

A Century of Progress Along Seventh Street

By John Claggett Proctor

Seventh street Northwest, as we look at it today, is certainly a much different thoroughfare from what it was a century ago. Indeed, looking back into the past, an early Washingtonian said that about 1832, "Three or four blocks from Pennsylvania avenue older Washingtonians got on to the 'common,' and here squatters built their hogs, and the men and boys worked at anything they could get to do, while the women and girls herded the cows and minded the geese. It was profitable, and these humble folk were the ancestors of some of our solid Muldoons."

"On the west side of Seventh street there was only one house between New York avenue and the Boundary, as Florida avenue was then called. That was a bakeshop at N street. Eslin's brick kiln stood on the southeast corner of the Boundary and Seventh street. The troops used it during the Civil War to set their targets against."

Another old-timer in describing Seventh street in the early '30s tells us that at the corner of Seventh and G streets there was a tanyard, that Seventh street was then a country road,

M streets, its exact location being a short distance west of Sixth street and about midway between L and M streets. This general area was also early known as the White Oak Slashes, and where the Public Library stands was once a part of Tommy Jenkin's farm.

There were few houses in this neighborhood up to the latter part of the '30s, and speaking of the conditions of this vicinity and particularly of Mount Vernon Square about this time an early writer of The Star said:

"In fact, north of it, with the exception of the Washington Asylum (the poorhouse) there was not much sign of improvement to be found other than a pretense of keeping the wagon road of Seventh street in such a condition as to be used; for that street was, of course, as now, the route to Montgomery County, and during the days of the cholera epidemic it was much used by hearse and wagons bearing away the victims of the dreaded disease, who were buried a short distance north of the asylum."

Incidentally, the poorhouse was on square 448, between M and N and Sixth and Seventh streets N.W., which was



Southwest corner of Seventh and H streets in 1891.

how interesting a place this old barn was, particularly during the winter months, when the weather was very cold, and especially during a snowstorm. Today the motormen and conductors are protected from the elements, but not for many years when horses were used for motive power, and then, at times, both men and horses suffered intensely. Indeed it was not unusual to see the drivers' faces covered with ice and snow when they reached the end of the line at T street, though they were dressed with the heaviest kind of clothing, their boots even being heavily wrapped in burlap bags to keep the driver's feet warm. And the poor horses would be turned in after the trip covered with leather, and one could see the moisture rising from their bodies as they were being led to their stalls. It was, indeed, a case of cruelty to animals but an unfortunately necessary one, and one the early inhabitant will never forget.

Original Second Precinct

Seventh street at Florida avenue was the gateway to the city, and in the northwest corner of the car barn was the first place prisoners were taken prior to the police station being located a block north on Seventh street, and then designated the second precinct.

By 1872 the police precincts had been reduced from 10 to eight, with Lt. Cessford in charge of No. 1, Lt. Johnson, No. 2; Lt. Skippin, No. 3; Lt. Hurley, No. 4; Lt. Austin, No. 5; Lt. Greer, No. 6; Lt. Kelly, No. 7, and Lt. Noonan, No. 8.

The writer remembers the original second precinct station house, which stood for many years opposite the baseball park on Georgia avenue, and which indeed was not torn down until about two years ago. It was erected as a large frame dwelling by a Mrs. Tomkins. A picture of this early station house, taken in 1920, gives its number as 2042 Georgia avenue.

Lt. James Johnson, who was appointed on the police force late in 1861, shortly after the first men were taken on, was in charge of this station, according to the City Directory, at least as early as 1862. From here the station was moved into the adjoining brick house to the south, about 1868. This latter house, 2040 Georgia avenue, is still standing.

A Georgia Avenue Station

Though quite a lad when 2042 Georgia avenue was being used as a station house, the writer vividly recalls seeing the policemen occupying this building, and the long rail in front of the station, to which the mounted policemen tied their horses.

At one time, we are told, this precinct was the largest in the city, and the men patrolled more territory than did the officers of any other precinct, and that during the exciting period of the Civil War the area it looked after embraced all of the district beyond the Boundary and west of the Anacostia River to Rock Creek and the writer feels satisfied that at one time a part of the city south of Florida avenue was also included in its boundaries.

Some of the men then serving with Lt. Johnson whom the writer remembers were Hamilton K. Redway, J. N. Fifield, Thomas Markward, Joseph T. Morgan, Julius B. Slack, Officer Brown, F. W. Pfaff, James E. Heffner, Officer Sullivan, Daniel Slattery, Benjamin T. Rhodes, Norman H. Cole and William H. West, the last named and Officer Brown being colored members of the force. West was one of the most gentlemanly policemen the writer ever knew. Very fond of good horses, he always had the best, and any one who made him "eat the dust," as the boys back in the bicycle days would say, was "going some."

'Boundary Street'

Boundary street (now Florida avenue) was macadamized in the early '70s and was one of the best stretches of road within the District. They had their speeders and their speed regulations then, just as they have today, and they had their crazy drivers then—just as they have today. The man with a fast trotter or pacer, before the advent of the automobile, was just as reckless and needed just as much watching as the careless and inconsiderate automobile driver does at present. However, the difference then was that only people of means had horses and buggies, while now there are many cars that can make a mile a minute—more or less—and owned by persons of limited means. No doubt the traffic conditions would have been just as bad then had there been as many horses and buggies as we have automobiles now, and with the same population. Indeed, it might be successfully argued that the conditions would have been even worse.

It was then against the law "to drive any horse, mare or gelding in or on any street, avenue or alley of this city at a pace faster than a moderate trot or gallop, or to make any attempt or trial of speed between two or more horses." If any one was injured during a violation of this law, the driver was subject to a fine of \$20 and incarceration in the workhouse for not less than 30 nor more than 90 days.

Florida avenue proved a great temptation to a man with a good stepper, and many a driver contributed to the city's exchequer for trying to lower the record of Maud S.

Many a desperate character was taken to the old second precinct during the years it was used as a station house. When the precinct was moved next door, to 2040 Georgia avenue, that building housed for a time some, if not all, of the Hirth murderers.

It was not long after the second precinct was moved to U street, between Ninth and Tenth streets, that Lt. Johnson was retired and Lt. James W. Gessford transferred, about 1884, to its command.

War Secret Revolutionizes World Navigation

By W. H. Shippen, Jr.

Aviation Editor of The Star.
A secret, war-tested system of radio navigation which may add immeasurably to the safety of air and sea commerce was demonstrated to the public for the first time yesterday.

Airmen and mariners on combat duty in both oceans had been guided through fog and storm from long range, for years before the general public ever heard of the cryptic military term of "Loran."

In fact, the new system was an operational whole, with scores of shore stations rimming the Atlantic and Pacific months before the Navy and Coast Guard showed how it worked yesterday to airmen, mariners and writers at the Naval Air Station, Brooklyn.

System 99 Per Cent Accurate

Loran is said to eliminate errors of older methods because it is based on speed of radio waves rather than their direction, which vary at times. Fixes can be obtained in a minute or two, almost independent of weather conditions, and can be relied upon to be about 99 per cent accurate, it was said.

Throughout latter years of the war aircraft and ships were guided by Loran from distances of from 750 miles in the daytime to double that at night over vast ocean areas completely covered by radio impulses from shore stations spotted at strategic points. The only equipment needed by planes or ships was a small receiver, or electronic stop watch, and a set of Loran charts or tables.

The "stop watch" calculates distances to shore stations in millionths of a second on the basis of the known speed of radio waves, enabling navigators to obtain cross fixes rarely more than a mile off for every hundred miles separating them from the stations. This compares favorably with the accuracy of celestial fixes obtained under the best weather conditions, experts said.

In All Weather

While operators can be trained to use Loran in a few days, celestial navigators require long schooling backed by experience, and they must work out most calculations with elaborate mathematical formulas. Too, the system often fails when most needed because the very storms which bring emergencies at sea are apt to prevent navigators from obtaining fixes on celestial bodies or even the horizon.

Has Saved Countless Lives

Loran was credited with saving many lives at sea during the war. Planes or ships in distress were able to flash back quick and accurate positions, and rescue vessels as well as craft crippled on the surface knew their location as long as Loran receivers remained in operation. These emergencies occurred most frequently in foul weather where ships otherwise would have had to rely on dead reckoning or on radio direction finders subject to unpredictable variations, it was said.

With a small Loran receiver somewhat resembling a television set, fixes can be obtained entirely independent of compass, chronometer and various radio devices.

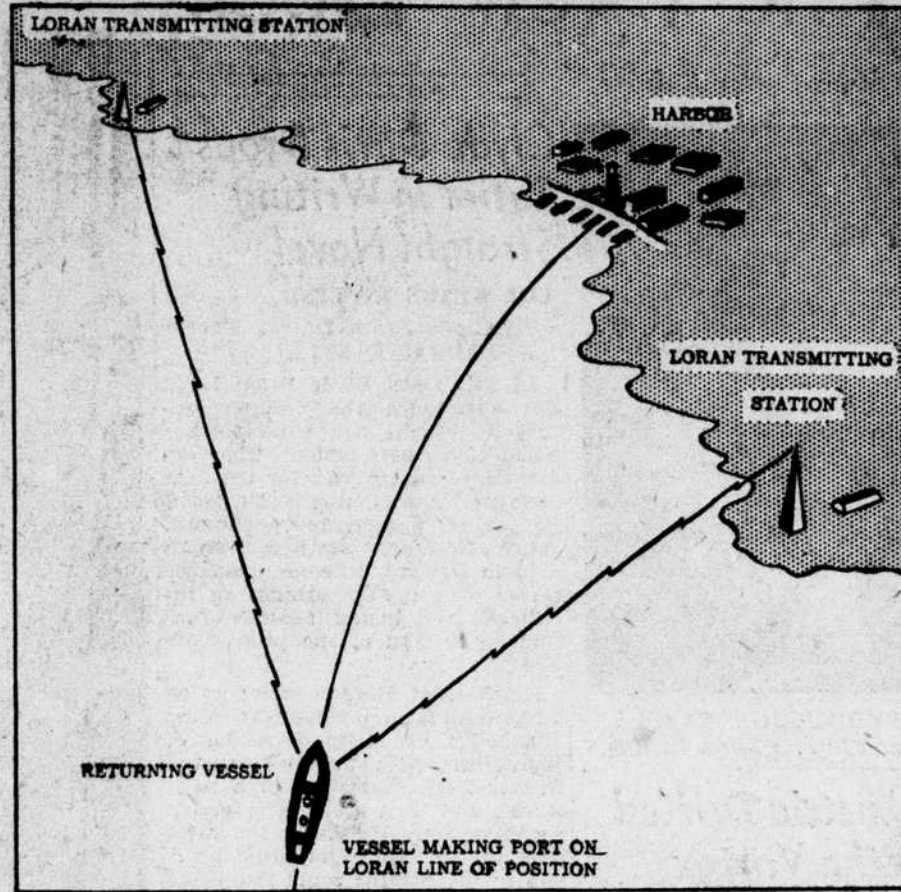
A further advantage is the fact that no transmission by the aircraft or ship is necessary.

Postwar Possibilities

The Coast Guard, while not attempting to sell Loran as a long-range navigation aid, or various types of radar for short-range work, is anxious to simplify and standardize equipment. Thus far Loran and various radar aids have been confined to military use for security reasons. But as to its postwar use the Coast Guard believes that "Loran will make possible to commercial air and surface craft the same unflinching and accurate navigation that carried military planes safely and directly to and from their targets in fair and foul weather."

Helped Naval Victories

Postwar engineering may well extend daylight range of transmission up to 1,500 miles under good conditions. Har-



With electronic "stop watch" calculating exact distances from transmitting stations ashore, Loran-equipped vessel can make swift harbor approach despite the most adverse visibility conditions.

bor approaches may, in many cases, be made at full speed under certainty of position within a few hundred yards. In rescue operations at sea, both the distressed ship and rescue vessel will be assured of exact position-finding re-

gardless of weather conditions." Admiral Ernest J. King agrees with Admiral Chester Nimitz that Loran was "one of the powerful new scientific developments of the war." The system, they pointed out, not only sped the movement of troops and materiel, but aided combat units to operate under adverse weather conditions.

The admirals, along with a spokesman for the Army Air Forces, paid tribute to the men who designed the system and to those who installed shore stations and manned them at lonely outposts from Greenland to the north coast of South America, or from the Aleutians to Japan and the Pacific Islands.

In Difficult Ocean Areas

The shore stations were erected under emergency conditions, often immediately behind assault troops. They were spotted to cover ocean areas where navigation was most difficult, and recently were extended to Japan and islands on approaches to the China coast.

The Radar Division of the National Defense Research Committee began development of Loran in the fall of 1940 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and by late '42 naval vessels were testing the device on antishub and convoy duty in the stormy Atlantic.

The Coast Guard was assigned the duty of installing and operating the shore stations, a task later shared by the Army Air Forces, the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy. By last summer some 70 stations covered 40,000,000 square miles of ocean, and more were under construction.



Airviews of WAVE Quarters "D" at Massachusetts and Nebraska avenues, the largest WAVE barracks in the United States and the first military installation to be built specifically for WAVES. —Official U. S. Navy Photo.

They're Getting Ready to Go Home

By Betty Wixey.

Preparation for civilian life seems to be the main thought in the minds of the 3,700 girls in WAVE Quarters "D" on Massachusetts and Nebraska avenues. These days they spend their spare time in the sewing room turning out brightly colored dresses and in classrooms studying shorthand, languages and other subjects for high school diplomas, college courses—new careers.

Quarters "D" is the largest WAVE barracks in the United States. It covers 40 acres of land. It is composed of 38 buildings. It was the first installation to be built specifically for WAVES. The barracks started out nearly three years ago for girls working in the Communications Center housed across the street in the old Mount Vernon Seminary. Now WAVES working in naval offices all over town live there. The end of the war has had little effect on the administration of the barracks, since as other WAVE quarters all over the city are closed, girls still on duty are transferred there.

From a recreation point of view things have changed, however. Quarters "D" used to have a band, a glee club and an

orchestra. Now with people getting discharged right and left, it is sometimes impossible to replace an oboe player at the last minute. So, although they still have an orchestra, it's not easy to plan performances.

Bowling leagues are harder to keep active, too, but the five alleys are still in use every evening. Bowling classes as well as classes in basketball, swimming, dancing and badminton are still going on. And arts and crafts classes are as popular as ever.

A 15-foot-long swimming pool, open every day most of the day, is the pride and joy of Quarters "D." Next in line as a spare time favorite is the lounge in the recreation building. When luxury liners like the Manhattan were converted during the war, some of the furniture built for comfort as well as beauty went to furnish the lounge and officers quarters here. The lounge also boasts several pianos and a radio. In the place of a pinball machine, WAVES gather around an elaborate little contraption for practice identification of planes. Annexed to the lounge is a library with magazines and the latest books.

The gameroom downstairs has ping



WAVES have earned the Navy's traditional "Well done!"

pong and billiard tables. Next door is a fully equipped darkroom for WAVES interested in photography.

Well-Equipped Classrooms

The two classrooms for academic subjects have all the latest equipment including languagephones for language students. There are several former teachers living in the quarters who supervise the courses and, when it is possible, they help individual girls with their studies without the formality of classes. All courses are conducted and attended on a voluntary basis by the WAVES stationed there.

A little city in itself, Quarters "D" has its own beauty shop, dry cleaning service and soda fountain—all operated by WAVES. After patronizing these establishments, most of the girls must get a rude shock when they are discharged and go back to paying civilian prices.

Movies are shown three times a week in the auditorium. Like every other branch of the service, the WAVES see all of the best shows long before they are released for civilians. In the auditorium, seating 1,000, Mrs. Roosevelt has made several speeches, concert artists have given recitals and numerous USO shows have played.

Plans for a bank had been set in operation, but the war ended before they were carried through. The quarters have had its own post office all along. At Christmas a room was set aside and twine and paper were provided to wrap presents for mailing.

The 33 barracks each devote the first two decks to sleeping quarters, composed of separate partitions with four bunks and four lockers apiece. WAVES are responsible for the neatness of their quarters and gear is inspected once a week. Both lower decks have laundry rooms. The third deck is a lounge.

Ready for Postwar Kitchens

WAVES in Quarters "D" will have the edge on their civilian sisters in finding their way around highly mechanized postwar kitchens. The girls do all their own cooking, surrounded by all sorts of new-fangled gadgets. Since they work in a number of different offices, getting leave to do commissary duty for a few days every now and then would be impossible. So the girls take their commissary duty in three-month stretches and get it over with all at once.

The quarters has its own bakery and butcher shop and makes its own ice.

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and that connected with the tannery was a row of low sheds covering huge vats, with a strip fence surrounding the grounds.

Early Stores

Farther north, where stands Hahn's shoe store at Seventh and K streets, once stood T. C. Clark's grocery store as early as 1860, and on the southeast corner of this intersection was the wood and coal yard kept by John Neal and to which Richard W. Burr succeeded about 1846. In 1865, Mr. Burr was trading under the name of Burr & Bro. in the shoe business at 383 Seventh street (old number), the brother being Benjamin B. Burr, who then lived on Eighth street between G and H streets.

However, as a shoemaker, Thomas French was probably the pioneer in this neighborhood. He lived on the southeast corner of Ninth and K streets, where he owned a two-story frame house. He was here prior to 1843.

Burr's Coal Yard

The corner, where was Burr's wood and coal yard was early purchased by George W. Utermehle, and here were erected several low gabled-roofed frame buildings where Augustus Coppes kept the Oriental restaurant, and these buildings later gave way to the present structures, early occupied by Jackson Bros. Furniture Co.

South of Mr. Utermehle's holdings, on the east side of Seventh street between I and K, was owned by Andrew Rothwell, who worked as a printer at the case early in his life, and, according to Mr. Croggon, who probably knew him well, "in the '30s he published a paper and carried on a job printing office on the Avenue near Four and One-Half street."

In 1839, Mr. Rothwell was elected collector of taxes, and continued to fill the office for 12 years. At this time he resided on the east side of Seventh street between I and K, but by 1850 he had moved to the northeast corner of Seventh and I streets, and in 1860 kept a fancy goods store in that vicinity. Six years later he was a clerk in the Navy Department.

His earlier activities included the publishing of the Washington City Chronicle, with T. W. Ustick, for a brief period, about 1828 to 1829. A few years later he prepared the third digest of the laws of the corporation of Washington. That he rendered service to the temperance cause is evident from the fact that in 1830 he was vice president of the Franklin Temperance Society.

Third Baptist Church

Mr. Rothwell prospered and accumulated what was a fortune in his day, and when the Third Baptist Church was organized, in 1843, he gave the lot upon which the church building was erected, on the south side of E street, between Sixth and Seventh streets, in 1846. And it still stands. However, it has long since gone into other hands. Though its official name was the Third Baptist Church, or "Dr. Samson's Church," for Rev. George W. Samson was its first pastor and served as such until 1859, when he became president of Columbian College (now George Washington University). Incidentally the writer always thinks kindly of Dr. Samson because he performed the marriage ceremony for his parents.

Andrew Rothwell was a member of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants at the time of his death.

Port Royal Tract

When the city was first laid out the immediate vicinity of Massachusetts avenue and Seventh street belonged to Dominick Lynch and Comfort Sands and was a part of a large tract of land known as Port Royal. These men, we are told, had a log house in the square bounded by Sixth and Seventh, L and

purchased by the Corporation of Washington in 1809.

The burial ground attached to the institution was on the line of N street, and the one for the interment of the cholera patients was on the Sixth street side of the square. In 1845 the poorhouse was removed to the neighborhood of the old Washington Jail, near the Eastern Branch, and only a remnant of the poorhouse buildings remain. During subsequent building operations, the remains of many buried in this locality were disinterred, several of whom had around them what was supposed to be the remains of leather belts, conveying the impression that they had been laboring men.

The southeast corner of Massachusetts avenue and Seventh street was vacant ground prior to 1860, and the Post Office Department having ceased to use the space at F street between Sixth and Seventh streets to burn the unclaimed dead letters and refuse paper, this material was hauled to the Massachusetts avenue site and there destroyed. This was prior to the coming to this corner of Burr's wood and coal yard, before mentioned.

Seventh Street Bridge

Speaking of the period around 1840, an early resident tells us in an early issue of The Star that "the west end of the two angular squares fronting Seventh street, and between Massachusetts and New York avenues, was not improved until after the '40s and was not susceptible of improvement because of a stream which had its head in the commons north of this area, and which crossed Seventh street eastwardly near the center of K street, and continued on its way in a gully down Sixth street and thence to Judiciary Square, joining there the water from Willow Tree Spring, located at New York avenue between Fourth and Fifth streets. A small arch spanned the former stream at Seventh street, and there was a narrow bridge at the roadway on New York avenue. Not far east of the square there had been a brickyard. At what was later known as Spigulus corner, at Seventh and K streets, was then vacant, but the owner of the land, W. T. Griffith, had erected two brick dwellings a short distance away on what was known as Northern Market space, and lived in one for a number of years afterward. Griffith was a tailor and of the firm of Matlock & Griffith."

We who today enjoy the fine paved streets and avenues of Washington can hardly realize the fact that the first improvement noted to the carriage way along Seventh street was made just 100 years ago, when it was graveled from Virginia avenue, southwest to H street north. And at this time there were no public conveyances traveling along this thoroughfare, and little if any need for them. But by 1860 buses found it profitable to run as far north as L street.

An Early Railroad

However, on May 17, 1862, a charter was granted by Congress to the Washington & Georgetown Railroad Co., now included in the Capital Transit Co., with authority to construct a line from the Navy Yard to Georgetown, with cross lines on Seventh street, from Florida avenue to the water front and on Fourteenth street from Florida avenue to a connection with the main line at Fifteenth street and New York avenue. This line was completed by the close of 1862, and the operation of the Seventh street line soon followed, with its car barn in the flatiron block bounded by T street, Florida avenue and Seventh street. This car barn, a one-story, entirely frame structure, covered the entire block, and here were housed the horses, cars, sweepers and all necessary equipment for the operation of the road.

Looking backward to railroading when the writer was a boy, he recalls