

## ACHS SUMMARY FORM

M:35-2

(date entered 5-4-80)

1. Name: Mahlon H. Austin House
2. Planning Area/Site Number: 35/2
3. M-NCPPC Atlas Reference: Map 20  
Coordinate L-7
4. Address: 9104 Hempstead Avenue  
Bethesda, Md.
5. Classification Summary
- |                                      |                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Category <u>building</u>             | Previous Survey Recording <u>MNCPPC</u>                              |
| Ownership <u>private</u>             | Title and Date: <u>Historic Sites Inventory</u><br>1976              |
| Public Acquisition <u>N/A</u>        |                                                                      |
| Status <u>occupied</u>               |                                                                      |
| Accessible <u>no</u>                 | Federal <u>    </u> State <u>x</u> County <u>x</u> Local <u>    </u> |
| Present use <u>private residence</u> |                                                                      |
6. Date: c. 1900
7. Original Owner: Mahlon H. Austin
8. Apparent Condition
- a. good                      b. altered                      c. moved - 1930s
9. Description: This farmhouse was once part of a model farm and was moved to its present location in 1920. It is a two and a half story, three bay by two bay frame house which faces south and has a north ell, added in 1961. The exterior walls are covered by white novelty siding. The south porch has a shed roof supported by five round columns. There are two-over-two double-hung windows flanked by green wooden louvered shutters. There are two gabled dormer windows on the north and south elevations added in 1920. The house has a gable roof covered with asbestos shingles.
10. Significance: This house was once the dwelling of Mahlon H. Austin, who operated a farm here in the early 20th century.  
Mahlon Austin purchased 10 acres of "Honesty" in 1869 and built this house about 1900.  
The land stayed in the Austin family until 1928, when Austin's daughter Martha sold the house and 47½ acres to John C. Letts. Letts combined the Austin farm and that of John Bohrer to make "Ayrlawn Farm".  
Letts was a grocer who had made his fortune in the years approaching the Depression of the 1930s. He developed the property into a model dairy farm with spotless barns, decorated silos and prize livestock. Fire has since destroyed the main barn and silo, and a number of buildings have been dismantled and removed, but the two older farmhouses remain. It is believed that this structure was moved from its original to its present location during Letts' ownership.  
The farm was sold and subdivided in 1946. Ayrlawn School was built on the property in 1962, and incorporated some of the original outbuildings to new use.
11. Researcher and date researched: Candy Reed - Arch. Description  
Cecily Mango/Eileen McGuckian                      July 1979
12. Compiler: Margaret Coleman
13. Date Compiled: 10/79
14. Designation Approval
15. Acreage: c, 15,700 sq. ft.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

M: 35/2  
Magi #

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Mahlon H. Austin House

AND/OR COMMON

Avrlawn

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

9104 Hempstead Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Bethesda

VICINITY OF

Old Georgetown Rd. 8

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Montgomery

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. James Keating

Telephone #: 530-0526

STREET & NUMBER

9104 Hempstead Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Bethesda

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 20034

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

Liber #: 4300

Folio #: 215

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

MNCPPC Inventory of Historical Sites

DATE

1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Park Historian's Office

CITY, TOWN

Derwood

STATE

Maryland 20855

**7 DESCRIPTION**

M:35-2

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>1930s</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This farmhouse was once part of a model farm. Moved to its present location in the 1930s, it has brick foundations and a poured concrete basement. This is a two and a half story frame structure with a rear ell which was added in 1961. The exterior walls of the house are white novelty siding.

The house faces south. On the south elevation there is an open porch with five columns supporting a shed roof. The central front door is paneled. There are two-over-two double-hung windows flanked by green wooden louvered shutters. At the northwest corner of the west elevation a picture window has been installed. At the northeast corner of the east elevation there is a three-sided bay window. After the move, dormer windows (two each) were added to the north and south elevations. These have gable roofs and are six-over-six double-hung windows.

The original interior end chimneys were changed when the house was moved. Now there are exterior end chimneys at the east and west elevations. The gable roof has asbestos shingles.

The south (front) door leads into a central hallway flanked on each side by two rooms. A single run closed string stairway ascends, south to north, along the east interior wall. East of the hall is the study. This has a diagonally placed fireplace at the meeting of the east exterior wall with the north interior wall. North of the study is a living room with the large three-sided bay window. At the north end of the hall, west of the living room is a bathroom which was formerly a pantry. West of the hall is the kitchen. South of the kitchen, in the southwest corner, is the dining room.

The axe hewn beams under the western half of the house support the theory held by the present owners that the eastern half of the house was a later addition, possibly dating from when the house was moved to this site. Floors over the western section are softwood now covered by the same narrow hardwood as in the eastern section. Walls and ceilings are plaster over lath. The study (southeast) has full field vertical paneling. There are simple molded doorways and paneled doors throughout the house. Plumbing and heating were added when the house was moved.

West of the house is the Ayrlawn School and playing fields. South of the house is a carefully tended garden. In 1961 a rear ell apartment was added to the northeast. This one story frame clapboard structure has a gable roof and contains a kitchen, bath, bedroom and living room. It may be entered from the main house living room (northeast) or the northwest patio.

There are several farm buildings on the school grounds that have been incorporated into the present facility: the silo with Jersey cow weather-vane is now an incinerator. The former Bull Barn was moved south to 6005 Johnson Avenue in 1950 to make way for road construction into the development, and at that time was converted into a four-dormer house.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		Local History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES      c. 1900      BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house was once the dwelling of Mahlon H. Austin, who operated a farm here in the early 20th century.

Mahlon Austin purchased 10 acres of "Honesty" in 1869.<sup>1</sup> He also owned considerable acreage along the C & O Canal, and apparently lived there prior to moving to the Bethesda area. Austin constructed this house c. 1900<sup>2</sup> and lived there until his death in 1915.

By his will, Austin left several unimproved acres of the "home place" to his daughters (individually), and the remaining six acres including buildings to his son, Milton B. for "He has given the best years of his life to me and his sister."<sup>3</sup>

The land stayed in the Austin family until 1928, when Austin's daughter Martha sold the house and 47 1/2 acres to John C. Letts.<sup>4</sup> Letts combined the Austin farm and that of John Bohrer<sup>5</sup> to make "Ayrlawn Farm".

Letts was a grocer who had made his fortune in the years approaching the Depression of the 1930s. He developed the property into a model dairy farm with spotless barns, decorated silos and prize livestock. Fire has since destroyed the main barn and silo, and a number of buildings have been dismantled and removed, but the two older farmhouses remain. It is believed that this structure was moved from its original to its present location during Letts' ownership.

Mr. Letts died in the late 1930s and for a time the farm was owned and operated by F. Henry Jones, his son-in-law. The land was sold in 1946<sup>6</sup> to Morris Marks of Stear-Mark Corporation, which subdivided it for homes.<sup>7</sup> Approximately 400 homes were built, and the two older farmhouses were sold separately. John and Kathryn Kelly purchased the subject house in 1947,<sup>8</sup> and in 1972 Mrs. Kelly sold it to her daughter and son-in-law, the Keatings.

Twenty acres of the farmland were sold to the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission for the North Bethesda Recreation Center; the MNCPPC later<sup>10</sup> sold 3.1 acres for the Ayrlawn School. The school building was erected in 1962, incorporating some of the original farm outbuildings; the silo became the west corner of the school, used for an incinerator.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Land Records of Montgomery County, Md. EBP 7/186 (Feb. 26, 1869).
- 2 The house does not appear on Hopkins' 1894 map, but is noted in the 1907 Assessment Records for the 7th District, Montgomery County.
- 3 Montgomery County Will Records, HCA 19/15 (1915).
- 4 Land Records of Montgomery County, 468/55 (Aug. 28, 1928).
- 5 Ibid., 488/144 (May 22, 1929).
- 6 Ibid., 1031/497 (Sept. 20, 1946).
- 7 Ibid., Plat 32/2018 (July 21, 1947).
- 8 Ibid., 1106/490 (Aug. 7, 1947).
- 9 Ibid., 1094/86 (1947); 2381/157 (Sept. 6, 1957).
- 10 Ibid., 2773/307 (Sept. 1, 1960).

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Maps: Hopkins (1894)  
Land and Orphan's Court  
Records  
Plat Books

Secondary Sources:  
Interview with Mrs. James Keating 6/13/78  
The Washington Star, Dec. 4, 1966,  
"Still Called Ayrlawn" by Morris Fradin  
Tigers Territory, Nov. 1976, "Ayrlawn  
Farms", North Bethesda Jr. H.S.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY Parent-Teacher-Student Association

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 15,700 square feet

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 2, Block 20, "Ayrlawn", (as per Plat 32/2018).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE	Cecily Mango/Eileen McGuckian	Candy Reed-arch. desc.
ORGANIZATION	Sugarloaf Regional Trails	DATE
STREET & NUMBER	Box 87	TELEPHONE
CITY OR TOWN	Dickerson	STATE
		926-4510
		Maryland 20753

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

M#35-2  
1608494635

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Ayrlawn Farm?

AND/OR COMMON

Ayrlawn School

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Hempstead Ave., off Old Georgetown Rd.

CITY, TOWN

Bethesda

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Montgomery

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

private owner of house-School Board, Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

(M-NCPPC) (Mont. Co., Md.)

CITY, TOWN

— VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Montgomery County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Liber #:

Folio #:

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

M:35-2

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This is an old (probably early 1900's) farm complex, that has been imaginatively incorporated into the present elementary school complex. The farmhouse (in private ownership) is a large, frame building that faces south. The main (south) facade has three bays with a central door. An open "farmer's porch" runs across the front. There are two dormers on the roof. Window sash is 2/2, and siding is German siding.

There are several farm buildings on the school grounds that have been incorporated into the present facility—these include a silo that has been converted into an incinerator.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

M:35-2

## PERIOD

- HISTORIC
- 10-1499
- 1500-1599
- 1600-1699
- 1700-1799
- 1800-1899
- 1900-

- ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
- ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC
- AGRICULTURE
- ARCHITECTURE
- ART
- COMMERCE
- COMMUNICATIONS

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

- COMMUNITY PLANNING
- CONSERVATION
- ECONOMICS
- EDUCATION
- ENGINEERING
- EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
- INDUSTRY
- INVENTION

- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- LAW
- LITERATURE
- MILITARY
- MUSIC
- PHILOSOPHY
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

- RELIGION
- SCIENCE
- SCULPTURE
- SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
- THEATER
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A controversy is now raging in the County over the closing of small schools-including Ayrlawn.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY



**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

WASHINGTON STAR, Sunday Magazine, article by Morris Fradin.  
(Dec. 4, 1966.)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Michael F. Dwyer, Senior Park Historian

ORGANIZATION

M-NCPPC

DATE

9/10/74

STREET & NUMBER

8787 Georgia Ave.

TELEPHONE

589-1480

CITY OR TOWN

Silver Spring

STATE

Maryland

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Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
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M:35-2

# Still Called Ayrilawn

IN the days when Bethesda was rural, millionaire grocer John C. Letts ran a showplace farm there which ranked high as a Washington tourist attraction. Ayrilawn Farms, with its prize cows, hogs and poultry maintained in spotless barns, enjoyed a long, bright day in the sun. Now its surviving buildings and land across from the National Institutes of Health can still be seen, but put to a very different use—as part of a school and as a recreation center.

The metamorphosis is a successful one.

Ayrilawn Elementary School, built in 1962, has its west corner tied into the old dairy silo (which it uses as an incinerator) topped by a cow weathervane. At the east end of the school stands another silo surmounted by a prancing horse weathervane. Across the pathway, in a corner, is the smokehouse where hams were produced. Adjacent is the egg house and the sloping entrance doors to a root cellar. There is still a horse trough to be seen.

The old pasteurization barn stands opposite the school. Since it has been converted into the school library, bookshelves conceal its white-tile walls. From their classroom windows, the pupils can see the miniature barn-mailbox next to the flagpole and the busy North Bethesda Recreation Center. Baseball, football and basketball teams work out on the field where once cattle grazed; tennis is played where poultry houses once stood. Cyclists ride down a dirt lane which formerly led to pigpens.

Two of the farm buildings were converted into attractive dwellings in the Ayrilawn subdivision. One is the white farmhouse at 9104 Hempstead Ave., now modernized and the home of Eugene E. Kelley, a realtor. Inside, paneled walls cover the original plaster of some rooms, but an "Ayrilawn Farms Corner" is maintained as a shrine to the past. On display here are a crank-type magneto wall telephone and framed photographs of the farm and its activities. A lamp converted to a lamp base stands in the basement, a creamer converted into a lamp is on

the porch and there is a milkcan mailbox on the kitchen side of the house.

The former "palace" for the prize Jersey bulls was moved 200 feet south to its present location, 6006 Johnson Ave., and serves as the home of John A. Ruhling. The move was made in 1947 when Ayrilawn Farms ended its 19-year operation following the death of its founder and the labor shortage of World War II.

Fire claimed the main barn and silo, a number of other buildings were dismantled and the original 100-acre site has shrank greatly, but Ayrilawn Farms lives on in its buildings and in memory. And the 400 handsome homes surrounding the original site benefit from its floral setting. With its farm look, Ayrilawn School likewise stands as a continuing reminder of the pride area residents show in the Ayrilawn experiment.

MORRIS FRADIN

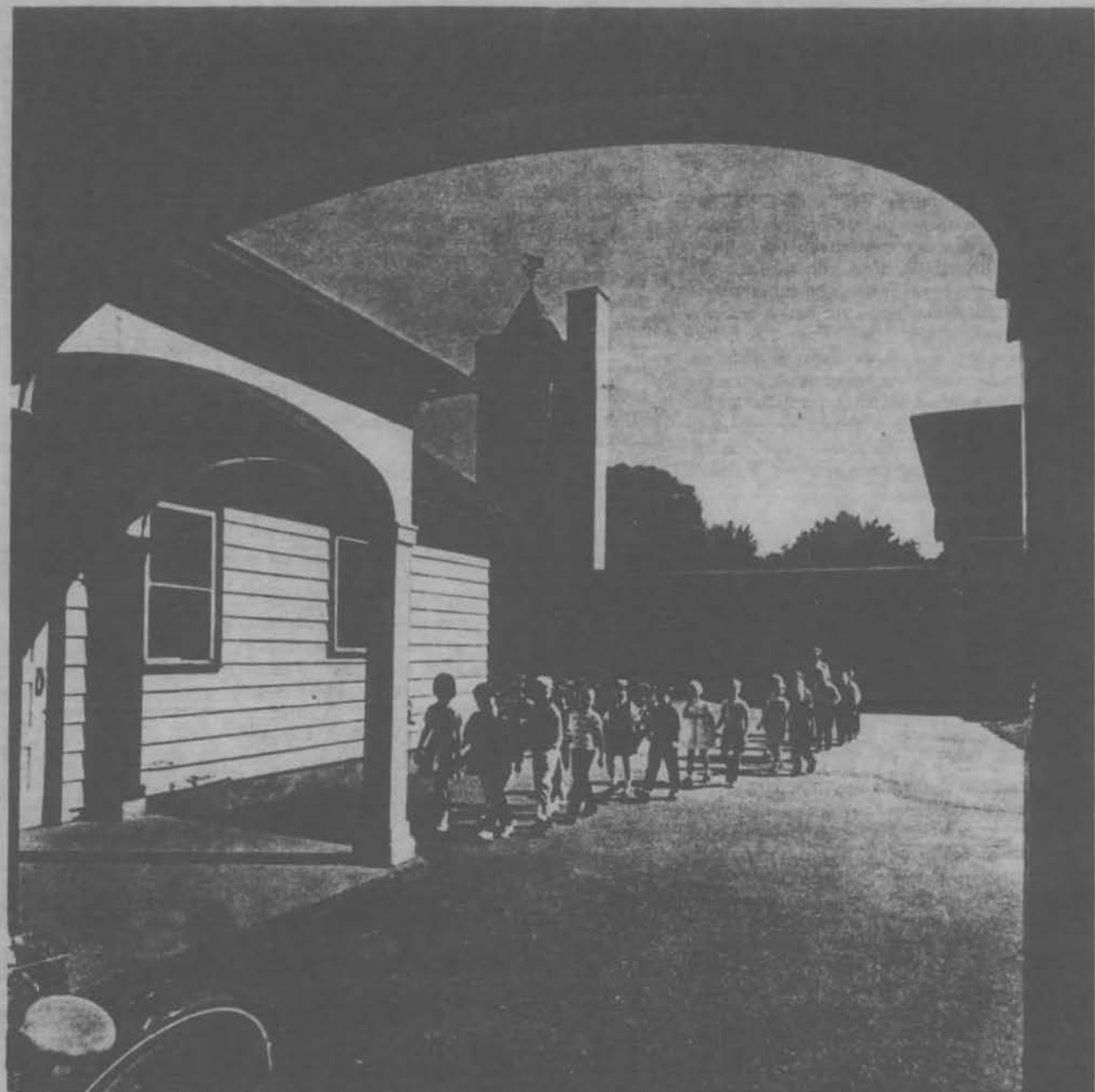


The buildings at the old Ayrilawn Farms in North Bethesda had great style, as this surviving silo shows.

M:35-2



*The weathervane atop a second silo symbolizes the Ayrilawn claim to fame—prize Jersey cows.*



*Pupils march from school to library, a converted milk house. The silo is now used as an incinerator.*



NAME (AURLAWN FARM)

M: #35-2

LOCATION HEMPSTEAD AVE., BETHESDA, MD

FACADE SE

PHOTO TAKEN 4/22/75

M. DWYER



NAME

(AYRLAWN FARM) M: # 35-2

LOCATION

HEMPSTEAD AVE., BETHESDA, MD.

FACADE

SE

PHOTO TAKEN

4/22/75

M. OWYER





NAME AYRLAWN SCHOOL - FARMHOUSE

M: #35-2

LOCATION

HEMPSTEAD AVE., BETHESDA, MD.

FACADE

SW

PHOTO TAKEN

9/10/74

M. DWYER