



River View Drive, Potomac

With its fascinating historical roots, this secluded Potomac street offers a bounty of privacy and elegance.

STEPHEN WALKER

River View Drive is a secluded street in Potomac with an unusual provenance. Its 40 or so homes were built in the late 1980s on the grounds of the Marwood estate's nearly 200 acres, which overlook the Potomac River. The house was built in 1931 by Samuel Klump Martin III, heir to a Chicago retailing fortune, according to *Places from the Past*, published in 2001 by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The 33-room Marwood mansion—with its 11 bathrooms—was said to have a vaulted dining room that replicated one belonging to King James I of England. Joseph and Rose Kennedy rented and resided on the estate in the 1930s until the couple and their children relocated to London when Joseph Kennedy became ambassador to Great Britain in 1938. The home was the site of many lavish parties thrown by the Kennedys and attended by President Franklin Roosevelt and other dignitaries.

Grady Gore, a distant cousin of Al Gore, bought Marwood in 1943, but in 1995 his family was forced to sell the entire property to pay estate taxes. Developers Ted Visnic and Chris Bogdan subdivided the land into 1-acre and 1.5-acre lots and kept the Marwood mansion intact with 13 acres of its own on the riverfront. The long drive to the mansion became River View Drive.

Marwood was bought in 2005 by Chris and Nalini Rogers,

who have spent the last 2½ years renovating the house. (Chris Rogers was one of the founders of the telecommunications company that is now Nextel.) The home has 16,000 square feet on four levels, with an underground garage. Long & Foster real estate agent Marc Fleisher says Marwood has the finest river views on the Maryland side.

Don Sperling, a Rockville attorney, and wife Leigh, an interior designer, have lived in their stucco and stone home on River View Drive since 2005. "It's a great place to live, from the beautiful trees and landscaping to the well-spaced houses. It's a private neighborhood, with no through traffic," Don Sperling says. "It's close to everything but not on top of everything."

The former Marwood gatehouse—stucco with a red tiled roof, green shutters and a three-car garage—is situated at the top of River View Drive (pictured above). The street is immaculately landscaped, courtesy of the neighborhood civic association. Carefully preserved tall and leafy trees give the neighborhood a woodland feel, Fleisher says. The homes are all custom-built in a variety of architectural styles.

Indeed, the sound of traffic along busy River Road tends to fade away, leaving only the whispers of the trees and the ghosts of the glamorous Marwood parties.