



# 2012 Most Endangered Places Washington, DC



Beginning in 1996, the DC Preservation League has announced annually a list of Most Endangered Places to draw attention to Washington, DC's historically, culturally, and architecturally significant places that may be threatened with ill-advised alteration, demolition through neglect, or abandonment.

The mission of the DC Preservation League is to preserve, protect and enhance the historic and built environment of Washington, DC through advocacy and education.



**Bond Bread Factory**  
**2146 Georgia Avenue, NW**

Nominated by:  
John DeFerrari

The Bond Bread building was completed in 1930, its distinguished design standing out from other contemporaneous factory buildings in the city. When construction began in 1929, the Bond Bread Factory was a state-of-the-art building designed by an experienced bakery architect, C.B. Comstock. His design mixes elements of the popular art deco in its verticality and stepped façade, as well as the stripped classicism so at home in federal Washington.

In 2008, the factory was traded to Howard University for another nearby parcel. The university plans to raze the structure and build a mixed-use complex in its place. The site is outside the U Street Historic District, meaning the developer has no obligation to retain the building. Perhaps if attention was drawn to the historic nature of this building, elements, if not the whole, of the structure could be incorporated into the new plans for the site.



**Alexander Crummell School**  
**1900 Gallaudet Street, NE**

National Register for Historic Places  
DC Inventory of Historic Sites

Nominated by:  
Parisa Norouzi, Empower DC  
Andria Swanson, Ivy City Civic Association

From 1912 to the early 1970s, the Alexander Crummell School served as the Ivy City and Trinity communities' elementary school for African American children. The school was designed in 1911 by Snowden Ashford, the first municipal architect of Washington, DC. It was named for Reverend Doctor Alexander Crummell, a leading African American educator and compatriot of Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DeBois, who founded the think tank the American Negro Academy. This elementary school was the center of the community in the historic Ivy City neighborhood.

Since 1980 the building has been vacant and left to decay. The site faces problems beyond its neglect, however. Mayor Vincent Gray recently approved plans for the site to become a bus depot and parking lot, contradicting the call for rehabilitation outlined in the city's own Comprehensive Plan. Ivy City community activists have filed suit to seek an injunction, however the threat to the school remains imminent. Empower DC and the Ivy City Civic Association nominated this site to the Most Endangered Places list and hopes that placement on the list will draw attention to their goal of turning the school back into the community center it once was.



## **Mount Zion Cemetery** **27th and Q Streets, NW**

National Register of Historic Places  
DC Inventory of Historic Sites

Nominated by:  
Kimberly Bender

Both the Mount Zion Cemetery and Female Union Band Cemetery play an important role as a reminder of African American culture in nineteenth century Georgetown. The land was purchased in 1808 by the Dumbarton Street Methodist Episcopal Church. The African American members of this congregation broke off to form Mount Zion Church, which in 1879 took control of the cemetery. This was done with the help of the Female Union Band Society, a benevolent society of free African American women established in 1842. This cemetery stands as a physical representation of the society and culture African Americans in Georgetown created and the pride they placed in this.

In 1976 the Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation organized volunteers to clean up the neglected cemetery. Unfortunately, plans by the Corporation were to rehabilitate the cemetery were never fully carried out. The site has fallen back into a state of disrepair; headstones are broken or missing, vegetation grows unchecked, and the sign marking the cemetery has disappeared. These factors combine to make it difficult to identify the site as a cemetery at all, let alone relay its significance to the community. DCPL looks forward to working with leaders of the Mt. Zion Church and the trustees of the Female Union Band Society to develop plans that will help rehabilitate and preserve the site and to raise community awareness of this important local landmark.



**Old Thai Embassy**  
**2300 Kalorama Road, NW**

National Register of Historic Places  
DC Inventory of Historic Sites

Nominated by:  
Sally Berk

The former Thai Embassy, at the corner of Kalorama Road and 23rd Street, was vacated several years ago in favor of the larger Codman Mansion at the foot of the Spanish Steps. Constructed in 1920, the Embassy was designed by James Rush Marshall, of the architectural firm Hornblower and Marshall, best known for the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, 1908-1911. According to the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District nomination, this was the first purpose-built embassy in our district. Prior to this time, embassies were converted from private mansions. The Thai symbols that top the pilasters on the façade are testament to the fact that the house was intended for a specific occupant.

The building is threatened with demolition-by-neglect. The embassy vacated the premises several years ago and has deferred maintenance resulting in the physical decline of the building. The first sign of deterioration was the crumbling baluster wall in front of the embassy. When residents of the immediate area brought this to the attention of the ambassador, a quick fix was performed by constructing a brick wall in place of the balusters, the work of the John Earley Studio, which was responsible for the iconic balusters at Meridian Hill Park of a decade earlier. Since the crumbling balusters, cracks have appeared in the walls of the building. Because the building is probably constructed of concrete, these cracks indicate the likelihood of a very serious structural problem that poses a threat to the entire building.



## **Washington Canoe Club** **3700 Water Street NW**

National Register of Historic Places  
DC Inventory of History Sites

Nominated by:  
Washington Canoe Club Board

Designed by Georges P. Hales in 1904, the shingle style Washington Canoe Club (WCC) has been a fixture on the Georgetown waterfront and an important center for Washington recreation for over a century. Its “flow through” design has withstood floods and ice jams with little damage, a testament to its design. In addition to its being an excellent example of shingle style architecture, the interior is decorated with a frieze by Felix Mahony, a cartoonist for the Washington Star and the founder of the National Art School, done in 1910 and restored in 1981. The club represents the role of athletic clubs in twentieth century recreational life. It has produced numerous national champions and Olympic medalists.

Despite upkeep over the years by loyal WCC members, the structure is deteriorating both internally and externally. The shingles are in poor condition, the windows and window frames are in need of repair, the roof needs replacement, there are structural issues with the floor, walls, and building frame, and the building systems need repair. Due to unclear ownership of the property, neither the Washington Canoe Club nor the National Park Service wants to invest in restoration of the building, despite the fact that in 2010 the NPS deemed the structure unsafe for occupancy. Inclusion on the Most Endangered Places list will hopefully draw attention to the needs of the building and help the NPS and the WCC move forward in their efforts to prevent further damage to the building and begin to repair and document the structure.



## **Watchman's Lodge and Tower Donaldson Place, NW, Tenleytown**

Nominated by:  
DC Historic Preservation Office

The facility at Fort Reno was constructed in 1904 to meet the growing demand for water from the Tenleytown vicinity. The watchman's lodge and tower were designed in an engineering-adapted Flemish Revival style by Wood, Donn, and Deming, a prominent Washington architectural firm at the time. They have embellishment unique for their engineering purpose, with quoining, decorative patterns in the brick, and half timbering. Very little has been modified in the years after their construction. As part of the larger engineering history of Washington, DC, this site is also significant for its connection to two important engineers, Montgomery Meigs and Allen Hazen, who designed the gravity-fed aqueduct system in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Fort Reno site is part of the larger system which has been documented in a 1995 architectural survey. It was mentioned in this survey and included in the proposed historic district, but neither a history of the site nor an inventory of the structures of the facility was included in this documentation. The structure is now in need of maintenance, with vegetation obscuring the southern elevation and the roof in need of repair. More protection of this site may be possible with deeper research further connecting it to the Washington aqueduct system as a whole.