

## **Herndon: A Resort along the Railway**

By Barbara Glakas

For a time in the early 1900s the railroad that bisected the town of Herndon was known as the Washington & Old Dominion Railway. The rail went electric in 1912, creating an interurban electric trolley system. For a while, the railway experienced some financial hardships and significant efforts were made to increase the flow of summer traffic to the Blue Ridge Mountains, with publications advertising the scenic views and all the hotels and boarding houses along the way.

Found in the Herndon Depot Museum was a 24-page booklet entitled, “Resorts: Health, Pleasure, Recreation, From the Capital to the Blue Ridge on the Washington and Old Dominion Railway.” Published in 1916, with comments by the General Manager of the railway – Mr. W. B. Emmert – the purpose of the booklet was to promote ridership on the relatively new electric rail service, espousing the lovely resort areas that existed along the way.

The booklet described journeys to the Blue Ridge Mountains:

“Two hours refreshing ride through a delightful country – for morning, afternoon or all-day trips – for excursionists, visitor and pleasure-seekers. Clean and comfortable Electric Train Service. Low two-day round-trip tickets are good from Saturday to Monday, inclusive. Special round-trip tickets are \$1.00.”

The descriptions of the promoted excursions were compelling:

“Nature seen in its loveliest forms ... sun-lit country, gently undulating valleys, fresh green meadows... rushing stream of sparkling water... mountains which softly blend into the azure of the sky, and the cool healthful breezes cannot be further unheeded.”

The booklet also described some of the principal resorts along the rail line, which extended 54 miles from Alexandria to Bluemont. The resorts areas had “good hotels and boarding houses, with wide, shady verandas, from which the magnificence of the country can be viewed.”

The resort areas that the booklet highlighted included GlenCarlyn/Barcroft, Falls Church, Dunn Loring, Vienna, Wiehle, Hunter, Herndon, Sterling, Ashburn, Leesburg, Paeonian Springs, Clarkes Gap, Hamilton, Purcellville, North Hill, Round Hill and the terminus - Bluemont.

The Herndon write-up included pictures of Lynn Street, Station Street, Dr. Detwiler’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Street office, and farm scenes including wide open fields and dairy cows. It indicated that Herndon had numerous boarding houses. The principal hotel was The Herndon House, run by Sallie Holtzclaw, which accommodated 20 guests at a rate of \$1 per day. This hotel was the former Herndon Hotel that used to sit on Lynn Street, on the east side of the Nachman building (now Green Lizard Cycling at 718 Lynn Street).

Herndon received one of the longer write-ups in the booklet. It described the Town as follows:

“This progressive town of Herndon has long been a favorite place for suburban and summer residence, where hundreds of people spend the summer months each year. Located only 21.1 miles from Washington and 23.2 miles from Alexandria, with pure water and all the healthful surroundings contributory to the enjoyment of summer and suburban residence, this attractive town awaits in a welcoming spirit the oncoming of the city resident, who must needs seek in a place like this the joys and comforts which are commanded by neither wealth nor station in the thickly populated cities.

“It is thoroughly up-to-date, and possesses many advantages not to be found elsewhere. On account of its proximity to Washington and excellent transportation facilities accorded it, this town is steadily growing in favor, not only as a desirable place to spend the months of summer, but also as permanent residence, where the pleasures and the freedom of the country is combined with the conveniences of the city.

“Many streets are laid out in graceful curves, bordered by lovely shade trees and verdant lawns, fronting modest and pretty and stately homes, set well back, which present a pleasing scene of quiet beauty.

“The attractive rural scenery of the immediate surroundings of Herndon impresses itself upon the minds of those in search of a charming pretty and restful place to spend summer or the year round. It has a delightfully pleasing social atmosphere.

“It has excellent commercial and banking facilities. Numerous boarding houses and a hotel amply provide for visitors and summer boarders at moderate rates. Fresh, rich milk, which is produced in large quantities, and fruits and vegetables are supplied daily.”

The Washington and Old Dominion Railway has long since passed, but due to forward thinking planners - who converted the railroad bed to a hike and bike trail - bikers and walkers can still use the W&OD to venture into Herndon’s historic downtown, and on to points west that lead them into Virginia’s countryside.

-----  
*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](http://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](http://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](mailto:HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com).*