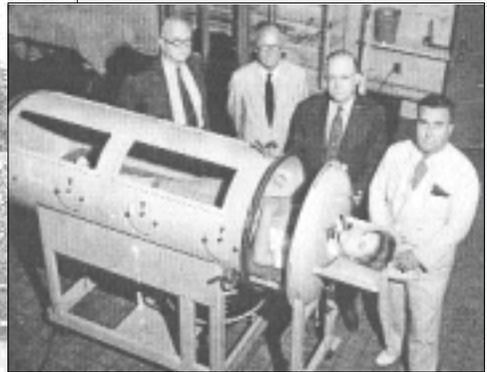


Scenes from the Past...

photo—John Proctor, Washington Past and Present (1930); courtesy, Kelsey & Assoc. private coll.



Garfield Hospital campus as viewed across 11th Street from the steps of Central High School (later to be known as Cardozo), about 1925.



photo—courtesy, Washingtoniana Division, M.K. Library.

On July 30, 1942, Dr. F.J. Eisenman (left), Supervisor of Garfield Hospital, demonstrated an iron lung on Red Cross worker Mrs. George Wheeler. The \$1,600 mechanical respirator was given to the Hospital by the Local 201 of the Reinforcing Steel Workers Union.

Washingtonians traveling today along Florida Avenue between 10th and 11th Streets might take notice of the elaborate stone and wrought iron fence that surrounds the entire square, now occupied by an elementary school and high-rise housing project coined Garfield Terrace. It was once the site of a large complex known as Garfield Memorial Hospital, one of many institutions and public buildings named after the assassinated President. However, even though it was built as early as 1884, the hospital was not the first structure on the square that prompted the elaborate fencing that remains to this day.

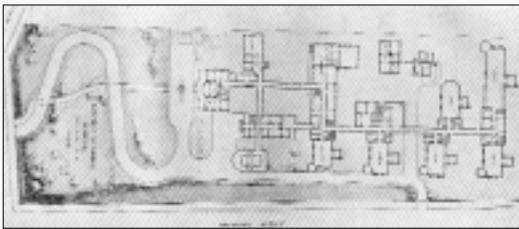
To the founders of Garfield Hospital, who incorporated the institution on May 18, 1882, it seemed appropriate to name it after President James Garfield, "whose long and patient suffering from the wounds that caused his death should be commemorated by a hospital, which, though located in Washington, should possess a national character," stated Mr. Justice Miller at its inaugural address on May 30, 1884. Funds for the facility had been raised by an appeal to the "wives and daughters" of Congressional members, 150 of whom first met in the parlor of the Ebbitt House in the spring of 1882.

The seven-acre site along Florida Avenue between 10th and 11th Streets, which extended nearly two full blocks to Euclid Street, was purchased in 1883 for \$37,500. Developer and patron Henry A. Willard held a \$22,000 mortgage on the property. The property apparently contained two mansions, one of which was the "Schneider mansion," once the summer home of Dr. J.C. Hall, and the large "Haw mansion" facing Florida Avenue, which received a \$12,000 addition and alteration to create the first building of Garfield hospital beginning in late 1883. Its grand iron fence was also altered to include an arched sign for the new hospital at its entrance from Florida Avenue near 11th Street, opening to a long winding drive into the hospital grounds.

Unlike Children's Hospital, located just two blocks to the west and featured in this space last month ("Scenes from the Past," February 2002, page 10), Garfield Hospital was incorporated to serve those in need of medical assistance that could not afford other institutions in the city. Opening day was staged on May 30, 1884, and largely organized by Mrs. John A. Logan. The day was recorded as a beautiful balmy spring day, and the opening and dedication event included tents set on the vast lawn for refreshments, supper, and confections. Chinese lanterns



photo—Annual Report, Charities and Reformatory Institutions in the District of Columbia (1898); courtesy, Kelsey & Assoc. private collection



drawing—Annual Report, Charities and Reformatory Institutions in the District of Columbia (1898); courtesy, Kelsey & Assoc. private collection.

The annual report of Garfield Hospital for 1886 shows that those admitted included 362 men, 207 women, 25 boys, 10 girls, 49 of whom were African American, and two of whom were classified as Native Americans. Seen above is the 'Public Ward' in 1898, when it was lit by gas fixtures and heated by a fireplace. At left, architect Appleton P. Clark's site plan outline showing the placement of the several buildings, with Florida Avenue shown at far left.

hung from trees throughout the grounds of the former estate while patrons danced in the mansion's ballroom. Incredibly, funding for the hospital was raised in numerous foreign countries including France, Great Britain, Japan, India, Brazil, Haiti, China, and Russia—even King George of Tonga committed the sum of \$239.50.

The first patient at the hospital was admitted on June 18, 1884, a woman government clerk, during a time when the resident physician earned just \$50 per month. Dr. Swan M. Burnett performed the first surgery at the facility on June 28th of that year, on an African-American Civil War veteran. In all, the hospital treated 178 patients the first year, 119 of whom received their medical treatment free of charge. Soon after, the hospital began to experience financial strains and over-crowding, prompting Congressional intervention and funding. Meanwhile, the Ladies Aid Association collected \$168.79 in 1885 from a collection box placed near the Garfield assassination spot in the

Baltimore and Potomac Railroad station on Capitol Hill.

The following two decades witnessed an expansion of the hospital grounds and buildings under the supervision of architect Appleton P. Clark. In 1888, local resident Alexander Graham Bell donated an ambulance, and an anonymous donor had an ice-house built on the property in 1890. All races and ages were admitted to the hospital throughout its existence. In 1889, the average cost per patient per day was \$1.54!

The number of buildings steadily increased, as a 100-bed facility was added in 1892, a new administration building was added in 1894, along with several laboratories, a caretaker's cottage, and a Willard memorial fountain. By 1898, the hospital consisted of six large buildings worth an estimated \$250,000. A large annex was added in 1899, and in 1907 the remainder of the Schneider tract on 11th Street was purchased, on which a very large central building with 78 individual rooms for patients was constructed in 1923 at a time when 96 nurses lived on the property.

In 1924, the hospital had grown to be able to admit



photo—courtesy, Washingtoniana Division, M.K. Library.

This dramatic image of the abandoned Garfield Hospital, above, was taken on February 13, 1959 by Washington Evening Star photographer Randy Routh shortly before demolition commenced. At right, view of demolition shown already underway on November 29, 1960, as seen from the corner of Florida Avenue and 10th Street.



photo—courtesy, Washingtoniana Division, M.K. Library.

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La Fourchette: An Old World Bistro in the Heart of Adams Morgan

By Adrianna Borkowski

Editor's Note: Last year The Washington Post carried a story about some business owners who live "over the store." It was nice to read of a small town-like tradition maintaining a foothold in the nation's capital. But no mention was made of one of the city's longest-surviving practitioners of this age-old custom right here in our own neighborhood backyard—and by a family from France where living "over the store" is so common. As we begin to look forward to next month's Adams Morgan house tour, we thought this a good time to highlight one of the especially nice surprises in that neighborhood. Pierre and Jackie Chauvet, by the way, are not alone in this, but theirs is the only family carrying on this tradition we know of that operates a restaurant downstairs.

Many restaurant owners set their tables with forks, but La Fourchette—named simply "the fork" in English—has something many other Adams Morgan restaurants do not have. It's not the hearty bistro cuisine, nor the music of France coming from all corners, nor its 19th century Parisian-style décor—though all those elements are nice. The historical feel at this bistro goes deeper than its dimly lit interior: This is a family-run business with a long-standing place in the community. And that is what makes La Fourchette such a unique place.



photo—Michael K. Williamson—The InTowner

Native French chef and owner, Pierre Chauvet, and his family have owned the restaurant and lived above it for over 20 years, and their presence there predates the Adams Morgan renaissance. He and wife Jacqueline, the restaurant's bookkeeper and hostess, raised two sons there who also worked in the restaurant.

The Chauvets first bought La Fourchette in 1978, while the area was still recovering from the race riots of the late 1960s. They rented and lived in the apartments above for many years until they

bought the whole building in 1981.

"Washington was a boring little town," says Chauvet, recalling the days when the District's last drinks were served at midnight. "There was nobody. The neighborhood was dead for about 10 years."

Getting a loan to buy in that real estate climate was not easy, he says, but he had help. "People told me, Pierre, it's going to be good, but it will take time," he says.

And it has been good. Today, Adams Morgan is one of the District's most popular night spots and home to a diverse number of restaurants that reflect a variety of cuisines and cultures.

One of those who predicted the success of the restaurant and the Adams Morgan neighborhood was the late Katharine Graham, publisher of The Washington Post. Chauvet was her personal chef from 1973 to 1978.

"She entertained a lot," he said, describing her as a very kind employer. "She was beautiful to me and to my children," he added.

Chauvet fondly remembers his trips to Martha's Vineyard with Graham, where he enjoyed the "well-preserved and wild" beaches there. It is the only area of the United States that remotely resembles his native coastal town of La Rochelle in France.

La Rochelle is known for its traditional drink, le Pineau des Charentes, a cognac-based aperitif. Chauvet serves it along with other traditional regional dishes such as escargots, bouillabaisse, ostrich, and a pork and veal pâté that he starts preparing each morning at 5 a.m.

La Fourchette's long history in the community as a small neighborhood bistro helped the restaurant endure the downturn in the local economy following September 11th. Regulars, known as habitués in bistro lingo, continued to visit the restaurant even while big downtown restaurants suffered, says Chauvet.

"Some are lonely and need to talk, others are French-speaking also," he says of his patrons, some of whom have become friends over the years. "In a neighborhood like this there are always people." □

* Adrianna Borkowski, a staff member of the Press Office of the Canadian Embassy, is presently working on her Masters degree in Interactive Journalism at American University, having previously obtained a Masters in English degree from the University of Western Ontario.

SCENES

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4,397 patients in that year alone. A huge expansion plan was scrapped due to World War II, but the facility was one of the first hospitals in the city to receive air conditioning, in 1954. Just four years later, the complex was closed for good. Demolition

began in November of 1960, and the site remained vacant for several years until an elementary school was built along 11th Street and the high-rise apartments constructed along Sherman Avenue (10th Street) that both remain to this day.

—Paul Kelsey Williams
Historic Preservation Specialist
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