

The Pines

By Barbara Glakas

The lot on which The Pines Center is now located, at the northeast corner of Elden and Monroe Streets, was once the estate of John Barker.

John H. Barker (1814-1893) obtained ownership of various parcels of land around Herndon in 1869, including land in downtown Herndon in the vicinity of Monroe, Quincy, Jackson, Van Buren, Adams, Jefferson, Grant and Madison Streets. Some of his parcels can be seen on the 1878 map of Herndon drawn by cartographer, G.M. Hopkins. Barker subdivided part of this land into parcels of approximately ½ acres and started selling them off.

Barker died in 1893, still owning several of the lots in his subdivision. By 1901 the court had partitioned Barker's estate to various heirs and land owners. Part of the court decision decreed that "the Mansion House of the late J. H Barker and the two acres connected therewith" [that is, lots 1, 2, 13 and 14] be sold privately or at a public auction. Barker's son – John H. Barker Jr. (1857-1941) - was the highest bidder. These two-acres of land were surrounded by Elden, Monroe, Adams and Quincy Streets.

It is unknown exactly when the Barker house was built. However, when Kathryn "Kitty" Kitchen Hanna was interviewed in 1905-1906 about her life in Herndon during the Civil War, she said:

"The Barker corner was still all pines then, no house there, an' at the crossroad stood the outside picket all day."

The home stood at the approximate location of the current AutoZone and Sherwin-Williams paint store on the west end of the current shopping center, near the intersection of Monroe and Pine Streets, facing Elden Street. Two wings were added onto each end of the main home which were used as apartments that were rented out. Some Herndon residents say the apartments were built at some point after Barker's death in 1941, while others think the apartments may have been built prior to 1940.

There were two apartments on each side of the main Barker house, and with each apartment having its own individual entrance. There was a long shared porch that ran across the front of the house and apartments. Mr. Barker's house – and later the apartments – was known as "The Pines" due to the pine forest that was located around it. These pines were described as long needle or loblolly pine trees, whose needles grow to about six to nine inches long. They are fast-growing trees that can grow as fast as about two feet per year and can reach well over 100 feet tall with an average life span of 100 years. One Herndon resident recalled how he and his family would go cut down a Christmas tree every year from the pine forest on the Barker property.

Lottie Dyer Schneider, who lived in Herndon from 1879 to 1920, described The Pines in her 1962 book *Memories of Herndon, Virginia*:

“The Pines, the residence of Mr. John Barker, was a gracious house in a grove of beautiful tall pines, sixty feet or more in height. In my childhood Miss Ruth Barker was a delightful hostess for her brother after his wife’s death. This place was across the road from our little home [on Monroe Street], and The Pines are happy memories to me. There was always music in these trees. They signed softly in gentle breezes, their melodied were more audible when brisk winds blew, and in times of storm they moaned and swayed. They seemed to me like a giant instrument which expressed such varied moods and changing rhythm. As long as Mr. Barker lived, lovely shrubbery and trees characterized the landscape, but after his death his son added hideous appendages to the house and used it as a rental property. Gradually the place took on a slum-like appearance and the pines looked down in solemn dignity on flapping clothes on the line lines on the porches and on a scene of general neglect and decay.”

Long-time Herndon residents said that The Pines ended up becoming low cost housing. Some recalled from their childhoods how they went to school and church with some children who lived at The Pines. One recalled how “the kids who lived at The Pines were very poor. Some mothers made their clothes from gunny sacks from the mills.”

Herndon residents recall that the apartments looked run down on the outside and looked to be rarely if ever painted. The apartments were very small and spartan. The walls were plaster. There was a single light hanging from the ceiling. They had wood stoves for cooking and heating. There were outdoor privies and a water pipe outside. Later, in the early 1950s, sewer lines were added so that the out buildings had flush toilets.

In the later years the Barkers did not live on the property but they had an on-site manager who lived in the main house. Some recall how members of the Barker family would come into town about once per year for a few days - presumably to check on the property - stay in a locked room in the main house, and then leave.

The Pines was torn down c. 1963-64, and a shopping center called The Pines Center was built c. 1965 in its place, one of Herndon’s early shopping centers. One long-time Herndon resident recalled, “My father got the job of bull dozing it down to make way for the shopping center, but he removed the staircase railing and the pickets from the steps before hand and kept them for many years until I was building my house on Van Buren. He gave them to me to use for my staircase.” Another former Herndon resident, Virgie Wynkoop (1878-1981), explained that the few remaining pine trees were removed when the shopping center was built.

In its early years The Pines Center was anchored by an A&P Grocery Store with a Drug Fair Pharmacy next door. A very popular Herndon restaurant that opened in the Pines Shopping Center in the 1970s was the Tortilla Factory which closed in 2012. Many businesses have come and gone over the years in The Pines Center. It has several small retail stores with some vacant

units as well. As of 2019 the major stores that occupy The Pines Center include the Best Way Supermarket and The Dollar Tree store.

The lot where The Pines Center is located is privately owned but is also part of the Town of Herndon's Downtown Master Plan. Future redevelopment plans include a mixed use center, with retail along Elden Street and new housing transitioning northward toward the adjacent neighborhood. As of 2018, the block directly behind the shopping center started being redeveloped into a row of new single family homes along Jefferson Street, a development called "Station House."

Through the years - from acreage filled with pine trees, to an estate owned by the Barker family, to an apartment rental property, to one of Herndon's earliest shopping centers - the words "The Pines" have long-held meaning in Herndon's history.

About this column: "Remembering Herndon's History" is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon's past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of "Remembering Herndon's History" columns is available on the Historical Society website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org.

The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society's website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org, and the Historical Society's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.

Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com.