched roof. It has a wide front gable covering a northwest corner second-story porch which extends half-way across the front of the house. Both gables contain arched windows with diamond patterns topped with a sun-burst window. The inverted half-round fish-scale shingles and five surprisingly elegant finials on the high peaks of the gables are finishing touches which add to the overall excellence of fine workmanship and imaginative architecture in this "Victorian Cottage." Looking down the north side, there is a wrap-around, wooden-columned porch downstairs, which extends all the way to the back of the house where it again becomes a two-story back porch and sleeping porch upstairs. Also, on the north side, there is a three-sided extension of the house which supports still another gable; on the south side, there is a gable bay window. In addition, there is a brief additional gable, a "suggested" gable, shall we say, over the front steps. There are a total of five stained-glass windows, two showing on the front porch. The balustrades have lathed balusters. The house has been cared for over the years and appears to be in reasonably good condition. The present owner reported that in 1912 when his father bought the house, one story which was told then was that at the time of construction, the building materials were purchased and left outside for over a year to "weather" so that there would be no warping. It is thought to have been built by Sue Chapman in 1897.

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Address: 516 Cedar Street, N.W.SquareLotBlock

3191

10

8

Original Owner: (H. L. Thorntorn, Agent)  
Laura S. Thorntorn (wife)Architect: A. W. HodgkinsDate: May 15, 1900Builder: Fred BoothOriginal Construction Data: Wood. Foundation: Hard Brick laid in cement. Shingled roof.Est. Original Cost: \$4,500

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This white clapboard house was built in 1900 by one of Takoma's principal real estate promoters, H. L. Thornton. Several large pines and a very large maple shade the sidewalk that leads to the broad front porch. The square-posted balustrade begins half-way round to the rear of the house on the east side and continues across the front to the northwest corner. What makes the porch particularly attractive are the graceful Doric columns that extend from floor to porch roof and connect the porch railings. On the west side of the house is a bay window supported by a brick base with a decorative interconnecting pattern. Above the bay and across the front of the whole second story, a balustrade repeats the pattern from the porch below and provides a delightful upper deck. A broad three-windowed bay on the northeast side dominates the deck and counterbalances the western bay below. The slate hipped roof has three symmetrically spaced dormers projecting from it. Both the main roof and the dormer roofs are supported by very simple rectangular braces.

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Address: 521 Butternut Street, N.W. Square Lot Block  
3191

Original Owner: A Briscoe

Architect or Builder: N. T. Haller, Architect Date: July 17, 1911  
George C. Hough, Builder

Original Construction Data: Brick, two-story, concrete foundation, pitched, slate roof.

Original Cost: \$5,000

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This is a two-and-one-half story brick Transitional house with hipped roof, with a center shingled, two-windowed dormer facing the street and with similar dormers on the west and east sides, along with similar chimneys. The chimneys are at the center of a two-windowed on both sides of the house; however, on the east side, there is a wrap-around porch with a curved railing downstairs. Upstairs there is an open sky space a cornice height and then a screened-in sleeping porch on the east side. There is wooden bracework under the eaves. The wrap-around porch is supported by simple Doric columns, which extend floor to ceiling from one end of the porch to the other. There is arched brickwork over the windows in the bay sides and front porch and an off-center front door with an 8-square side panel and transom. The house sits high above the street and is shuttered on the front and sides.

Address: 7106 Piney Branch Road Square Lot Block  
3174 Orig. 104/1

Original Owner: W. T. Knox

Architect or Builder: Miller Date: April 1, 1910

Original Construction Data: Two story, frame, brick foundation.

Est. Original Cost: \$5,000

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: Among the many influences on bungalows built in America were Swiss Chalets, and this house reflects that interest. The overall shape of the house is more vertical and compact, rather than horizontal and spread out, as are the bungalows at 611 Butternut Street and 202 Cedar Street. Contributing to this more box-like effect is the brown shingled upper level that is almost a full story; rather, it does not contain a shallow roof and a couple of dormers, as with the "classic" bungalows. The peaked rooflines of the gables are supported by prominent white double triangular brackets that contrast well with the dark shingle. Also contrasting with the shingles are the white trimmed front windows.

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The many small panes in the four upper windows are unified as are the lower ones by white woodwork surrounding the glass. The light-colored lower story of stucco is set off by a porch across the front of the house. The stuccoed base of the porch supports three sets of double white square wooden columns. Further accenting these columns are curving brackets flanking the columns that help form two archways, one of which leads to the entrance of the house. Also a white carved bracket design forms a graceful pattern under the eaves of the porch and the other rooflines.

Address: 202 Cedar Street, N.W.                      Square                      Lot                      Block  
3353 orig.                      16

Original Owner: Clarinda C. Stout

Architect or Builder: Architect: Fred G. Atkinson                      Date: October 19, 1908

Original Construction Data: One story, plus attic, frame on brick underpinning, tin shingle, roof, porch on front, small one on back.

Est. Original Cost: \$3,740

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This white, bevelled clapboard house is an early example of the Dak-Bungalow style. It is one-and-one-half stories with a center chimney, two small side dormers, and one large, very attractive three-windowed center dormer on the side facing west over the front porch. The shingling and diamond pattern in the windows adds a touch of elegance to the unusual gambrel roof. A broad front with six Doric wooden columns is connected by a square-posted railing, which also extends down the front steps as a hand railing. There are two ample matching bay windows fronting on the porch, and a third bay on the north sides balances the other two big bays on the front. The fat, squat amplexness of the structure gives a pervasive atmosphere of "welcome" and "openness" and rest to the traveller with the Dak Bungalows in India were supposed to convey. At present the house is in a rundown condition.

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Address: 410 Aspen Street, N.W.

Square  
3274

Lot  
13

Block

Original Owner: Harold Depue

Architect or Builder: J. M. Faulconer  
Kensington, MD.

Date: N/A

Original Construction Data: Brick foundation, frame, shingled roof.

Estimated Original Cost: \$3,000

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This distinctive, very steeply pitched roof bungalow contains elements of earlier Takoma styles with its shingled gables and clapboard siding on the lower story. On three sides of the house there are three oval windows with decorative frames. On the west side is a contained bay-window toward the back of the house on the lower story only. There is an ample four-windowed shingled gable facing the street. A subtly sloping curve constructed from the main roof to the cornice of the gable roof softens the otherwise angular dormer. The roofline also has an unexpected filled-in curve underneath the eave over the porch. There is a deep porch across the front; simple round wooden columns are supported at the square-posted porch railing by concrete posts.

Address: Public Library-Takoma  
5th and Cedar Street, N.W.

Square  
3191

Lot  
12-800,

Block  
801

Contributor: Andrew Carnegie and Public Funds

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: Takoma Library on the corner of 5th and Cedar is a typical Carnegie Library construction: hipped roof, one massive story with rather simplified entablature, composed of dentils and frieze and brackets at the roofline. The centered Palladian doorway with fanlight window, at the top of broad concrete steps has Ionic pilasters topped by a small circle within a rectangle pattern above the columns. There is a frieze pattern of circle and four lines above the semicircle arch topped by a single row of protruding bricks at the center of which is a keystone. The same brick pattern is repeated in the two Palladian windows of equal size and elevation as the doorway. Quoin brickwork forms the corners of the building. Care was taken with the decorative side entrance, leading to the lecture Hall which has the same fanlight window as the front and which stands above a pediment over the door; the brick arch is supported by two anchor stones and a tripart keystone. The cornice work and window treatments are the same on this side of the building with the exception of one square window at the rear which is plain. The overall effect of the edifice is rather low and horizontal in feeling with a lot of classical decorative treatments, which is more typical of Carnegie buildings rather than of Takoma styles. It gives the neighborhood a quiet, sedate atmosphere.

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Historic Notes: Original lots were bought and contributed by homeowners in Takoma. One story of how Takoma happened to be selected as the location of the first branch library in Washington is that a local resident (some say it was Mr. Meikeljohn) was on a return voyage from Europe and happened to meet Mr. Andrew Carnegie aboard ship, who informed him that he had donated \$350,000 to the capital city for branch libraries whereupon Mr. Meikeljohn told him what a wonderful place Takoma was and how honored they would be if they could be the beneficiaries of funds for a branch library. The result of this chance meeting was that a committee of public spirited citizens was formed, and they selected and bought and donated an excellent site for the library and Carnegie designated \$40,000 to be spent on the building. So the land was purchased by subscription at a cost of \$1,800, and the building was officially opened for the distribution of books on November 17, 1911.

Address: 406 Cedar Street, N.W.

Square  
3276

Lot  
17

Block

Original Owner: Mrs. Mary J. Watkins

Architect or Builder: A. S. Baird

Date: May 21, 1908

Original Construction Data: Brick and concrete  
Three stories and basement  
Six apartments, Flat Roof, tin.

Original Estimated Cost: \$18,000

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This three-story, red-brick Victorian apartment building was built by William Watkins for his six daughters, as there are six large apartments in it. It has been said that the best building materials and workmanship, overseen by its owner every step of the way, went into it. The architect, A. S. Baird has constructed a flat-roofed rectangle, offset by two octagonal five-windowed bays, which stand like fortress towers at the front corners of the building, although they are not elevated higher than the roofline. A three-tiered porch made of concrete blocks fills the entire front space between the bays. This building is very similar to an earlier hotel which Watkins built on the other side of the tracks, but which burned. The porch has four prominent columns filled in by a moulded concrete thick-posted balustrade. There is a center double panelled, bevelled-glass entrance door with transom overlooking two flights of stairs ascending a steeply terraced front lawn. Overall, there are one-over-one windows topped by lintels and french doors opening onto the second and third story porches. Double parallel cornices give a decorative emphasis at the roofline. The sides of the building are perfectly plain.

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Address: 4th and Butternut Streets., N.W. Square Lot Block

Original Owner: Takoma Theatre Corporation 3280 14

Architect or Builder: John J. Zink, Arch.

Original Construction Data: Brick, steel, reinforced concrete

Estimated Original Cost: \$55,000 to \$60,000

Address: 611 Butternut Street, N.W. Square Lot Block

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Original Owner: Edward O. Ulrich

Architect: D. L. Richardson

Date: June 1, 1923  
(filed May 18, 1923)

Builder: G. W. Chase, 415 Cedar Street

Original Construction Data: Concrete brick foundation, frame, terracotta tile roof.

Original Cost Estimate: \$20,000

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This is a spacious dashed -on pebble stucco house on a blonde brick foundation. It has a massive terracotta tile roof with quite a wide space given to paneled overhanging eaves. In its proportion of roof-eaves to its base, a Japanese influence is suggested. At the west side, on both sides of a brick chimney which tapers to a wide base, there are twin 3x3 dormers. The bay windows downstairs on the west side are built angularly into the chimney. The main entrance of the house faces south. There is a very broad porch, broad entrance stairs with massive brick sidewall rails, and this porch wraps around the west side. It seems originally to have been built as an open side porch, and then it was screened-in and finally glassed-in. There are six massive square stucco columns filled in by blonde brick wall railing.

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Takoma is significant because it is Washington's first railroad suburb. Takoma Park was developed and founded as a suburb by Benjamin F. Gilbert in 1883. It was developed as the first commuter suburb in the area and was originally located on approximately 100 acres of land around the B & O Railroad tracks in the upper northwest edge of the District of Columbia. Gilbert, in developing this suburb, disregarded jurisdictional lines and the town thus is located in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County and Montgomery County, Maryland. (Part of Takoma Park, Maryland has been designated a historic district and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places). When Gilbert selected this site, few roads extended north from Washington City, and during the first years of its existence Takoma Park depended almost entirely on the steam railroad for the movement of goods and people. This type of commuter suburb was part of a national trend which occurred in the 1880's and was typified by movement from urban areas to developments in green open spaces located along railroad and trolley lines. The establishment of development away from the density of the city was part of a contemporary philosophy that advertised suburbs such as Takoma Park as providing the advantages of country living while maintaining access to the city. Takoma Park was advertised as being located high above the swampy, malaria-ridden Washington City and possessing such amenities as fresh spring water and beautiful cottages and villas surrounded by spacious, landscaped lawns. The residences in Takoma Park were located within walking distance of the railroad station, and Gilbert sited the grander houses to be in view of the tracks in order to further emphasize the idyllic character of the suburb to train passengers.

Takoma Park is also significant for the quality of its architecture. The suburb was planned with large detached houses set back from the building line and villas and cottages designed in the manner of Jackson's pattern book houses with verandas, large lawns, and privacy. The major architectural styles represented in Takoma are Stick and Shingle styles, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Bungalows. The earliest houses were Stick and Shingle styles, an architectural style which was very popular on the East Coast in the 1880's.

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The text of this section consists of edited excerpts from "Takoma Application for an Historic District" prepared by Terry Dammann and Keith Kinsolving, December 12, 1979.

Benjamin F. Gilbert, the founder and developer of Takoma Park, promoted his new suburb with the flair and enthusiasm characteristic of the late 19th century movement away from the cities and out to the suburbs. Prior to Gilbert's development, the area was unsettled farmland. As late as 1875, Mrs. Angus Lamond, who lived near Lamond Station (later known as Takoma-Lamond Station) described the area as follows: "There were but three families living within the reach of her home-- the Bladens, the Hagens, and the family of Dr. Cockerville and there were still standing buildings nearby which has been erected by the army for use during the Civil War." In addition to farmland, there were natural springs in the area. The first (called Spring No. I) was located between what is now Blair Road and the railroad tracks on a small tract of land called Spring Park, and the second was Spring No. II and still is located between Elm and Poplar Avenues (in Maryland).

In 1883, Benjamin Franklin Gilbert purchased the original hundred acres for Takoma Park, a tract which spanned the District line; and the town grew without regard for jurisdiction. Gilbert, in conjunction with others gradually acquired more land, (some from the old Carroll estate, the Francis F. Blair estate, and additions from the Riggs and General Beale properties) so that by 1889, there were approximately 1500 acres and the number of homes had increased from the original five to over 200. Although the original site was described as "a place only for the wild creatures of nature," Gilbert persevered in his development. His enthusiastic real estate ads promised that Takoma would be illuminated by electricity, a fine hotel would be erected, and that a sanitorium would be established. The name Takoma was the idea of one of the residents who felt the experience of residing in the development was expressed in the American Indian word Tacoma meaning "exulted place" or "high up near heaven." The letter "k" was substituted for the "c" so that it would not be confused with Tacoma, Washington.

A healthy climate, pure water from wells, some of which were serviced by windmills, and natural "healing" springs, a relaxed country environment, and especially the accessibility offered by the railroad, and later, tramline were the things which attracted some of the first commuters.

Takoma's first general store was opened in 1884 by Issac Thomas who supplied luxury items as well as necessities to the citizens. By 1886, telephone-telegraph communication facilities were established inside the first post office. Later another store was opened by George L. Favorite, located on Carroll Street. The store was burned in 1893. Mrs. Favorite started the first small local newspaper called "The Favorite," which was followed later by a booklet journal called the Pioneer Press, which printed anecdotes, editorials, recipes, news of special events, and items of gossip.

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In 1881, the first public school was opened on Tulip and Maple Ave., on a site purchased from Gilbert for \$740. Twenty years later, in 1901, Takoma Elementary School was opened on Piney Branch Road and Dahlia Street. That spacious old school was razed in 1976 to make way for a new school.

In 1889, seventy street lamps were installed in clusters of three incandescent lamps giving the light of "2000 candlepower." The steam-powered machine which supplied electricity was designed by W. H. Reynolds and made use of the water from Spring No. I.

The Evening Star of June 15, 1889, described Washington's first suburb and its B&O Railroad whistlestop with nineteen trains stopping there daily: "The pretty depot presents a busy scene in the early evening, when the trains from the city arrive... any person who knows not Takoma would wonder where all the people went...the platform is thronged, and there is an overflow out in the streets. Waiting for some of the arrivals are carriages, for others horses, but the majority walk."

The people who settled in Takoma wished to construct a self-sufficient community which offered peace and tranquility away from the cares of the city. The first houses were expansive (although they were called "cozy cottages") and gave place to large families and servants, typifying a rather standard optimism about the future and the continued availability of cultural wealth, materials and energy. The bungalow's popularity showed a modified or scaled down expectation creeping into the values of American family life. Although Takoma Park has survived as a continuous community, it has suffered from economic shifts and changes in the District of Columbia's real estate market. An additional possible threat to the scale and character of the neighborhood is Metro, which has brought along with it real estate speculators and developers. The community has come together in the past few years to support down-zoning for the area, to support historic district designation and has worked with other agencies of the D. C. Government to initiate traffic and planning studies.

Benjamin Franklin Gilbert

Benjamin F. Gilbert was born in De Ruyter, Madison Country, New York and came to Washington during the Civil War where he worked as a clerk in the National Hotel. Eventually he opened up "one of the finest luncheon spots in Washington," called "The Temperance," located between 9th and 10th Street, N.W. He was also associated Alexander "Boss" Shepard, thus beginning an active involvement in real estate. Gilbert suffered financial losses during the panic of 1873, and left Washington for Dunellen, New Jersey where he regained his fortune in the real estate market. In 1883 he returned to Washington and began the purchase of land for Takoma Park.

Gilbert was elected the first mayor of Takoma but did not serve out his first term. For political rallies, he built a 60 foot tower, and next to the tower, a log cabin was constructed as a meeting house; it served for a short time as a jail and firehouse also. In the Depression of 1893 Gilbert again lost large sums of his money which was tied up in unimproved real estate. He became ill for the last seven years of his life, and in 1907 died of a stroke. He was typical of the entrepreneurs of the late 1800's who envisioned the development of the suburbs along the commuter railroad lines.

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The Takoma Park News, Oct. 11, 1980. (Only one issue published.)

\* (TMPL).

Takoma Park--75 Years of Community Living, 1883-1958. Washington

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"Takoma Park Suburban Homes." Gilbert, B. F.. Real Estate, Washington,

D.C.: A. G. Gedney, 1886.

Takoma Park: The Sylvan Suburb of the National Capital. Takoma Park

Citizens' Association, 1901.

Takoma Record, Takoma, D.C. (TMPL)

Waldhorn, Judith Lynch, Commentary, and Carol Olwell, Photography.

A Gift to the Street. San Francisco: Antelope Island Press,  
1976. (MLK)

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles

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Assorted Clips in the Files of:

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Takoma Park, Md. Library \*(TMPL)

Washingtoniana Room of Martin Luther King Library; Historic District of  
Takoma Park, Md. (Ellen Marsh); Columbia Historic Society;

\*(MLK)

Library of Congress Map Division. \*(LCMD)

Washington Evening Star