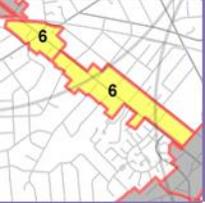


## **2. History & Culture**



## West Broad Street Connecting Falls Church

### History of Development

Throughout its history, the West Broad Street area of Falls Church has developed in response to changes in transportation, major events, and shifting regional development patterns. This section highlights some of the major developments in the area.

#### Humble Beginnings

The current route of Broad Street was loosely established by Native American trails that preceded the 1699 European settlement of the area. This trail, as well as other Native American trails in the area, evolved to become important transportation corridors by the 1730's. The trail became commercially used for tobacco rolling in subsequent years, as well as for British troop movement during the French and Indian War in 1755. Locals subsequently referred to the road as Braddock's Road, after a portion of Major General Edward Braddock's command passed along the route on April 7, 1755.

#### The Turnpike Opens Development

The route was updated in the early to mid-1800s after a private company built a toll road from Alexandria to the Leesburg Turnpike. Around 1838, the Leesburg & Alexandria Turnpike was completed, with a stretch along what is now known as State Route 7 (Broad Street), after nearly 25 years of construction.

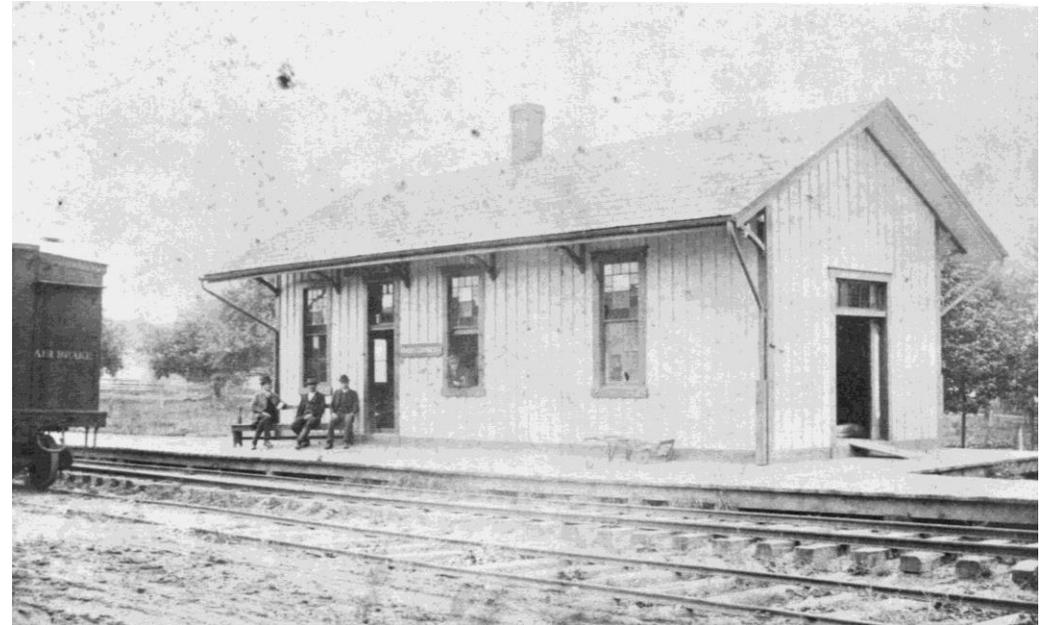
The village population began to grow after the improvement of the main transportation route, which increased trade opportunities among local farmers and merchants. In 1845 William Harvey constructed Cherry Hill Farmhouse on about 66 acres of land north of what is now Park Avenue. Old Brick House was constructed along the Leesburg & Alexandria Turnpike in 1855. Rees House was constructed along the same corridor in 1859.

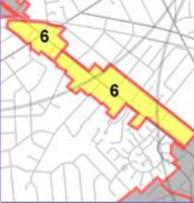
Further growth in the City occurred with the establishment of the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad (AL&HR) in 1860, which was the predecessor to what would eventually become the



**Above:** The Rees House in 1869 (Left) and a carriage company in the 1000 block of West Broad Street in the 1890s.

**Below:** The West Falls Church Train Station in the 1890s.





**Above:** Trolley service and houses near the 1000 block of West Broad Street in the 1920s.

Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad. The AL&HR drastically reduced travel time between Falls Church and Alexandria, allowing quicker access to Washington, D.C. as well.

### Passenger Rail and Wartime Activity

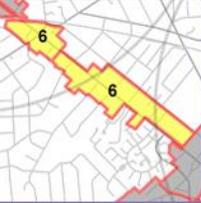
West Broad Street was again used for military purposes during the Civil War. At the start of the war, the road was used by both the Union Army and the Confederate Army to move troops during different stages of First Manassas. After a strategic withdrawal by the Confederate Army, the Union Army occupied much of the eastern portion of the village for the duration of the war. Small skirmishes continuously occurred along West Broad Street and around Falls Church until the end of the war.

Falls Church continued to grow after the Civil War and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The passenger rail, which had serviced the area since 1860, was heavily used during the Spanish-American War in 1898 to move troops to and from Camp Alger. At this time the Town of Falls Church was serviced by two train stations along the route originally built by the AL&HR, the East Falls Church Station and the West Falls Church Station. The West Falls Church Station was located on the western edge of what is now the West Broad Street POA, near the intersection of North West Street and West Broad Street. An historic marker currently stands along the W&OD Trail near the site.

St. James Catholic Church was constructed in 1902 to replace a smaller wooden chapel about a half mile from the West Falls Church station. The stone church still stands at the corner of Park Avenue and Spring Street just outside the border of the West Broad Street POA.

### The Automobile

In the 1920's population growth and the popularity of the automobile caused Broad Street to become congested. The state highway department proposed widening Broad Street at the expense of the large Silver Maple trees that lined the roadway. Village residents vehemently opposed the destruction of the trees. The state highway department and residents reached an



# West Broad Street Connecting Falls Church

agreement, whereby Broad Street was widened to accommodate more automobile traffic and new shade trees were planted to line the widened roadway.

### Growth of Suburban Retail Centers

Falls Church became an independent city in 1948, breaking away from Fairfax County. Soon after, in 1956, the Seven Corners shopping mall opened just east of the City, followed by Tysons Corner Mall in 1966 west of the City. The establishment of these two large suburban retail centers along State Route 7 greatly reduced the retail market along Broad Street within the City limits. The 1955 “Falls Church Master Plan Report” and the 1965 “Plan for the Central Business District” addressed these concerns and called for an improved transportation network and zoning ordinance.

### The W&OD Trail

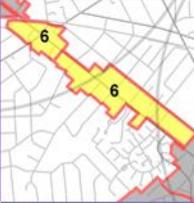
Passenger rail service through Falls Church was discontinued by the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad in 1951 and freight operations were discontinued in 1968. After all operations were discontinued, the Virginia Department of Highways bought the land to use as part of the right-of-way for Interstate 66, and subsequently sold a large portion of the property to the Virginia Electric Power Company. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA), which had been organized in 1959, worked with the City of Falls Church to open the first portion of the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail in 1974. The NVRPA continued to work with nearby municipalities to extend the Trail, with the newest portion having opened on May 30, 2009, bringing the total length of the W&OD Trail to 44.7 miles. Today the Trail supports over 1,000 trips each day during summer months.

### Increased Office Demand

During the 1960’s through the 1980’s demand for office space in Northern Virginia grew substantially. Several office buildings from this time period are still standing along West Broad Street, including: 450 West Broad Street, built in 1960; 803 West Broad Street, built in 1964; and 701 West Broad Street, built in 1965. In



Above: Tyler Gardens, now Winter Hill, (Top) and West End Plaza (Bottom) under construction along West Broad Street in the late 1940’s.



**Above:** The widened intersection near the 1000 block of West Broad Street in 1964 (Top) and an aerial view facing east along the commercial corridor in 1977 (Bottom).

addition, an office condominium complex was constructed around the historic house at 109 Rowell Court in 1980, preserving the historic structure and using it as a centerpiece for development.

This era also brought some mixed-use retail/residential with the construction of Broad Falls Apartments within the POA, and general single-use moderate density residential at Lee Square Apartments just outside the boundaries of the POA.

### **I-66 & Metrorail**

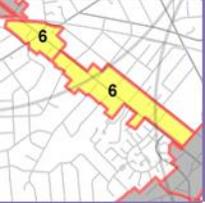
Interstate 66 inside the Beltway was constructed in the 1980's as an alternative to State Route 7. The new interstate routed many drivers around the City of Falls Church instead of through the City's commercial corridor along Route 7. The City publicized concern with the economic impact this would have in planning documents of the time. I-66 was completed in 1982.

Metrorail brought a new opportunity to stimulate commercial growth in the City in the 1980's. During planning of the Orange Line, neighboring Arlington County worked to route the line directly through the County's commercial corridor along Wilson Avenue and even captured an extra station due to the rejection of a station by residents of Georgetown. However, initial plans that would have routed Metrorail through the City, were blocked by community opposition. The Orange Line opened in the median of I-66 around the City in 1986.

### **Mixed-Use Redevelopment**

The special exception provision in the Zoning Ordinance was amended in 2001 in order to encourage mixed-use redevelopment. The provision was amended to allow residential use within mixed-use projects in order to provide extra incentive for developers to build in the City in a market that heavily favors residential. Upon review, a project must also contain a large enough commercial component to be sustainable for the City.

Several mixed-use projects were constructed since the revisions to the special exception were made. The majority of these projects are a mixture of residential above retail, as the

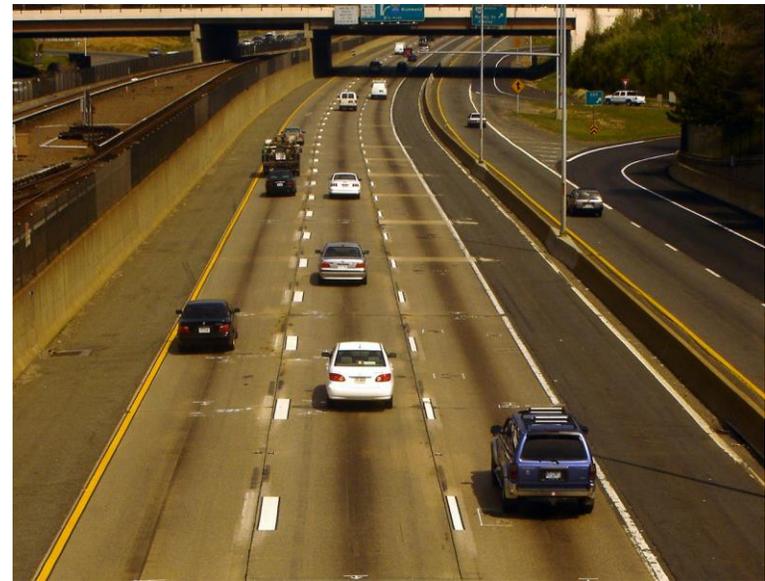


# West Broad Street Connecting Falls Church

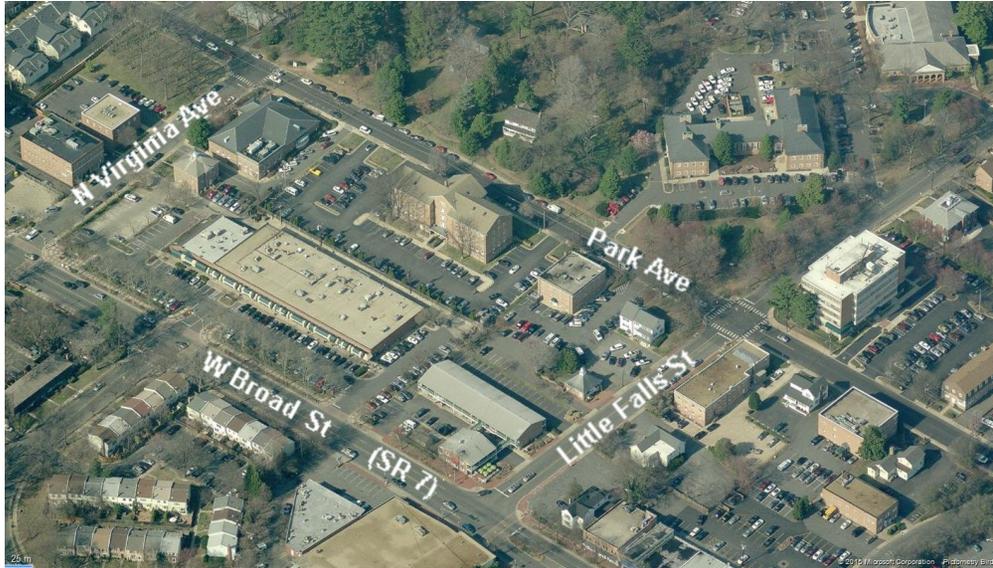
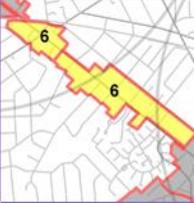
residential market demand surpassed office demand in the City. The Broadway was completed in 2003, followed by The Read Building in 2006, The Byron and The Spectrum in 2007, and the Flower Building in 2008. The Flower Building is the only one of the mixed-use projects in the West Broad Street POA that does not include residential uses. The Spectrum Condominiums include a strip of office condominiums along Park Avenue.

Development interest in the West Broad Street POA continues to be strong, with three projects under various stages in the development process. The Hilton Garden Inn was completed in Summer 2014. Another project, The Kensington, has been approved by City Council and is expected to be completed in 2017 adjacent to the Hilton Garden Inn. The proposed Broad & West development is currently going through the development process, and could be completed as early as 2019. The Broad & West development particularly shows the strength of developer interest through the systematic consolidation of ten parcels that would prove an obstacle in a less desirable location.

More information about recent development projects is available in Appendix A.



**Above:** The Metro Orange Line (Top), including the two Falls Church stations located just outside the borders of the City, opened in 1986. It runs in the median of Interstate 66 inside the Beltway (Bottom), which opened four years previous, in 1982.



**Above:** The portion of the Arts & Cultural District within the West Broad Street POA is bounded by West Broad Street, North Virginia Avenue, Park Avenue, and Little Falls Street.

**Below:** The Arts & Cultural District in and around the West Broad Street POA includes the Municipal Center, a public park, and a popular shopping center.



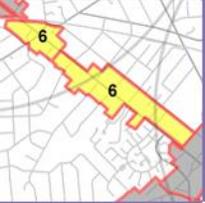
## Arts & Culture

Many Arts & Cultural events occur near the commercial corridor between West Broad Street and Park Avenue, particularly at Cherry Hill Park and City Hall. The easternmost portion of the West Broad Street POA is within the City's official Arts & Cultural District.

### Arts & Cultural District

The easternmost block of the West Broad Street POA falls within the City's designated Arts & Cultural District. This block includes the Broaddale Shopping Center and the City Library. Broaddale Shopping Center was constructed in 1960 and continues to be a popular retail destination in the City. The sidewalk in front of Broaddale Shopping Center along West Broad Street was the site of some of the first streetscape improvements in the City and helped form the basis for the Broad Street Streetscape Plan.

The Commonwealth of Virginia allows economic development incentives to be used by localities within an official Arts & Culture District. Allowable incentives include tax incentives for up to ten years, such as reduced permit and user fees and reduction of gross tax receipts. Regulatory flexibility may also be applied to the area, which may include a special zoning district or exemption from ordinances for up to ten years. Grants are also provided for improvements within the Arts & Culture District.

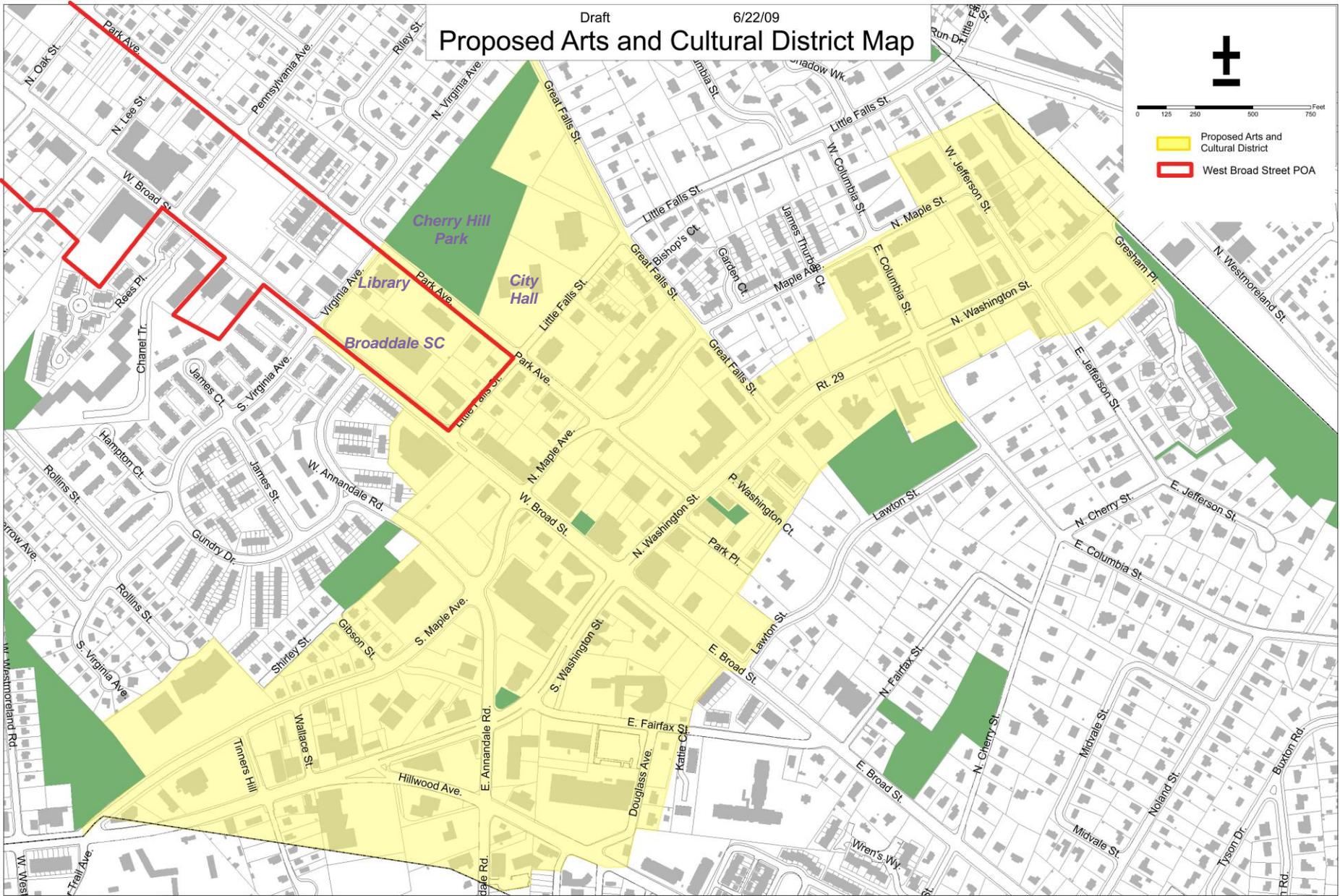


# West Broad Street Connecting Falls Church

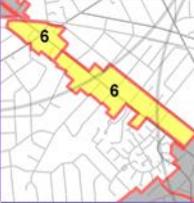
Draft 6/22/09  
Proposed Arts and Cultural District Map

0 125 250 500 750 Feet

- Proposed Arts and Cultural District
- West Broad Street POA



# History & Culture



Cherry Hill Farmhouse

### Cherry Hill Historic House & Farm

Cherry Hill Park borders the West Broad Street POA and is the site of several popular City events. Regular events hosted at Cherry Hill Historic House & Farm include: Valentine Tea, Celtic Music Concert, Mother's Day Tea, Farm Day, Civil War Thanksgiving, and the Children's Holiday Shop.

The Cherry Hill Historic House & Farm, located in Cherry Hill Park, is listed as an Historic Landmark in the State of Virginia and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Cherry Hill Farmhouse was originally built in 1845 and restored in 1976. The restoration was a cooperative effort between the City and local community groups. The Friends of Cherry Hill Foundation was created to preserve, and to protect the integrity of the Cherry Hill Historic House & Farm, and continues to be responsible for acquiring and maintaining house furnishings and the antique tool collection in the barn.



Entrance to Cherry Hill Park

### Summer Concerts in the Park

Summer Concerts in the Park is an annual concert series hosted by the Recreation and Parks Department and the Village Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS). The series begins every June and continues through August at Cherry Hill Park. These concerts are free to the public and begin at 7 p.m. on Thursdays.

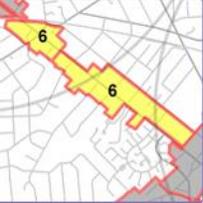
### Falls Church Farmers Market

The City of Falls Church Farmers Market takes place every Saturday year-round in the front parking lot of City Hall. The Farmer's Market boasts over 50 vendors during the peak season and 40 during the winter months. Once a month the Farmer's Market hosts the unique Chef Series, during which local area restaurants are able to develop and showcase recipes that use local, seasonal food.



### Tinner Hill Blues Festival

The annual Tinner Hill Blues Festival is a three-day regional event held at Cherry Hill Park which includes several musical



## West Broad Street Connecting Falls Church

acts and historical events. The event has been held every summer for the past 21 years and brings up to 3,500 people to the City, with a peak daily attendance of 1,500 people. It is sponsored by the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation and is in tribute to John Jackson, a well-known area blues musician.

### Mary Riley Styles Public Library

The Mary Riley Styles Public Library is located at 120 North Virginia Avenue, at the corner of North Virginia Avenue and Park Avenue. The Mary Riley Styles Public Library had 307,466 visits in 2013 and has a collection of 146,422 items. There are more than 26,000 registered cardholders. The library hosts a Local History Room, Children's reading area and programs, a small conference room, and a lounge area. The Children's programs are very popular, 15,761 children participated in programs in 2013.

The library building was originally constructed in 1958 and expanded in 1968 and again in 1992 to accommodate a growing collection and attendance. In 1977, the library was renamed to its current name to honor the contributions of Mary Riley Styles.

Mary Riley Styles served as chair of the Library Committee of the Women's Club from 1919 to 1945. During her tenure, the library collection grew from 650 items in 1899 to over 2,000 in 1924 and by 1940 had grown too large for the Women's Club Committee to maintain. The land for the library was donated to the Town of Falls Church by the Styles family after Mrs. Styles passing in 1946.



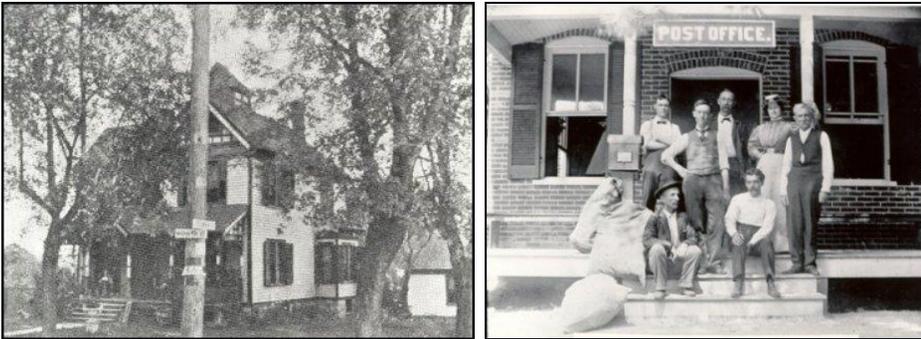
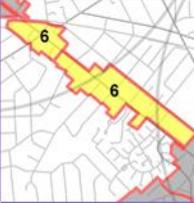
John Jackson



Mary Riley Styles



Mary Riley Styles Public Library



A further expansion or reconstruction of the Mary Riley Styles is being explored by the Library Board. The current building provides 15,500 square feet of space, but the Dewberry Facility Study commissioned by the Library Board recommended that between 40,100 to 51,000 square feet be made available either through expansion or reconstruction. The additional space would enlarge the Children's reading area and programs' area as well as provide new internet terminals, additional space for other elements of the collection, and increased meeting space.

### St. James Catholic Church & School

The Mission of St. James received formal recognition as a parish in 1892 and was initially housed in a wooden chapel near the current church location, two blocks away from what was then the West Falls Church train station along the Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad. The original stone church was constructed in 1902, and the first elementary parochial school was built in 1906. After two expansions of the original school, a new school was constructed in 1948 to accommodate the growing student base, and this school was then expanded in 1950. Two years later the original stone church was expanded to accommodate the growing congregation.

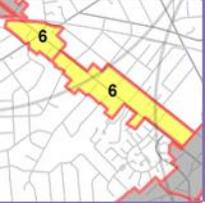
St. James School continues to be a popular private educational institution in the City and the region. The Church also attracts a large congregation that includes people from around the region, and provides multiple events nearly every day of the year.



**Above:** Previous sites of the library collection from 1899 until 1958 when the Falls Church Public Library (now the Mary Riley Styles Public Library) was completed.

**Below:** St. James Catholic Church (Left) and St. James Catholic School (Right).





**West Broad Street**  
*Connecting Falls Church*

**History & Culture**

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