

commentary

from other pens...

Famous neighborhood over two centuries old

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Georgetown had been a thriving Potomac River port for a half-century when the federal government swept it into the new District of Columbia.

This month, Georgetown celebrates its 250th anniversary with its spirit and many of its original red-brick houses intact. It's now a prosperous city neighborhood, no longer an independent river village.

The French and Indian War was in the offing in May 1751 when Georgetown was chartered by the Maryland legislature.

The town was at the highest point of navigation on the Potomac. It was a tobacco and grain port and a portal to the vast wilderness of the American interior.

"Georgetown is where the men of the 18th century, if they ventured any further at all, changed into buckskin," wrote Louis J. Halle Jr.

In 1711, a Swiss baron, Christophle De Graffenreid, founder of the New Bern colony in North Carolina, spotted the site's potential, noting that the largest oceangoing vessel could anchor there.

"I believe there are scarcely any places in the world more beautiful and better situated," the baron wrote.

British Gen. Edward Braddock passed through in 1755 on his way to fight the French and found an outpost of civilization. "The men are very large and gallant and the women the most beautiful my eyes have ever looked at," the enthusiastic general wrote.

The origins of the town's name are debated. One camp holds for King George II. Another favors two local landowners, Georges both.

Georgetown citizens supported the American Revolution. And location and politics brought the new federal capital to the Potomac.

Pierre L'Enfant, the French military engineer-turned city planner, laid out the slashing avenues of the new city in the early 1790s after establishing himself at a Georgetown inn.

Although work on the new capital went on for the rest of the decade, Georgetown was the nearest established community when John and Abigail Adams moved into the White House in the fall of 1800.

But the president's wife was decidedly unimpressed with Georgetown. "It is the very dirtiest hole I ever saw," she wrote a friend.

The new city slowly eclipsed the old. In the early 1870s, Georgetown was folded into the city of Washington and continued a long decline.

Georgetown was rediscovered in the 1930s when the bright young men and women of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration poured into Washington and were smitten by the neighborhood's streets and houses.

"Gabled roofs, tiny dormers and inviting doorways with brass knockers are reminders of the past," the writers of a 1942 guidebook noted.

In recent years, the guidebook said, "the smaller homes have been bought by artists, newspapermen, well-to-do government employees and others who appreciated the charm that lay beneath dilapidation."

Wealthier people bought the mansions, "and with them returned the social life for which Georgetown once was famous," the guidebook said.

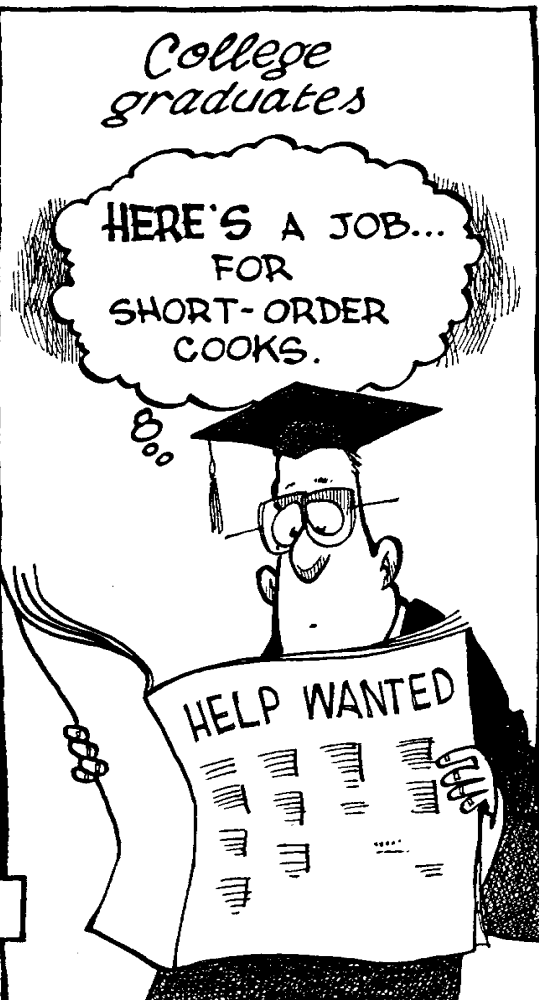
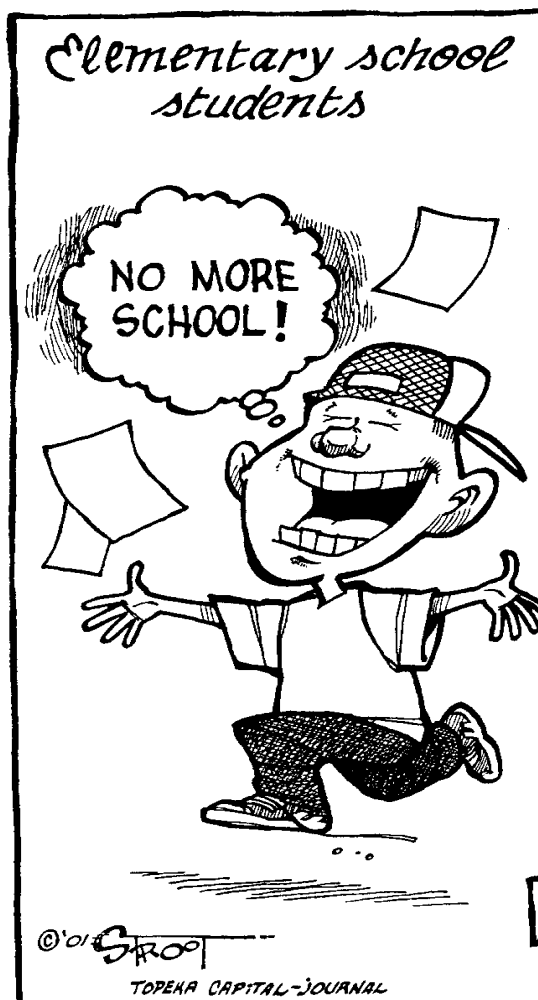
Georgetown became known for "the Washington party," presided over by famous hostesses and attracting senators, Cabinet members, ambassadors and the occasional president.

Future president and first lady, Sen. John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, lived in a red-brick federal house on N Street before moving to the White House. As president-elect, Kennedy announced appointments to the Cabinet from its front steps.

One of its most interesting houses is Tudor Place, completed in 1816. The owners were Thomas Peters and his wife, Martha Custis, a granddaughter of Martha Washington. She made Tudor Place a repository of Washington family memorabilia. It was opened to the public in 1988.

Francis Scott Key was a Georgetown resident when he wrote the words to "The Star Spangled Banner" in 1814.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress and Washington history for more than 30 years.



Stole nukes? Nah! Stole farmers surpluses? Yep!

Are farmers being set up again over this China thing?

What would happen if the Commerce Department made a contract with the Peoples Republic of China to buy all the soybeans in the US farm belt?

How would the American farmer feel if flybys were over Taiwan straits and mainline China embargoed grain exports?

Would anyone care if the American farmer became a dispensable pawn in the defense of American crony capitalism in China?

It's about time Americans stop watching the glories of the military-industrial complex on the history channel. It's about time the memory of the greatest generation of blood and guts General George Patton and the warrior of the Pacific General Douglas McArthur, are forgotten.

It's time we see this new world order of free trade for some is as phony as a Chinese banker's credit card.

This American Manifest Destiny is still alive and well and it didn't stop at the water's edge. Now there are crony U.S. corporations in China, Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia — the fancy guys call it free trade?



wayne gattshall

• wayne's world

Since the Korean War the battle cry of hulking State Department was "...we only want what is good for you and that's more competition. Smash down your trade barriers or we will not invest money in your crony corporations."

That sounds pretty good, more competition and more sweat shops. But what did they say in 1972 when the first grain exports to the USSR hit the futures market?

Did these fancy guys say we want more competition? No! One member of the tribal council (Congress) from that pioneer village along the Potomac, introduced something called the Most Favored Nation statute.

He said this new global market for farmers was the great grain robbery, and we have got to stop it.

Well wheat that had been \$1.20 a bushel now sold for \$3.75, or more. So if that was stealing, farmers may have said "come steal from me again."

This beltway economics that says low farm prices is as good as a tax cut for the people was hard to follow. What was wrong with good ole Uncle Lenoid Brezhnev buying the farmers grain in this free market economy?

What was wrong is the USSR ended up buying our entire stored surplus.

No surpluses...no need for a bureaucracy? We can't have that! The very same nuclear corporations that lobbied the big chief in the white teepee to open trade with the USSR was madder than Ted Turner before his mediation.

What had been a great political success of too little surpluses had become a political orphan that no one would claim credit for. The export of manufacturing technology to the USSR was one thing but farm exports? That was way too big a boo (free trade).

Well the difference between nuclear technology and farm exports to China is the difference between fried chicken and chicken litter. It would take the supreme Court to issue an export license for farm exports but if some son of a Chinese general is found down loading classified nuclear technology some liberal judge would let him out of jail.

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And not a drop to drink



evan barnum

• slightly off the wall

A hint. Water, when it freezes, expands. Gets bigger. If it is in a confined place, it has an amazing capacity to make that space — bigger. Even in spaces that don't want to get bigger.

Even early in the fall, when the forecast is for below-freezing temperatures for the night, take the hoses off the outside faucets.

Realize that weathermen are only there to make economic forecasters look good, but the law of averages says that they will be right — sometime. The Boy Who Cried Wolf effect, so pay attention.

And if that sometime comes, and you don't heed the warning....

Spring comes, eventually. And when it does....

Things have been dry since the last rain. And the time came Thursday, as it does in April in this country, to water the flowers.

Out came the hoses that had been in storage since last fall. Late last fall. Remember last fall? I didn't either — at least not well enough.

On went the hoses. The actual watering was entrusted to the care of a teen-ager. Nothing wrong with that, but teens don't always have the life experiences to realize when things are Not Quite Right.

Mom was in the back yard. I was out of town. Far out of town. Safely out of town.

Son was in the front yard ready to water the gasping flowers. Faucet came on. Full. Water trickled out. Slowly. Son stands there. Looking. Thinking.

Figuring that — hey — the water has been off all winter, maybe it needs time to build up pressure. Not realizing that this pressure is never going to build up, because it already has Somewhere Else to go.

Inside. Mom, for some ordained-from-above reason, picked that time to go downstairs. It could have been later, much, much later, but it wasn't — thankfully.

She heard the sound of running water. Pipes sound like running water when there is water running through them. But this was different. Unrestrained running water.

And when she looked, it was cascading down the walls, and flowing across the floor.

With a scream and a yell, she was up the stairs and outside so fast she left smoke behind. Not to worry, there was plenty of water around to put it out.

The rest of the evening was spent moving Everything on the west side of the house to be piled high on the east side. Out came the shop vac, and up came the carpets.

Foresight years ago in this department saved us

now. When we first moved in, we installed Kangabacked carpet downstairs. This is basically nylon carpet in a special foam pad. Wipe it off, and it's dry. Doesn't rot. Doesn't smell. In a basement, it's almost a requirement.

So, up came the carpets, out came the fans, and the de-humidifier went on. Extra-High. By Friday everything dried out.

Saturday it was time to put it all together, starting with replacing that *&^%# faucet.

Step one — go to hardware store, buy all parts that you *think* you need to replace the faucet.

Step two — turn off the water to the house.

Step three — uh, turn off the water to the house.

Step four — why won't the water to the house turn off? Bad valve. Bad, bad valve. Go sit in the corner. Play dead. Oh, you already are.

Step five — shut off the water at the street, so you can replace the valve so you can shut off the water at the house so you can replace the faucet that leaks. (!)

This is now Saturday afternoon. I don't figure the chances are very good that I'm going to find someone from the city cheerful enough to turn off the water at the meter. They don't make it easy to do, probably on purpose, by using an odd nut, so I'm thankful that sucker wasn't on too tight.

Step six — with the water off, go back to hardware store to buy all the parts you *think* you need to replace the house shut-off valve. Use a clue from

previous trips like this: take the old parts with you so you can say, "I need one of these. This pipe size, this length." Saves trips back.

Step seven — replace house shutoff valve, replace faucet, solder pipes together.

Step eight — turn on water at street. RUN back in to see if there are any leaks in the repair job. Open valves, check again.

Hot dog, it all works.

Step nine — put the basement back together. This includes putting things back in the cabinet hanging from the sheet-rocked wall right by the leaky pipe. Remember the leaky pipe? Because the sheet-rock did.

Funny thing about sheet-rock. When it is dry, it is fairly strong. Strong enough to hang cabinets from — if you don't get too carried away.

But when it gets wet... well, it can turn to mush, and often can't even hold its own weight.

As I opened the doors to put things in the cabinet, it said "so long" to the wall and leapt into my arms.

So there I stand, surprised, again, wondering what is next.

After waiting for the wall to dry — and the sheet-rock to get hard again — I re-hung the cabinet and finished putting the basement back together.

Cleaner, and with a little less stuff.

Renting is starting to look awfully attractive. Renters don't have to water their flowers.

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