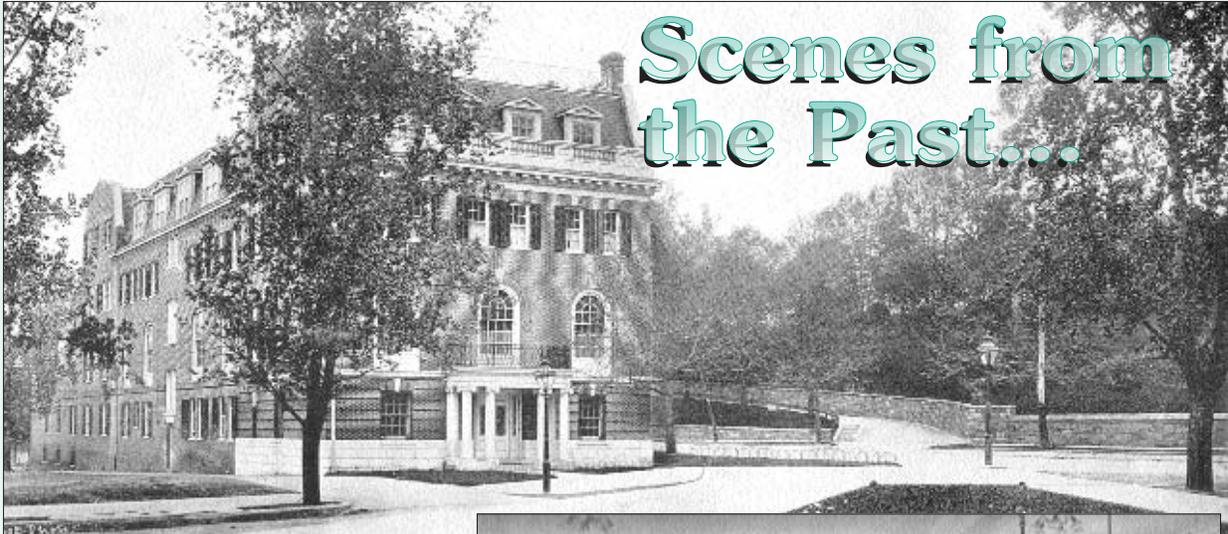


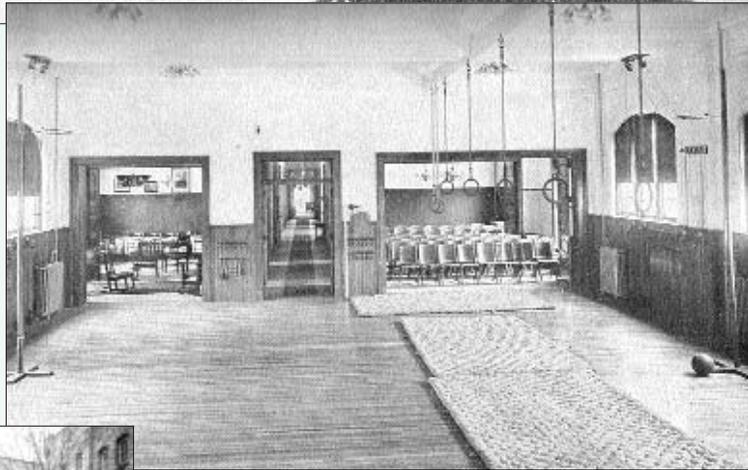
Scenes from the Past...



photos—courtesy, Kelsey & Associates, Inc. Private Collection.

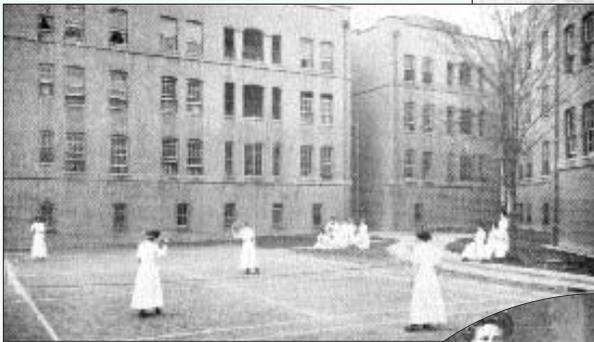
This large and impressive building at 19th Street and Florida Avenue once served as the location for a prestigious girls school, coined Gunston Hall, that had relocated there from Thomas Circle in 1906. The Gunston Hall School for Young Ladies was established in 1892 by the great-grandson of George Mason, Mr. Beverly R. Mason, and it was first located in a private home in Georgetown at 3017 O Street. The school was named after the ancestral home in Virginia, now a National Trust historic site, and was first established for the exclusive education of Mason's children and their intimate friends.

The school moved from adjoined houses and a corner apartment building on Massachusetts Avenue and 14th Street in 1906 to 1906 Florida Avenue, shown above, which offered a vastly expanded space for classrooms, a gymnasium, and rooms for boarding. It was next door to a building at 1904 T Street, which had been built in 1907, but no longer exists, to the designs of the architectural firm of Wood, Donn, and Deming, and which was annexed by the school in 1926.



The building at 1906 Florida offered enough room for the school to incorporate this spacious gymnasium, above.

The "social room" at Gunston Hall was furnished with a variety of arts and crafts furniture, popular at the time that this photo, below, was taken in 1911.



Gunston Hall students took advantage of a large yard behind the school to enjoy tennis in the summer of 1911. At the far end of the tennis court can be seen the rear of the then relatively new apartment building along 20th Street, which is still there and known as the President Madison, with its entrance facing Florida Avenue. The school's rear wall can be seen on the far right side of the photo.

The Gunston Hall fencing club as shown in this 1912 photo at right.



The stated goal of the school was to "train students to be intellectually mature, physically fit, socially well adjusted and to give them a basic faith in God that will steady and support them all their lives."

Beverly Mason himself was a teacher in mathematics and Latin at the Norwood Institute prior to establishing the Gunston Hall School in 1892. His wife Elizabeth began as the school's principal upon its creation. A brief history of the school appeared in *The City of Washington*, a book published in 1905, with a statement regarding its eight resident and 12 visiting teachers which read as follows:

"To secure and retain permanently as teachers ladies and gentlemen of high social



position, of moral worth and intellectual capacity of a high order is essential to the success of the school—not financial success necessarily, for that is a secondary consideration with the earnest teachers who would accomplish the best results in training and caring for the young people entrusted to their keeping."

When it was first located at 1906 Florida Avenue, the school faced an 18-acre residential estate known as Temple Heights, whose driveway entrance can be seen in the photograph illustrated here. It included the "Treaty Oak" tree, and was later owned by the Masonic Order, which had planned to erect its national headquarters there in 1927. However, because

RESERVATIONS RECOMMENDED

By Alexandra Greeley*

RICE Rice is Nice

You don't have to be a Thai food junkie to get what Rice is all about. It's a food game played out in a simple setting with dimmed lights, plain (well, almost plain) walls, a little splashing waterfall, and a lively crowd shoehorned into a minimalist space. Absent are the slick, gaudy décor and oddly pulled together menus—most of which, if you've noticed, offer the very same dishes from one restaurant to the next.

And if you are a Thai food freak, you will still delight to the tongue-in-cheek menu, so irreverent that one whole menu column is devoted to assorted make-believe Thai concoctions. Purists would faint at the idea of spaghetti tossed with Thai anchovies and crispy—and rather salty—bacon. They would raise collective eyebrows at the cook's temerity at serving stir-fried rice with plump shrimp enlivened by a green curry paste. And finally, what about the mirroring of the famous Thai tom yum (lemongrass) soup with its familiar sour taste rendered Rice-style with enoki mushrooms, little tomatoes, snipped cilantro and onions—and seafood. A backwards assembling of ingredients?

If this all seems a bit too wacky, take heart. You can turn your palate to a more traditional dish—pad Thai, green curry with chicken or beef, and panang chicken, for example—but you'll fare better with the fantasy stuff. My friend and I sampled the pad Thai—yes, the cook does offer this with thin squares of omelet, one way Thais serve this national favorite in Thailand, but not one you'll find often in the West; but we decided that the noodle toss was simply too sweet. Yes, it's true, Americans love sweet Thai food, or maybe just sweet food in general, and Thai restaurants recognize our love affair with sugar. The noodles also looked suspiciously reddish, raising the question: Did the cook take a shortcut and didn't bother making the traditional fish sauce/palm sugar mixture typically used to darken and flavor the pad Thai noodles? If so, tut tut!

The third and final menu category consists of all-veg fare, but since much of Thai cooking can be vegetarian anyway, this does not offer many surprises. You might find the deep-fried tofu appealing, or

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For six years prior to its move to Florida Avenue in 1906, the school had occupied the large building at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and 14th Street on Thomas Circle, shown to the right in this photo.

SCENES

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of various delays, including, the ensuing Great Depression and then World War II, the property remained vacant until it was finally developed into the Washington Hilton Hotel in 1965.

Ellen Fillebrown, a graduate of the class of 1910, recalled that they "all wore sailor blouses or wool dresses with guimpes [short, sleeved blouses worn with jumpers]. We had black stockings and high, black buttoned shoes. The older girls wore shirt-waists . . . and silk petticoats."

The school's program for 1911-1912 indicated that it opened on September 28, and held the last day of classes on May 28 that year. Students arriving at Union Station unattended were directed to go to the women's waiting room, where a chaperone from the school would escort them to Florida Avenue. When in attendance, pupils could only receive visitors who had been included on a parental-authorized calling list, and only on Saturday afternoon!

Students partook in language classes that included German, Spanish, French, and Latin. Musical instruction included violin, piano, mandolin, and voice. The ample gymnasium allowed for fencing classes, in

addition to tennis, basketball, and "physical culture." A total of 27 teachers instructed just 50 pupils.

The school was known for its annual carnival, with costume dances and plays presented throughout the day. The 1911-'12 program also noted that "the open country is within a five minutes' walk of the school." The girls were also expected to furnish 12 dinner napkins for their meals, and two sets of bed sheets. Tuition and board that academic year ranged from \$750 to \$800, depending on the location of the room. Additional fees were plentiful, from \$25 for daily use of the piano to a \$2 fee for use of the tennis court. Meals could be taken in the room for an addition 25-cents. Despite the stringent rules, the students were allowed several somewhat unexpected field trips, such as to the Army-Navy Football game in Philadelphia on November 26, 1910, and a tour of the Dead Letter Office at the Post Office that winter.

With the advent of WWII, the school was forced to suspend operations due to the shortage of teachers. For 20 years thereafter the four daughters of the Masons preserved the school's Virginia charter, and reopened the institution in 1962 in Gunston Neck, Virginia.

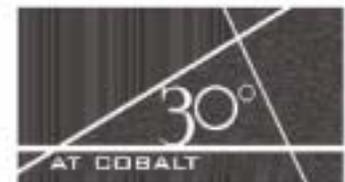
—Paul Kelsey Williams
Historic Preservation Specialist
Kelsey & Associates, Washington, DC

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