Proposals for a modern road connecting the nation’s capital with the Mount Vernon Estate were raised in 1888 and proceeded in fits and starts for the next forty-two years. By 1900, a patchwork of new roads and renamed existing roads had created Mount Vernon Boulevard from Rosslyn to Alexandria. With the construction of an electric rail line running a similar route all the way to Mount Vernon however, the impetus for such a road died out. The rise of the automobile renewed interest in the road proposals and resulted in a rebuilt Mount Vernon Avenue in 1915. Eventually, the George Washington Memorial Parkway used an all-new route north of Alexandria in 1930 and claimed the electric railway’s right-of-way for the portion south of the city.

Since 1894, Mount Vernon Boulevard had been the oldest road in the District and was popular for Sunday drives. In recognition of its role at the end of the main business district, the District of Columbia planned to name the street for the nearby Mount Vernon area. However, the name was never officially adopted. The street was known variously as the Boulevard and the National Boulevard. In 1913, the Board of Public Works decided to rename the street, a decision that was not implemented until 1915. The street was then officially named Mount Vernon Boulevard.

The 1920s saw remarkable growth in the commercial density along Mount Vernon Avenue. The core area between Bel欺负tje and Mt. Ida avenues in 1921 was the site of fifteen residences, five stores, and the Mount Vernon School. Ten years later, that stretch of road had gained only one house, but now had eighteen commercial buildings along with the school.

The appearance of mass-produced automobiles changed American life in many dramatic ways, including the need for high-quality paved roads. In 1914, the federal government began subsidizing “experimental roads” to test various materials and construction techniques. An early form of transportation largesse, these projects were eagerly sought after. One of the first to be launched was the “Mount Vernon Avenue Experimental Road”, which ran from the foot of the Highway Bridge at 14th Street down what is now Arlington Ridge Road along Mount Vernon Avenue and into Alexandria.