Language for Arlington Junction Park Interpretive Signage

Where Arlington Junction Park now sits has been the site for many uses throughout Arlington County’s history. Affectionately referred to as “The Teardrop Parcels,” due to the shape of the land, what is now a park was formerly the home for two essential pieces of transportation infrastructure in the County; The Alexandria Canal, and the Arlington Junction. These two pieces of our local history have played a large role in creating the surrounding neighborhoods, connecting what is now Crystal City to population centers throughout the area in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

**The Alexandria Canal**

The Alexandria Canal was completed in 1843, allowing Virginia merchants to connect to the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal. When completed, the Alexandria Canal connected the Rosslyn neighborhood to Georgetown via a 1,000-foot-long aqueduct that crossed the Potomac. The Canal then ran seven miles, through what is now Arlington Junction Park and to the eastern edge of Alexandria, Virginia. The primary product that was shipped up and down the canal was coal mined from Western Maryland. Other products shipped to Alexandria were wheat, corn, whiskey, corn meal and flour, while fish, salt, plaster and lumber were shipped from Alexandria, in the opposite direction. Shipments continued until the canal was abandoned in 1886, coinciding with demand for a toll-free bridge to cross the Potomac River, into Washington, D.C.

**The Arlington Junction**

In 1896, an electric trolley line was constructed along the towpath of the now abandoned Alexandria Canal. The new trolley line allowed the Mount Vernon Railway Company to offer continuous service between Washington, D.C. and Mount Vernon. The new trolley line connected to D.C. via the recently constructed Long Bridge, eventually converging at Arlington Junction.

Once trolleys made it to Arlington Junction, the line’s route split and passengers could continue west to Fairfax City and Falls Church or take a diverging line that served Arlington National Cemetery, Rosslyn, and the Green Valley neighborhood. The southward line from Arlington Junction continued along the original towpath of the Alexandria Canal. Near Arlington’s southern border at Four Mile Run, the railroad company constructed a rail yard and an amusement park, Luna Park, that operated from 1906 to 1915.

The electric trolley lines served residents and visitors of Arlington County until the last trolleys of the Washington-Mount Vernon line ran on January 18, 1932. Later that year, the tracks were removed when portions of the right-of-way was used for the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The line between Clarendon and Arlington Junction was abandoned on July 1, 1932, marking the end of the Arlington Junction as an electric trolley station.