



Arlington County, Virginia: A Modern History

Sherman W. Pratt

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Arlington County Virginia is a unique community with characteristics unlike any other in America. The County is just across the Potomac River from, and has a common boundary with, the District of Columbia, the operational headquarters and brain center of the world's only super power. It is, thus, closer to the White House, the Capitol, and control centers of most Federal agencies than any other locality in the Country. Not only do many of the top leaders of the Federal government live in Arlington, but a substantial percentage of its agencies are located in the clusters of high rise office buildings in the recently developed Rosslyn-Ballston and Jeff-Davis corridors. The County is also the location of the military's vast Pentagon building, the National Airport, the hallowed Arlington Cemetery with its Tomb of the Unknowns, and the graves of two presidents and almost a quarter million other honored military dead, and Arlington House, the magnificent mansion of the Custis-Lee families. Arlington's history, however, is not well recorded. The only extant comprehensive book on the County history is Arlington County Virginia, A History, by the late C.B. Rose who wrote in the 1960s or earlier and died in the 1970s. The author here recaps and expands on some early Arlington events described by Rose, but devotes most attention to political growth and activity not covered by Rose and many developments following the years included in her work. Pratt details many community challenges and confrontations, sometimes bitterly contentious, that were critical to the growth of the County, and the influential community leaders and organizations involved that helped shape events.

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