

# **BELMONT**

The History of a Neighborhood

by

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## **Dedication**

This historical paper is dedicated to two individuals who probably had more influence on the development and continuing tradition of the neighborhood of “Belmont” than any of the other people who contributed to the area:

1. Mr. Slaughter W. Ficklin—the original developer of the “Belle Mont” estate, Mr. Ficklin was a guiding influence on the upkeep and maintenance of the large antebellum estate. Even though Mr. Ficklin was not the original owner of this estate, he did more than any of its other owners in establishing an historical landmark that was once one of the most respected properties in the area. Present day “Belmont” comprises most of the land that Mr. Ficklin once cherished as his suburban farm just outside of Charlottesville.

2. Miss Florence Buford—the principal of Clark Elementary School from its inception in 1931 until her retirement in 1964, Miss Buford blessed the neighborhood with the illimitable energy and devotion to the youngsters of Belmont with her guiding influence that touched everyone. She can best be described with three simple adjectives: firm, fair, and beloved. It was most appropriate that a new middle school in Charlottesville be named after her. Her spirit and charisma will not be forgotten.

## **Acknowledgments**

Since there is little written history on the community of Belmont, the majority of this report is based on personal interviews with residents and former residents of Belmont. These people are recognized in the bibliography. I would like to thank these many people who took their time, I would like to apologize to many other residents or former residents of Belmont that I was unable to contact. Also, it must be remembered that since most of this report is based on personal interviews, one must allow for slight inaccuracies and contradictions; memories of a distant past are sometimes not easily recalled.

## Belmont

Belmont is, at present, a lower middle class neighborhood located in the southeastern area of the city of Charlottesville, Virginia. Belmont has seen many changes in its approximately ninety years of existence.

Belmont is the result of four primary influences: 1) the old three notched or three chopt road that connected Charlottesville with Richmond and wound its way through Belmont (present day 3 Chopt Road in Richmond derives its name from this original path); 2) the old Scottsville Road (presently Sixth Street in Charlottesville), which connected the original courthouse of Albemarle County to its later courthouse site in Charlottesville; 3) the flourishing of railroad activity in the late 1800s with the main Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Station, being located under the present-day Belmont Bridge; and 4) the historical and little known estate of “Bell-Mont,” from which Belmont gets its name.

One of the first and oldest entrances to Charlottesville was the “three notched” road that entered the city area around the present site of the old Woolen Mills on the far eastern end of present-day Market Street. This road or wilderness path of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was named for the three notches that marked the path on trees at intervals from Richmond to Charlottesville and points beyond. Mr. Bernard Chamberlain, a local historian, theorizes that after entering then Albemarle County near the Woolen Mills site, the path continued up present-day Carlton Avenue and merged with Monticello Road at the present day intersection of these two roads.<sup>1</sup> Hence, community development was inevitable along this route.

It is intriguing to note that around 1828, a toll road, the *Blue Ridge Turnpike*, was developed to *modernize* transportation into the city. This road now is the full length Market Street from Woolen Mills to the Main Street area.<sup>2</sup>

Present day Route 20 and Avon Street were nonexistent before the turn of the twentieth century. The main route before this time may have paralleled both of these roads at times, but it varied also, and parts of it are nonexistent now. This old road, or path, originally connected Scottsville, where the original county courthouse was established in 1744, to Charlottesville, where the county courthouse was moved in 1761 and the city was incorporated. Albemarle County had been, before 1744, much larger than its present-day size, extending mostly to the south, so Scottsville had been a more centrally located city for a courthouse, and just as importantly, it was on the James River water route that connected it with points east and west. As the old road from Charlottesville entered the outskirts of Charlottesville (now annexed by the city), it crossed Moore’s Creek at its intersection with present day Sixth Street, and it followed along Sixth Street into the city. It is natural, therefore, that community development in the mid to late eighteenth century began along this route nearing its approach to the heart of Charlottesville. Present day Sixth Street is the western borderline of the Belmont community.

A third and very important influence on later Belmont development was the flourishing of the railroad connecting Charlottesville with points east and west. Although the first tracks were laid in the 1850s, railroad transportation, with its steadily increasing importance, did not peak until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, housing needs developed at the turn of the century for many railroad employees needed to maintain the most efficient mode of transportation of goods and people at the time. Since the railroad tracks are the northeastern borderline for present day of Belmont, it was natural that many of these railroad employees sought housing in the Belmont area.

The fourth and most deciding influence in the development of Belmont was the death of Slaughter W. Ficklin, owner of the Belle-Mont estate, in 1886, and the ensuing five year period when his vast property of 551 acres stretching from Sixth Street to Monticello Road and southwest to Moore's Creek was purchased by the Belmont Land Company and subdivided into a quaint country suburb of a rapidly expanding Charlottesville. Debts incurred by the Ficklin family, partially due to the unfortunate mental illness of Mrs. Ficklin before and after Slaughter's death, evidently forced the family to sell their estate to the Belmont Land Company. Slaughter Ficklin had spent large sums of money to care for his wife at home with nurses and attendants rather than have her confined to a mental institution.

At the time of Slaughter Ficklin's death, Belmont as we know it today was, south of the Ficklin estate on top of present day Belmont Avenue, a beautiful valley of rolling hills with several farms located around its environs. This large area of land was then called "the Commons", because anyone was allowed to let their cattle graze on the land since it was devoid of houses.

The farms surrounding the Ficklin estate included a farm on the southwest side of Moore's Creek owned by a J.N. McBride, which was largely an orchard. Another farm that bordered Belle-Mont just north of the estate was the Goodman estate that roughly covered the area from Monticello Road northwest to the railroad tracks and was bordered by the present day Douglas Avenue and Graves Street. This estate had a French name, the "Hodesville Estate," possibly because Mr. Goodman's wife was of French origin. A third and little known estate was owned by a Carlton family and extended from present day Carlton Road up to the foot of Monticello Mountain. A Reaves family owned a lot around the turn of the twentieth century that was called "The Grove" and included the area east of Douglas Avenue to "Coal Bin Hill", or near the present day Chestnut Street area.

Slaughter Ficklin's estate was by far the largest though. Mr. Ficklin was an energetic man with much gusto for the good life, and he made full use of his vast property during his lifetime as a farmer. He won many prizes at state fairs for his excellent breeds of horses, cows, pigs, and other animals. At one time, he was considered, "one of the leading stock farmers in the United States."<sup>3</sup>

Slaughter Ficklin brought the first *Pencheron-Norman* horses to Virginia from France. He took great pride in these horses and won several prizes at fairs with them. Two of his most beloved horses, "Black Hawk," a male horse that lived for 28 years, and "Daisy," a mare that lived for 22 ears, were buried near his stables. Their grave sites were marked with flat gravestones, basically just concrete blocks. It is said that they still are in place in the present day block of land which was Mr. Ficklin's backyard and stable area. This block of land is bordered by the present day streets of Belmont Avenue, Monticello Avenue, Rialto Street, and Church Street. The author of this paper's grandfather owned a house on Monticello Avenue directly across from the Ficklin house where these stones are supposedly still intact, but as a child, I never remember stumbling across any blocks while playing around the area near the house.

There was also a small family cemetery near this site and one resident of Belmont at the time, Mr. Buster Smith, remembers as a child trying to get close enough to watch workers dig up the coffins and have them moved to another site to make room for further housing development. Mr. Smith recalls a large area being roped off, so he and his friends missed most of this event.<sup>4</sup>

Slaughter Ficklin loved horses so much that he even had his own personal racetrack built near the present day city-county line on Avon Street extended, possibly as far up the present incline where there is now an industrial site. Here he would hold races and also use the track to train his horses for other races. Another recreational activity that Slaughter hosted and possibly played in was cricket matches. Baseball was much more popular in this country at the time, but Mr. Ficklin had grown fond of cricket during his several trips to Europe. He had to bring in his cricket players from other areas as few people knew anything about the game. He may have even invited a group from Europe to come to Belle-Mont and put on an exhibition.

Besides being a farmer, Mr. Ficklin entered the stagecoach business for a period of time with a business associate, William Farrish. This stagecoach made daily trips from Charlottesville to Richmond and back.

Slaughter's brother, Benjamin, was more successful in the stagecoach business out West. Before Benjamin had moved out West, he had amassed a small fortune as a blockade runner during the Civil War. Slaughter and Benjamin's father, who had moved to the Crozet area in the early 1800s and later moved to the Charlottesville area in the 1820s as a successful tobacco merchant and minister, had every right to be proud of his independent and prosperous sons.<sup>5</sup>

Belle-Mont, the mansion (presently an apartment dwelling) in present day Belmont, has sometimes been confused with another "Belmont" estate near Keswick that was apparently built about the same time as the Ficklin house. Slaughter W. Ficklin purchased his "Belle-Mont" estate in 1847. The previous owner is not mentioned, but it is known that a prominent postmaster and successful merchant, John Winn, had lived there until his death in 1837. In addition to being a postmaster and merchant, Winn owned some valuable property near the Eagle Hotel which was located on Court Square in the city. Winn acquired the Belle-Mont property from a Charles Bankhead in

1820. The property was evidently maintained by Winn's family for ten years until it was sold at an auction to Slaughter Ficklin in 1847.<sup>6</sup>

Another historical survey lists the house being built as early as 1790 by a John Carr, nephew of Dabney Carr, the boyhood friend of Thomas Jefferson. It is said that Jefferson may have helped Carr design the house. John Carr served as Clerk of the District Court of Albemarle County and he was later the first Clerk of the District Court of Charlottesville. Carr died in 1823.<sup>7</sup> There seems a slight discrepancy here, since it was earlier mentioned that John Winn purchased the house from Charles Bankhead in 1820; perhaps Carr sold the house to Bankhead, but there are no records of this available. The three different survey records show discrepancies in these areas. One report also adds that Winn may have either erected a new building or greatly enlarged the Carr-Bankhead house.<sup>8</sup>

At any rate, we can be safe in saying that the present day structure at 759 Belmont Avenue dates at least back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century (except for a brick fronting which was added in 1937 to increase the size of the then apartment dwelling). This addition gives one the impression that the front of the house faces Belmont Avenue, but the original mansion with its impressive columns faced northeast towards Charlottesville. The view of the original front of the building was temporarily blocked off by the Hinton Avenue Methodist Church and several other dwellings on Hinton Avenue, but recent demolition of houses on the large corner lot at Hinton and Rialto for a church parking lot has once again given one a view of the once grand old structure. It can now best be described as in shabby condition.

For a more detailed architectural description, I quote from the Charlottesville Landmark Survey:

“Belmont is an unusually large brick house seven bays in length, originally one room in width with a central stair hall. A great many changes have occurred in its long history. The main section is two stories on a raised basement with 9 over 9 windows on the first floor having six pane windows for the basement beneath them and 6 over 6 windows on the second floor. There are Jack arches over the first floor windows and the second floor windows almost touch the deep wooden cornice attached to a brick projection under the roof line. There are no windows on either end wall and the chimneys are flush with the end walls projecting from the gently sloping parapet gable. In the middle of the Belmont Ave. side is a projecting wing end gable to the street that was added by the present owner. It is half the size of the original building and both stories are brick. It is attached where a larger frame addition once was that reached the edge of present Belmont Ave. There were also several dependencies shown as late as 1890 where the street now is. The other side of the building is the original front and now has a large two story neoclassical revival portico and is the same height as the outer windows, while the second floor windows on either side of it under the portico are 9 over 9. The entrance door is under the upper doors' balcony and has a Greek Revival door frame with shouldered architrace trim. The pedimented portico is supported by four square paneled columns resting on a raised brick base. The entrance bay is wider than the end spaces and the whole one bay in depth. From this porch an extension and symmetrical stairways have been added by the present owner.”<sup>9</sup>

If Slaughter Ficklin were alive today, he would certainly be disappointed in what he would find at 759 Belmont Avenue, with all the effort he put into maintaining this once grand house. One older resident of Belmont remembers the magnificent backyard that had still been well kept in the early 1900s with a “long yellow brick porch, trimmed in green that was beautiful.”<sup>10</sup> This area included Belmont Avenue, which was only a small path until the 1920s. There was a well on the path near the house to quench the thirst of travellers passing through.<sup>11</sup>

Slaughter Ficklin’s heart was with the Confederacy during the civil war. During the War, a Captain Wells used part of the house as his headquarters.<sup>12</sup> It is also interesting to note that Slaughter Ficklin was captured and made prisoner for ten days; however, it turned out to be an attempt by a Union general, General Schenck, to brainwash and convert Mr. Ficklin to admit secession was wrong, because “imprisonment” included feasts every day and almost any request by Mr. Ficklin was honored. In 1847 when Slaughter Ficklin had been travelling in Europe, he made an Austrian General get out of bed and give him a passport so he could leave right away rather than wait.<sup>13</sup> Slaughter Ficklin was a proud, feisty, and respected man with much integrity.

There have been several owners of the Belle-Mont house after 1891, one of the longest owners being Dr. W.B. Nichols, who evidently maintained the house fairly well, although he was probably the first owner to convert the house to an apartment dwelling. George Seiler is the present owner and has been since 1940.

Slaughter Ficklin owned one and possibly two or more houses near his estate. He had slave quarters between his house and stables that were apparently wooden frame houses. They no longer stand. He built a “cottage” on the other end of Belmont Avenue where present day Clark Elementary School stands. No exact date of its erection has been found, but it appears to have been built in the 1865—85 period. The estate, as mentioned earlier, was subdivided after Ficklin’s death in 1886, and D.C. Carver purchased the cottage and one acre of land in 1891. He sold it in 1903 to C.F. Crawford, whose family lived there for the next twenty six years. In 1929 when the Charlottesville School Board decided to build Clark School on this site, the Crawfords sold their land and moved their “cottage” (which was really a rather large house!) on rollers two blocks downhill to its present location, 1200 Carlton Avenue, at the intersection of Carlton and Bainbridge Street. It was then added on to somewhat with the addition to the parlor and the back porch was enclosed for a larger bath. A bedroom was also converted into a modern kitchen.<sup>14</sup> This author remembers the house in his childhood as being in quite shabby condition (late 1950s), but recent owners have done an excellent job in restoring the house. It is now once again a pretty sight (Update - fire in early 1981 severely damaged house. Now, 1989, a vacant lot and part of an apartment house).

For a complete architectural description, I quote Charlottesville Landmark Survey:

This is a fine example of a small Gothic cottage. It is three bays wide, single pile, weatherboarded, 1 1/2 stories above a brick English basement. The deeply projecting eaves and verges of the steep bellcast gable roof are unornamented except for a pair of brackets at each corner and one at the peak of each gable. A wide cornice board runs around the entire structure. There is a high central gable on the front and two dormers on the rear. Originally there were two interior chimneys, one on either side of the central hall, but one was removed in 1969. The windows are double sash, 2 over 2, with plain pediments on the main level, shorter and without pediments in the basement, and pointed with pediment-like trim in the upstairs gables. The bay window on the parlor end has decorated paneled spandrels with moulded rails. Both the bay window and the entrance porch have truncated hip rooves with overhanging bracketed cornices. The roof has chamfered posts with wide brackets and swan balustrade. The entrance door has four raised panels with raised panels with lights replaced with amber-colored plexiglass in 1969. Originally there were two rooms and central hall on each level, but the basement at the new site was only partially excavated and only the kitchen finished. It was abandoned in 1969 when a room on the main level was converted into a modern kitchen. Both single flight staircases have quarter-turn winders at the main floor level. The doors on the upper level are beaded board-and-batten with slanting tops. The roof was originally decorated with iron cresting.<sup>15</sup>

Slaughter Ficklin and/or his brother William, may have been involved with the construction of the present day apartment dwelling at 829 Belmont Avenue. Confirmation on when the house was built could not be found, but the house appears that it could possibly be antebellum. This house would later become the “Robinson Estate,” which I will discuss later. Slaughter Ficklin may have also built another house at the intersection of Monticello Avenue and Rialto Street, but this too, is unconfirmed.

The period between the death of Slaughter Ficklin in 1886 and the completion of the Belmont Bridge in 1905 is really the “birth and early childhood” of the Belmont neighborhood.

As mentioned in the introduction, 90% of the early history of the Belmont neighborhood is based on oral interviews, since very little was written on this early period. Sometimes, therefore, naturally there will be some slight inaccuracies and contradictions, as might be expected in such a report. The elderly residents and former residents are to be commended for their time and patience with such a taxing and tedious job of trying to recall their childhood memories from many years back.

By 1891, the Belmont Land Company, headed by two vice presidents, Bartlett Bolling and Micajah Woods, had surveyed the Belmont acreage and developed grandiose plans for a large subdivision southeast of Charlottesville. Belmont, of course, receives its name from Ficklin’s mansion, Belle-Mont. The Ficklin family kept a one block by two block area of land for themselves until 1906 when this was sold to a Kate Farrish along with the house.<sup>16</sup>

Present day Belmont resembles the old 1891 plans to a remarkable degree. With the exception of a couple of streets on the other side of Belmont park, or “The Grove” as it was called before 1915, that never developed, the 1891 plans and present day Belmont are very similar. The three



streets bordering and running parallel with Moore's Creek that never developed were Leander, Alma and Glen Avenues. They may have existed briefly at one time, but probably due to the flood plain of the low lying area near the bend in Moore's Creek, they didn't last. Fuller Avenue, a street connecting Monticello Avenue to Sixth Street, was later simply changed to an extension of Monticello Avenue. Lots and smaller plats of land were being offered for building sites as early as the later part of 1891.<sup>17</sup> Plans were even established for Belmont Park which was finalized in 1915 through donations from Paul McIntire, a local businessman and philanthropist. Before the park development, one resident of the area recalls just a large grove of trees with a well in the middle that supplied local residents with fine drinking water. A "Club House" on this property burned to the ground in 1909. Mr. McIntire allocated funds for sidewalks around the park and the development of a playground in 1915.<sup>18</sup>

Some of the earliest editions of *The Daily Progress*, which began printing in 1883, include classified ads mentioning, "For Sale, Lots in Belmont, 40 foot front, facing Mr. Ficklin's yard, F.A. Massie."<sup>19</sup>

An F.A. Massie connected with an old hospital at the west end of Jefferson Street in the city had apparently purchased a few lots in the Belmont area, because his name is mentioned several more times in the classified ads. Another news note in an early Daily Progress edition adds that:

Five new houses are going up in Payne and Massie's addition, half a dozen on Belmont; a number on Carlton and The Farm, and all over the city the sound of trowel and hammer is heard from 'early morn until dewy' - excuse us - we mean night. We are not on a boom, but we are counting, nevertheless.<sup>20</sup>

Between these years of 1891 and 1905, therefore, Belmont was a neighborhood growing in leaps and bounds, a result of the rapidly expanding city of Charlottesville.

Belmont in these early years of growth, was a neighborhood being developed by mostly middle and upper middle class people looking for a quiet haven from a now well established and bustling town. Belmont itself and its outskirts were not without tragedy and crime, though as noted by an early Daily Progress article describing:

A Foul and Cruel Murder - A Bo. Ben Found Dead in Ditch on Carlton - It was a sad thing indeed to contemplate that a stranger should come to our midst and suffer such a tragic fate. It was enough to bring tears to the eyes of a statue to see the stranger lying cold and stark in death without a friend to close his eyes or a priest to administer unction.<sup>21</sup>

Just as earlier pioneers had cleared land in the Midwest and West of the United States, "pioneers" of the Belmont area were not without outside dangers while clearing their "wilderness."

The development of Belmont was not an orderly progression from the Ficklin property to the southwest beyond Belmont Park, although before the turn of the century, the majority of building activity centered around Ficklin property; and the dirt roads of Monticello Road to the present

Blind Shop area, and Avon Street out to the park. Avon Street paralleled the older and more established Sixth Street one block to the west. There was also a flurry of building activity on the other side of Belmont park, but this mostly came right after the turn of the century.

One of the earliest residents of the Ficklin area of Belmont was the family of Mary Holladay, who later married and became Mary Holladay Nichols. Ms. Nichols is still living and is presently residing on Locust Avenue. She moved with her father, John Zachary Holladay, and the rest of their family, to Belmont in 1894 and Mr. Holladay built the residence at 901 Belmont Avenue on the corner of Belmont Avenue and Meridian. It was completed in 1895.

John Zachary Holladay was most likely very similar to Slaughter Ficklin in character and personality. He was a determined, strong-willed, and charismatic man of stout heart and mind, a near extinct form of homo-sapien in our modern, easy-living society. Mr. Holladay had been a member of John Mosby's Rangers during the Civil War, and his daughter relates that all he had after the war were two and a half dollars from a dead Union soldier, one horse given to him by the disbanded Confederate Army, a six months education from Hampden-Sydney College that he'd acquired before the War. Nevertheless, he eventually became a successful farmer in Culpepper, Va. area and had raised a hardy and self-reliant family.

In 1894, Mr. Holladay moved his family to the Charlottesville area and he chose Belmont for a building site because of its "natural beauty and charm."<sup>22</sup> The site he chose was a large grassy lot with a small grove of trees. The house he built was a huge and stately one. Presently it is a dilapidated and boarded up house in poor condition and without tenants for nearly seventeen years. John Zachary Holladay would no doubt exhibit his feisty spirit and take charge as he often did with John Mosby if he could see his once grand homeplace in such deplorable condition. Before the mid-1960s and as far back as most Belmont residents can remember, it was an apartment dwelling with four separate units. Mr. Dollins presently owns the house and vows to either sell it or renovate it. Residents of Belmont are anxious to see some action taken on this once magnificent edifice (update, sold late 1982 and being renovated).

John Zachary Holladay was mainly a handyman and farmer, but he was briefly the owner of *The Home Laundry* on 619 East Main Street. Later, his son John Zachary Jr. took over the laundry from his father. John Zachary Sr. evidently preferred being independent and a farmer.

Mary's three other brothers were successful also. Evin became a doctor in New York, Lewis was a professor of engineering at the University of Virginia, and Dupey became a minister. Mary graduated from Randolph-Macon Women's College and later married John Nichols, a veterinarian. Mary Holladay Nichols presently resides at 501 Locust Avenue, her residence for the last 57 years.

Ms. Nichols remembers an historical event after her father had completed his house in 1895 when she was only six years old. One Sunday morning in October she recalls a commotion - men

running and yelling around the sparse community. They had been in church when the fire bell had rung. Interested to find out what was going on, Mary rode the pony her father had recently given her to the top of Belmont hill (Avenue) to the Ficklin mansion area. From there, she watched the Rotunda burn in the distance as men from the area scurried on horseback towards the University.

Ms. Nichols can remember riding on horseback over “the Commons.” One particular spot she fondly recalls is the “Belmont Heights” area, on the present day hill at the intersection of Monticello Avenue and Druid Avenue. This was simply called “Big Hill” by local residents. Mary recalls an orange osage hedge around an orchard on the hill. A Wilkerson family raised cattle around this area at the turn of the century, and this family owned approximately 33 acres of land, most likely from the Big Hill area to Moore’s Creek behind Belmont Park. The Wilkerson family had apparently bought this land from Belmont Land Company sometime after 1891. Whether they maintained the orchard or not cannot be established.

Mary often cantered her horse with her father’s approval at a young age up and down a nearly deserted dirt path called Monticello Avenue. Ms. Nichols remembers a blacksmith in the area near Monticello Avenue warning her to slow down, but the obviously spunky girl responded that her father allowed her to canter her horse. The blacksmith was most likely an A.B. Cummings, a relative of another Belmont resident, Leroy Snow, whom I will discuss later. Mr. Cummings had originally owned a blacksmith shop near the old Belmont Bridge, but had moved his business near the present day site of the Belmont Baptist Church around the turn of the century. He is remembered as being a stern but friendly man.

One more interesting anecdote Ms. Nichols recalled was a humorous story about her younger brother, Dupey. It seems Dupey and a friend, Rodney Ball, also a longtime Belmont resident, had taken a horse-drawn wagon when they were still young boys from the Holladay house to Moore’s Creek. It was a hot summer day and the boys were looking forward to a refreshing dip in the cool waters. When they got to the creek, they took all their clothes off, as no one lived near the area then, and jumped into the swimming hole. Meanwhile, their untied horse decided it was time to go home for its afternoon meal. So the horse with the attached wagon and with Dupey and Rodney’s clothes on the back of the wagon, took off before they could react, much to their dismay. Dupey and Rodney ran between trees and hid behind bushes on their way home, not realizing that they were setting a trend that wouldn’t peak for another seventy years - “streaking.” Dupey’s father discovered the horse with the clothes on the back of the wagon and realizing what had happened, quite amusedly, went in search of the two naked elves dodging people on *the Commons*.

Ms. Nichols also remembers standing in her front yard in 1895 and only being able to see six other houses from all directions. Since there are no definite records of these houses in 1895, we discussed the matter and speculated that the six other houses were probably 1) the Ficklin mansion, Belle Mont, 2) the Ficklin/Crawford cottage at the other end of Belmont Avenue, 3) the later Robinson Estate at present 829 Belmont Avenue, 4) a house near the Ficklin mansion originally

owned by a Farrish family that faced the mansion, 5) a house owned by a Burch family on Monticello Road where the present day Monticello Apartments stand, and 6) a house built by a Webb family that was located across the street and towards the east of the Ficklin/Crawford cottage. The house was built in 1894 and is the next dwelling I will comment on.<sup>23</sup>

William C. and Virginia Walker Webb bought a lot at present day 1001 Belmont Avenue in 1894 and soon thereafter built their house. Their property was a rather large lot with a triangular shape across the street from the present day Clark School playground. William Webb was a saddlemaker and musician, an independent businessman like so many men of his time. Williams' son, Walker, now in his 90s, can remember their house, the Ficklin/Slaughter cottage, and the Bunch house as the only three residences in the immediate area. Walker describes the land being more used for farming and with no water or sewage service and only fresh water from a well on their property. Walker Webb also recalls Belmont Avenue being a "little dirt road" and Monticello Road also being dirt and not much larger. He does remember gravelled sidewalks in parts of Belmont, but no street lights. Mr. Webb remembers walking across the small trestle bridge crossing Moore's Creek at the foot of present day Monticello that connected Charlottesville with access to Jefferson's Monticello.

One of the highlights of Walker's youth includes seeing President Teddy Roosevelt riding horseback, but with typical Presidential parade, on his way either to visit Monticello or to visit his hunting cabin and country retreat near Scottsville. It is known that Mr. Roosevelt did spend the Christmas holidays in 1905 at his country retreat and he did pass through the city on the way there and back, so this could be the trip Mr. Webb remembers.

Another festive and annual event in the Belmont area was the circus, which first began setting up on its visits to the city in the Goodman/Haden Addition, or the land between Douglas Avenue and Graves Street and bordering the railroad tracks. This was a logical location for a circus as the animals and equipment could be unloaded and moved from the train cars a short distance to be set up. The site would not remain so convenient for the circus for long though, as after the early 1900s, residential housing was quickly developing in this area, engulfing part of the old circus lot. The circus was then moved further away from the city to an area of land behind the Bunch property and the present day Blind Shop.

Another interesting, if not somewhat bothersome, annual event Mr. Webb recalled was the "gypsy camps" that set up every summer on the south side of the Commons and in parts of Carlton's Addition. The gypsies would go house to house in the area begging for food, clothes, or just about anything they could acquire.

Mr. Webb remembers an Elliot's Feed Store on the Belmont side of the railroad tracks and a Brown Milling Company, also located near the tracks. Before 1905 there were gates at the train crossing that would be raised and lowered as trains passed through the area to prevent pedestrians and horseback riders and horse drawn carriages from venturing too close to these massive

moving monsters of the past. Trains must have been once just as enticing and awe-inspiring as supersonic planes like the Concorde are to people of today. Mr. Webb also recalls only a small green railroad station with a pot-bellied stove and spittoons for employees, travellers, or those just hanging around passing the time.<sup>24</sup>

Mr. Lewis who ran the Belmont Pharmacy at the foot of Belmont Bridge for many years can also remember the gates at the railroad tracks before the bridge was built. Mr. Marshall recalls an Uncle Ned Harrison, a crippled man, who operated the gate by winding a crank by hand. This good-natured man kept a bag of peppermint candy in his pocket to give to kids while they waited for the gate to go up.<sup>25</sup>

Walker Webb also recalls the Holladay laundry business and the family that lived down the street from him. He also recalls an Eddins family that lived at two older houses, 837 Belmont Avenue and 829 Belmont Avenue, the future Robinson estate.<sup>26</sup>

Several older residents of Belmont recall that there was not a church in Belmont before the 1909 completion of the Hinton Avenue Methodist Church; with the exception of the Belmont Chapel that was located on the southwest corner of Belmont Avenue and Avon Street.

This small building was interdenominational. The year it was built is unknown. A Mr. Roy Early bought the lot after the chapel was demolished and built a house there in the early 1900s.

Along with plans for the neighborhood in 1891, there were also plans for a “street railway” to run from the C&O railroad tracks south along Monticello Avenue (as Avon Street from Belmont Bridge to the intersection with the present day Monticello Avenue was then called) and along Avon Street to Belmont Park, or simply *The Grove*, as it was then called. Local businesses such as Graves Lumber Company (which became Charlottesville Lumber Company in 1893), the railroad, Ix’s Silk Mill, which opened later, and other businesses around the city offered blue collar workers good middle class salaries, enough to afford housing in the Belmont area. So while the Belmont Avenue area remained the residential area for the middle and upper middle classes, the lower middle class workers began to develop around this area.<sup>27</sup> To the southwest then, and along the short lived streetcar railway line on Avon Street, the buying of lots and building of houses prospered in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Around 1910 there were about ten families living behind Belmont park. According to Ms. Lucy Wheeler, a former resident, these first families include: J.B. Eiseman, J.M. Wilkerson, Grant Mitchell, Tom Payne, J.D. Hill, Ollie Payne, John Ross, Alfred Lang, Lewis Glass, and Stuart S. Wheeler. The mailing address to this area was simply “The Grove” and later Belmont Park. Most houses were a considerable distance apart, giving the area a country flavor which it really was as the Charlottesville city limits were still a good half mile away.

As mentioned earlier, a J.M. MacBride owned an orchard on the other side of Moore's Creek. Other businesses in the area include Hartman's Mill, which was located on Sixth Street near Moore's Creek a cement plant owned by Mr. A.C. Brechin on Moore's Creek at the end of Rialto Street, and which produced blocks for many houses in the Charlottesville area; a pigeon farm owned by Dr. J.E. Early. This rather large pigeon farm, located on the corner of Avon Street and Elliot Avenue and encompassing a whole block, shipped "squabs," or baby pigeons, to such famous resort areas as the Homestead and Hot Springs as a food delicacy.

Mr. J.M. Wilkerson, mentioned earlier, was the largest landowner in this area, owning just over 33 acres of land behind Belmont Park, mostly to the southwest. After he died at the age of 92, his land was sold for building lots in the present day area of Palatine, Green, and Rougemont Avenue. Mr. Wilkerson's boys raised cattle near the Big Hill or Belmont Heights around this time. They were Onrie Lee, Amit, and Beverly Wilkerson.<sup>28</sup>

By the time Paul McIntire had contributed funds to develop Belmont Park in 1915, Belmont east and Belmont west had begun to merge, mainly towards the southwest of Avon Street into the rolling hills and valleys of the present day *heart* of Belmont. The Belmont Heights development would come later.

Meanwhile with the exciting news of the plans for the construction of a bridge connecting Belmont with the city, the area near the bridge site was literally booming with residential housing and businesses in 1904–05.

At the Belmont end of the new bridge, business flourished. George Harlan who built a house on 910 Belmont Avenue in 1904, opened his Harlan's Progressive Grocery Store in 1906 at the foot of Belmont Bridge in a triangular lot where the bridge split off to Monticello Road and Monticello Avenue (present day Avon Street). His business had a Monticello Avenue address, so it must have faced that direction. His grocery and general merchandise store, selling everything from dry goods to shoes to fresh meat, prospered to the late 1920s, probably when Lewis Marshall opened his Belmont Pharmacy in 1928. It is presumed that this was the same building, however remodeled and added on to for a pharmacy. This pharmacy was in operation until September of 1960 when construction of the new Belmont Bridge forced its demolition.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to note here that for many years after the completion of the old Belmont Bridge, there had been a watering hole for horses near Harlan's Grocery. There is no known record of its removal, but with the advent of the new form of transportation, the car, it can be speculated that it probably wasn't there after 1920.

There was much competition in the grocery business for Mr. Harlan in the ensuing thirty years. Small community grocery stores were prevalent and very popular in these days, due mostly to

the lack of good transportation. Some of the early grocery and general merchandise businesses in the area that competed with George Harlan included:

- a) Azia Azar's corner grocery store at the intersection of Avon Street and Levy Avenue
- b) Tony Brown's Market at the corner of Avon and Hinton Avenue
- c) Melton's Store on the west side of Avon near its intersection with Monticello Avenue
- d) Belmont Market at 834 Monticello Road on the corner of Monticello Road and Meridian Street. This business was probably first operated by a Frank Cox and his wife. This store was later operated by a Mr. Newman, a Mr. Herman Dorrier, and its present day owner is Mr. Howell M. Ferneyhough. Thus, Belmont Market is one of the oldest grocery stores in Charlottesville still in operation.
- e) Burford's Market faced Cox's Grocery Store on Monticello Road and was actually larger and offered more variety until it eventually closed around 1940. It opened around 1912 and was run by several members of the Burford family.
- f) A.J. Davis' Market was near the present day site of old Mitchell's Furniture Store, on Hinton Avenue near its intersection with Monticello Road.
- g) Elliot's Cash Market at 530 Monticello Road

In addition to the many grocery stores (many that I left out because I did not have information on them), other businesses also began to emerge. These include businesses already mentioned such as Charlottesville Lumber Company, the railroad, Ix's Mill, and:

- a) A veterinarian hospital that was run by a S. W. White, grandfather of Leroy W. Snow, who later ran his nursery business on Carlton Avenue. This veterinarian hospital was located behind the present day Amoco Gas Station on the corner of Avon Street and then Levy Avenue (now Garrett Street).
- b) Armstrong's Complete Auto Service located at 417–423 Monticello Road. This business was opened in the 1920's by an E.H. Armstrong. This building is the present day site of Easton's Furniture Store.
- c) Belmont Service Station at the corner of Monticello Road and Carlton Avenue.
- d) Another service station that was run by the owner of the above service station (c) and located on the corner of Monticello Road and Meridian Street. Willard Bishop ran both of these service stations in the 1930s and 1940s
- e) Belmont Shoe Repair Company, located at 824 Hinton Avenue, and operated by Mr. A. White.
- f) R.L. Collier Barber Shop at 822 Hinton Avenue, which was opened in 1934 and is still operated by this same gentleman.
- g) Jessie Wood Meat Shop on Monticello Road, across from the present day Brown's Plumbing and Heating Shop on Monticello Road.
- h) After Harlan's Grocery Store went out of business in the late 1920s, there were three stores that continued to serve the area. The first of these stores was a *Cash and Carry Market*. After they went out of business, an *A&P Grocery Store* opened and operated up to the 1940s. Two brothers, Phil and *Stinky* Easton, operated a small service station/grocery business and later a grocery business at another site close by. This store, at the foot of the new Belmont Bridge, is still in operation.

This list does not include all of the businesses that prospered in the years following the completion of the old Belmont Bridge, but as with the grocery stores, historical data is limited on this area, also. This author regrets any business left out of this report.

With the advent of a new bridge and many new businesses and residential housing, Belmont still did not resemble present day Belmont, by any means. Streets weren't paved until automobile transportation became a social phenomenon and the necessity arose, probably in the late 1920's and 1930s and then only on major roads. Wintertime, cold weather, and rain must have produced quite a gloomy and depressing site in the early 1900s. Sidewalks, what few existed, were composed of either cinders or stone. "Stepping stones" at key intersections kept early Belmont residents from being immersed in a quagmire of mud, horse manure, and dry dust of a hot summer's day.

Belmont Avenue continued to be the elite street for successful businessmen and merchants. One of the wealthiest and most influential residents was a Samuel J. Robinson, who lived at a then impressive dwelling at 829 Belmont Avenue. Mr. Robinson, at one time, owned nearly a whole block of land including his residence and every lot behind his house to Monticello Road, including present day Belmont Market to present day Belmont Barber Shop on Hinton Avenue. Mr. Robinson and his sons operated a prosperous grocery store on Main Street where present day "Page Foster's" is located. There is not much historical data on the Robinson family, but it is known that they were still in business in the 1930s and had probably been in operation at least since the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Another prominent resident of early Belmont was a Carter family that owned a house built at the turn of the twentieth century (1904) on Monticello Road behind present day Fitzgerald's Tire Service. This house was originally owned by a Barksdale family. It was sold to a Bishop family that resided there from 1913-1918. The Carter family purchased the house from the Bishops shortly thereafter. Mr. Carter, who was an engineer for the railroad, also maintained a garden on his property where the present day tire company is located. The Bishops had started this garden and Mr. Carter maintained it. It is interesting to note that each train had its own peculiar whistle, and when they would arrive in Charlottesville, the whistle would alert the families if the engineers, porters, etc. in the area to prepare for their arrival home.

An influential judge of the city, Mr. R. Watson Sadler, resided at a house on the corner of Church Street and Belmont Avenue in the 1920s and 1930s.

A Walp family also lived in this area of Belmont Avenue. Mr. Walp owned and operated a 5&10¢ store on Main Street in the 1920-30 era. Their son, Paul, played football at the University of Virginia and later became a professor at Vanderbilt University.

These few influential men I have mentioned are only representative of many other successful people who resided in this community in the first fifty years of Belmont's existence.



As was earlier mentioned, the Ficklin/Crawford cottage was moved on rollers in 1929 to another location two blocks away. This may seem like a unique and singular phenomenon, but there are records of five (and at least probably several others) that were moved in the early 1900s.

A large white frame house that was located on the corner of Monticello Road and Meridian street (adjacent to this author's house) was moved in the late 1920s to an adjacent lot to the southeast to make room for a service station on the corner.

Several houses were moved from Lyman Street sometime in the early 1900s, most likely to make room for expansion of the railroad tracks since this road parallels the tracks between Douglas Avenue and Goodman Street.

A Mr. Lyman had built several houses in this area around the turn of the century. Two of these houses were moved and put together to form one large house. This is presently the last house on the right side of Douglas Avenue, owned by Mr. George W. Bibb, a long time resident of the railroad. Another house on an adjacent lot was also moved. I have even heard from one lady, Mrs. Thelma Chisholm of 619 Monticello Avenue, that her house was one of these moved from Lyman Street. This type of move, approximately six blocks away, would be quite a task, even today with our technology, but it is truly amazing that such a move could have taken place over fifty years ago! Evidently, many people felt moving a house was more economically feasible than buying a new house.

Entertainment was surprisingly varied and exciting in the early 1900s. Several older residents recall a "stationary carousel or hobbyhorse merry-go-round"<sup>30</sup> near the southwest end of Belmont Bridge. This carousel operated from spring to fall.

As mentioned earlier, the original circus lot for the city was next to the railroad tracks in the Goodman/Haden Addition. Later in the early 1900s until the completion of the Virginia Workshop for the Blind in the mid 1930s, the circus used a large lot in the present day Bainbridge Street area behind the old Bunch house (present day Belmont Apartments) and the Blind Shop. One resident, Mr. Leroy Snow, remembers the pageantry of the circus parade as it marched down Monticello Road after unloading at the C&O Railway depot. Children and adults not only enjoyed the circus, but also the chance to see the equipment and animals being moved, and the site being set up and taken down.<sup>31</sup>

Also, it is mentioned by several residents that the Big Hill, or Belmont Heights, was used for various recreational activities for quite a period of time as its area remained fairly devoid of housing until the 1930s. Some former residents recall a "Bruce's Carnival" that was held often on this site. The large, open fields provided are children with a nice playground site. One long time resident remembers the Monticello National Guard practicing on the Big Hill before leaving for World War I duty.<sup>32</sup>

Another area of Belmont that served as a playground lot for local residents was the Goodman/Haden Addition. Even after the circus had been forced to move its lot further down Monticello Road, area people still found large vacant lots, mainly for baseball diamonds and football fields.

In 1916, much of present day Belmont that was not originally inside the Charlottesville boundary was annexed by the city. In this same year, a J.S. Young Company opened an “extract plant” producing various dyes and other similar products. The site of this company was at the present day site of the Barnes Lumber Company on Carlton Avenue. A Ms. Masenheimer Durham, an elderly resident of Belmont who now resides on Goodman Street, recalls her father, Mr. George Masenheimer, being assigned as general manager for the Charlottesville plant during its four years of existence from 1916 to 1920. The Young Company also had plants located in Baltimore and Hanover, Pa. Various raw materials, including bark from certain types of trees, were used in the production of these extracts. Some local residents recall the loud noise of the machinery used that could easily be heard all over Belmont.

Mr. Masenheimer was treated royally by his company. Not only did he live in an impressive Spanish style house with a swimming pool, which was located across the street from the plant, but he was also given a large, adjacent office building at 1102 Carlton Avenue.<sup>33</sup> “The Young Building”, as it is now known, is on the Charlottesville Landmark Survey’s list of historical houses. It is presently owned by Sallie E. Thomas and is used as an apartment dwelling. The house was purchased by the Young Company in 1916 from Alvin J. Street. The building remained the property of the Young Company until 1938.

Its architectural description in the landmark survey proves interesting for this area:

This structure is an interesting example of Flemish architecture expressed with the great curving Jacobean gables. This feature, while not being extraordinary, is the only example in the city. Other features of the exterior are typical of commercial structures dating from the first quarter of this century; i.e. segmental and jack arches, center pavilion with the company’s monogram over the entrance, and small, decorative quoins done in brick.”<sup>34</sup>

The J.S. Young and Company closed their Charlottesville plant after a disastrous fire in 1920 destroyed most of the plant. Barnes Lumber Company took over this site shortly thereafter and are still presently operating with a large lumber yard. The house that George Masenheimer lived in was razed, but the historical plant office building, as earlier mentioned, still remains as an apartment building.

In late 1928 and 1929, it was determined by the Charlottesville School Board that an elementary school “of sufficient quality and type similar to the Venable and McGuffey School buildings”<sup>35</sup> was needed in the Belmont area to accommodate an ever increasing population in that area. After determination of a feasible site, different pieces of property were ordered to be purchased in April of 1929. \$245,000 were appropriated by the city for the building of the school.

Considerable work was needed to ready the site. As previously mentioned, the Ficklin/Crawford cottage was moved and possibly one or two more houses were razed to make room for the massive structure and its adjoining playground area. Quite a bit of grading and filling in was required to ready the site. A contract was made with the Wilson Company of Charlottesville on March on 1930 and at a meeting a week later, Mr. Paul McIntire suggested to name the school after George Rogers Clark because “his services to Virginia and the nation are well known,”<sup>36</sup> and because of the fact that he was born almost within sight of the location of the building.

George Rogers Clark School opened in September of 1931 under the able leadership of the principal, Miss Florence Buford. She would remain there until her retirement in 1964. Miss Buford, as all her students knew her by, was a very charismatic and lovable woman. She had an innate ability to show her love and understanding, even in the most trying conditions. She reigned over Clark School with a firm but fair and patient hand for many years. Of the many people who attended Clark during Miss Buford's tenure, it would be hard to find anyone who would say an unkind word about her. She was loved and respected by all and this author feels it only appropriate to name the new Charlottesville junior high school in 1966 in honor of her.

There have been many memorable teachers at Clark School. Two that left warm and unforgettable impressions on this author were a Ms. Elsie Woodward, first grade teacher for many years and Ms. Polly Echols, a seventh grade English teacher. Many other dedicated teachers too numerous to be mentioned are not forgotten by their former students. Miss Buford created an unique atmosphere for her students and faculty. Clark School provided the security of a home away from home, largely due to Miss Buford's firm but fair and caring leadership.

Two new industries were introduced to the Belmont community between 1928 and 1934. One industry was “Henderson and Irving Shirt Factory,” which was operated by these two gentlemen from Connecticut. The business located on Monticello Road just to the southwest of Monticello Road and Carlton Road, was begun in 1928 after construction of the building. Mr. Henderson's son, a Mr. Frazell, also helped run the business after Irving left the company. The Frazells purchased a rather large lot for their business, and the family still owns an empty seven acre lot behind the present day factory. Mr. Lockwood Frazell, Mr. Frazell's son, who furnished me with the information for this report, indicated that this area of Belmont was nearly devoid of houses in 1928 and most of the surrounding houses were built in the 1930s. He specifically remembers no houses being built between the Blind Shop and the shirt factory. He also mentioned that when his grandfather was considering a site for their business, a lot on the present day Monticello Dairy site was turned down at the remarkably low price of \$1500 for the Belmont site, mainly because of the beauty of the site in Belmont.

This family continued their business until it was liquidated in 1953. During the years before they closed, this shirt factory had manufactured such brand name clothing as Arrow and Rockingham. Between 1953 and the early 1960s, a Jacobson Company operated a pajama factory. From the mid-1960s to the present, there has been and After 6 shirt factory in operation, producing formal shirts.<sup>37</sup>

Another specialized industry, the Virginia Workshop for the Blind, had been in operation for approximately fifty years. The workshop had a curious and inauspicious birth.

In 1928, a Colonel Watts, who was then a former railroad worker who had been blinded by a dynamite explosion, opened a small workshop in part of the E.H. Armstrong building on Monticello Road. He and several other blind people worked in this small office (probably just one room) making brooms, chairs with woven seats, and several other products. In the period between 1928 and 1934, Colonel Watts decided to travel to Richmond and seek state funds for the construction of a workshop for the blind in Charlottesville. Colonel Watt's suggestion was well taken, because by 1935 the front part of the present day building was completed. Watts was also nominated for the "State Committee for the Visually Handicapped." By 1946 an addition had been added to the rear of the original building and workers were making various products such as brooms, box springs, mattresses, woven seats, and other woven products. Within the last few years, the Blind Shop has also added a storage garage. The Blind Shop presently employs approximately fifty blind people.<sup>38</sup>

This author can remember childhood images of "Watch Out for Blind Pedestrian" stop signs at intersections in Belmont, the white canes with the red tips, occasionally a seeing eye dog, and of course the many blind people that have come and gone in these years. With few exceptions, all the blind people this author has ever come into contact with have been, for the most part, colorful interesting to talk to, and certainly not the morose or bland people with little interest in anything as they have so often been portrayed. They are to be commended for their refusal to give up on life; their drive and determination should be admired and provide an inspiration for people with good sight.

As mentioned earlier, Leroy W. Snow, whose grandfather owned and operated a veterinary hospital near Belmont Bridge, took over his father's nursery in 1936. Leroy H. Snow, his father, had bought a house at 1003 Carlton Avenue, at the intersection of Carlton and now nonexistent Holly Street, in 1912. This house is near the Monticello Road and Carlton Avenue intersection, being the first house on Carlton Avenue. City records show the city/county boundary line ran through the middle of this house until 1916 when the city annexed more of the county! Leroy H. Snow and his wife Maggie White Snow eventually purchased a large piece of land from Holly Street down Carlton Avenue nearly to Coal Bin Hill, or present day Chestnut Street; and extending all the way to the railroad tracks. This large area of land was used by both father, son, and later grandsons for nearly seventy years for nursery and garden work. Leroy H. purchased his first greenhouse in 1912 from a Pantops residence and moved it behind his house. Since all of his property was undeveloped, Leroy H. had his hands full clearing the land and cultivating it, but he and his son were apparently highly motivated because their business thrived, especially after the 1920s.

Leroy W. Snow has been an active member of the Mormon church for many years, and he witnessed the completion of a Mormon Church on Monticello Road in 1948. Leroy W. was a minister at this church for a long period of time and is still very much active in church activities.

The Mormons built a new church on Rio Road in the mid-1970s and the old Mormon church building was converted to a Baptist church.<sup>39</sup>

The extreme southeastern part of the present day Charlottesville, or the Reaves/Nassau/Franklin Street area, is considered part of Belmont by city government, but this area has never been well received by residents of the Belmont Avenue and Belmont park areas due to its late and inauspicious beginnings. The Albemarle Livestock Market, just southeast of the city limits on Franklin Street, was built in 1946. This development and the fact that only several relatively poor families with small pig farms settled in the area originally, prompted the more elite Belmont residents up the hill to label the area “the Hogwallow.” Residents of this area peeved with this name for their area, replied that they would rather wallow with hogs than be in the “rat race” or live in “Rat Run” up the hill from their area. Hence a generally good-natured rivalry developed between the two areas. This author can remember in the late 1950s having football and softball games with both rival areas of the Hogwallow and Belmont Park. Even at present one does not simply live in Belmont; he either lives in East Belmont, West Belmont, of the Belmont Park area, or the Hogwallow or Reaves Street area.

Leroy W. Snow recalls his mother, then a Baptist, building a *Friendship Hall* during the Great Depression at 903 Reaves Street. This building served as a Sunday school and meeting place for the area residents who suffered from much poverty in these times. Money for the construction of the house was all through contributions and a Mr. Fitch built the house for no charge.<sup>40</sup>

Before the livestock market was built in 1946 on Franklin Street, it is interesting to note that it was located next to railroad tracks just southeast of Douglas Avenue. Hence, cattle could be directly loaded and unloaded from railroad cars to trucks. Before this time, probably before 1900, the original livestock market was located near the railroad tracks at the old Elliot Ice Company, or near present day Gleason’s Feed Store on Garrett Street. Today’s Albemarle Livestock Market is much larger and reaches more people than the two previous sites. “It is a thriving business, grossing as much as 5–7 million dollars in a sale year, which consists of 55 sale days – every Saturday plus 4 special “feed calf” sales held midweek. Operating as a service to the community, the Market draws buyers from as far away as Delaware and the Midwest, charging a fee only to the sellers for the handling of their livestock.”<sup>41</sup>

Well before the completion of the new Belmont Bridge in 1961, Belmont had begun changing, mostly for the worse. Some of the more prominent members of the community were dying off or moving out to more modest suburbs in other areas of the city and county. Rental units were on the rise and many landlords were just collecting rent and allowing their properties to depreciate.

Along with these problems, crime and juvenile delinquency soon followed. According to a recent inquiry by this author into police surveillance in the Belmont area, the police chief, Mr. John D. Bowen, assured me that Belmont was one of the more heavily patrolled areas in the city. Many residents seriously question this statement. If surveillance means simply sitting in a police car at

one of the businesses at the foot of Belmont Bridge and waiting for a complaint to be called in, Mr. Bowen may be correct in his statement. The police department must work harder in the Belmont area if crime is to be removed from the area.

Many residents and businesses are becoming angry, frustrated, yet sternly determined to lower vandalism and crime in the area and renew a sense of pride and charm to a once respectable neighborhood. A Belmont Neighborhood Association was formed in 1979 and its ever growing membership and hard work is beginning to draw the attention of the city government, who promise to cooperate in every way possible. In addition, after going up in the first part of the 1970s, rental housing has dropped slightly in the late 1970s from 53% to 52%,<sup>42</sup> not a significant change, but a promising one. Various federal funds and CHIPS, or the Charlottesville Housing Improvement Program, have also contributed to the beginning of a revival in Belmont. From an architectural point of view, Belmont has tremendous potential. Many once fine and expansive old homes are being renovated, and no where in Charlottesville is these any larger area with such varied and potentially grand old homes just waiting to be brought back to life. Belmont is a neighborhood of the future. Rising interest rates are preventing people from building new homes or buying homes in more *exclusive areas*. A relatively new trend is to buy an older home and spend several years completely renovating it after it has been made livable, and nowhere in Charlottesville is this movement more obvious than in Belmont.

Today Belmont is a varied community in every sense of the word. As one enters Charlottesville and Belmont driving north on Route 20, he is greeted with a "Welcome to Charlottesville, All America City" sign. The drive on Monticello Avenue to Belmont Bridge would indicate to an observant viewer that Belmont truly is an "All American" neighborhood; not a sterile and stuffy middle class neighborhood with simple matchbox houses lacking any charisma or individuality at all, nor a ghetto area rife with crime and ignorant people. The strata of people and housing in Belmont is varied, but the number of hard working and respectable people far outweigh the minority of low class housing and people; and improvements are being made every day! Belmont has, in the past, somewhat of a bad reputation, but critics need to take a new and closer look at this promising neighborhood of the future.

## Footnotes

1. Telephone interview with Mr. Bernard Chamberlain, local historian, March, 1908.
2. Personal interview with Ms. Earline Anthony, historian and early resident of Belmont, March 26, 1980.
3. Newspaper article on Belmont, **The Daily Progress**, Vera Via, reporter, May 19, 1960.
4. Telephone interview with former Belmont resident, Buster Smith, April 6, 1980.
5. Via article on Belmont, **The Daily Progress**.
6. *Charlottesville Landmark Commission Survey*, Department of Community Development, Charlottesville, Va. City Government project, p. 187.
7. *Architectural Survey*, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Richmond, Va.
8. *Three Notched Road Survey*, unpublished report, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, T.S. Scharer, May 1976.
9. *Charlottesville Landmark Survey*.
10. Telephone interview with long time Belmont resident, Ms. Isabelle Reddish, April 1980.
11. Ibid.
12. *Three Notched Road Survey*.
13. James Alexander and later edited by Mary Rawlings, **Albemarle of Other Days**, Michie Co., Charlottesville Va, 1925. p. 59.
14. *Charlottesville Landmark Survey*.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Original 1891 Belmont Land Company map, Bolling and Woods, Charlottesville Engineering Department.
18. Personal and telephone interviews with two long time residents of Belmont, Ms. Bessie Glass and Ms. Lucy Wheeler, March and April, 1980.
19. **The Daily Progress**, March 18, 1893.
20. Ibid., March 22, 1893.
21. Ibid, April 1, 1893
22. Personal interview with Ms. Mary Holladay Nichols, April 7, 1980.
23. Ibid.
24. Personal interview with Mr. Walker Webb, long time resident of Belmont March, 1980.
25. *Old Bridge and Its Friend Have Seen Presidents and Tragedy*, article by Gilbert Haile in **The Daily Progress**, June 6, 1961.
26. Webb interview.
27. Randolph Kean, *Early Street Railways and the Development of Charlottesville*.
28. unreadable.
29. Haile article from **The Daily Progress**.
30. Wheeler interview.
31. Personal interview with former Belmont resident and businessman, Mr. Leroy W. Snow, April 10, 1980.
32. Personal interview with long time resident of Belmont, Mr. James Dettor, April 1, 1980.
33. Personal interview with long time Belmont resident, Ms. Masenheimer Durham.
34. *Charlottesville Landmark Survey*, p 188.
35. James B. Johnson, Supt of Schools, Historical Supplement to the **McGuffey Reader**, Volume 6, Number 3, Charlottesville, Va. November 30, 1936. p 119.
36. Ibid. p. 120.
37. Telephone interview with Mr. Lockwood Frazell, March 25, 1980.
38. Telephone interview with Mr. Ponton, present director at the Workshop for the Blind, April, 1980.
39. Leroy W. Snow interview.
40. Ibid.
41. *A Day at the Livestock Market*, **The Albemarle Monthly Magazine**, August, 1978. pp. 12–16.
42. Article from **The Daily Progress**, Feb. 24, 1980.

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*The Three Notched Road Survey*, Vol. 3, unpublished report under the direction of K. Edward Lay. University of Virginia, 1976.

*Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Study*, Richmond Va.



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Ms. Addie Alexander	4/80
Ms. Earline Anthony	3/26/80
Mr. George W. Bibb	3/26/80
Ms. Eloise Bishop Carter	5/7/80
Mr. Willard Bishop	3/31/80
Ms. C.W. Bruffey	3/31/80
Ms. Eva Burford	4/1/80
Mr. Bernard Chamberlain	3/80
Ms. Thelma Chisholm	4/6/80
Mr. James Dettor	4/1/80
Ms. Neal Dudley	4/80
Ms. T. Masenheimer Durham	3/80
Mr. Lockwood Frazell	3/25/80
Ms. Bessie Glass	4/80
Mr. Henry Harlan	3/31/80
Ms. Will Rhoades Hayward	4/80
Ms. Iris Knight	3/31/80
Mr. Glenn Larson	4/80
Ms. Ora Maupin	4/80
Mr. R.W. Miller Sr.	3/23/80
Ms. Mary Holladay Nicholas	4/7/80
Mr. George Norcross	4/12/80
Mr. Harry Pond	4/7/80
Mr. Ponton	4/80
Ms. Isabelle Reddish	3/31/80
Mr. Dick Ryan	4/80
Ms. Sadie Sacre	4/9/80
Mr. Buster Smith	3/30/80
Mr. Harry E. Smith	3/22/80
Mr. Leroy W. Snow	4/10/80
Ms. Rubie Staley	4/80
Ms. John Stearns	4/80
Ms. Nellie Thomas	5/80
Mr. Walker Webb	3/22/80
Ms. Lucy Wheeler	3/31/80