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This photograph shows the increasing large-scale development in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood.

G.W. University, German Library/University Archives, ca. 1960.

FOGGY BOTTOM HISTORIC DISTRICT



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The area popularly known as Foggy Bottom is generally considered to be between 17th Street, N.W. on the east; Rock Creek Park on the west; the Potomac River on the south; and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., on the north. Although the origin of the name is not documented, it was probably used by locals as a term to describe the swampy “bottom land” along the Potomac, with its atmosphere of natural river fogs combined with the smoke and soot from nearby industries. Historically, Foggy Bottom was divided into two sections, with 23rd Street, N.W., forming the boundary between an upper income neighborhood to the east and the working class/industrial area to the west. The Foggy Bottom Historic District celebrates the former working class section of the larger Foggy Bottom neighborhood. The district is significant for its association with Washington’s industrial history, its association with Washington’s German and Irish communities, and for the low-scale, modest brick rowhouses distinctively ornamented with pressed and molded brick details that characterize the area.



Prior to the Civil War, the Foggy Bottom area remained sparsely developed with open fields and woodlands as illustrated on this 1857 Map of Washington City, by A. Boschke. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

Opposite, top (and back cover): Commercial activity along the water depended on the river and C&O Canal as sources of cheap transportation. Businesses included breweries, gas works, the Godey Lime Kilns, J. Maury Dove coal dealers, and the Arlington Bottlers. G.W. University, Gelman Library University Archives, ca. 1890.

Opposite, middle: “Hamburg Wharf,” at the foot of 21st Street, N.W. was important for many years in the early history of Washington as a place of landing. In 1806, an act of Congress fixed at twenty-five cents the rate of hack fare “from the President’s House to Hamburg Wharf.” Sketch of Hamburg in 1804 printed in *The Watergate Hotel Review*, 1974.

Historical Development

In 1763, a German immigrant named Joseph Funk subdivided a 130-acre tract of land near the junction of the Potomac River and Rock Creek into 234 lots. The village was officially called Hamburg, although it soon gained the local nickname of “Funkstown.” Here, Funk envisioned a community similar to Georgetown, founded to the west in 1751, which had become a prosperous port town by this time. Hamburg’s asset was its proximity to the junction of the Potomac River and Rock Creek and the wharves and trading industry that had been

established there. However, there was little development in Hamburg until the 1850s when the population of the entire city dramatically increased. Irish and German immigrants were drawn to Foggy Bottom because of the numerous job opportunities related to the growth of industries on the edge of the Potomac and the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Both groups developed as close-knit communities that formed separate religious and social institutions and generally segregated themselves, even in the workplace. Typically, Germans labored at the glassworks and breweries in the neighborhood, while the Irish tended to work at the Washington Gas Light Company.

Two important public sites anchored the neighborhood and helped spur development. One was Washington Circle, a formal reservation planned by Pierre L'Enfant at the intersection of Pennsylvania and New Hampshire Avenues and 23rd and K Streets, N.W. The other, Camp Hill, served various government purposes, most importantly as the site of the first Naval Observatory.

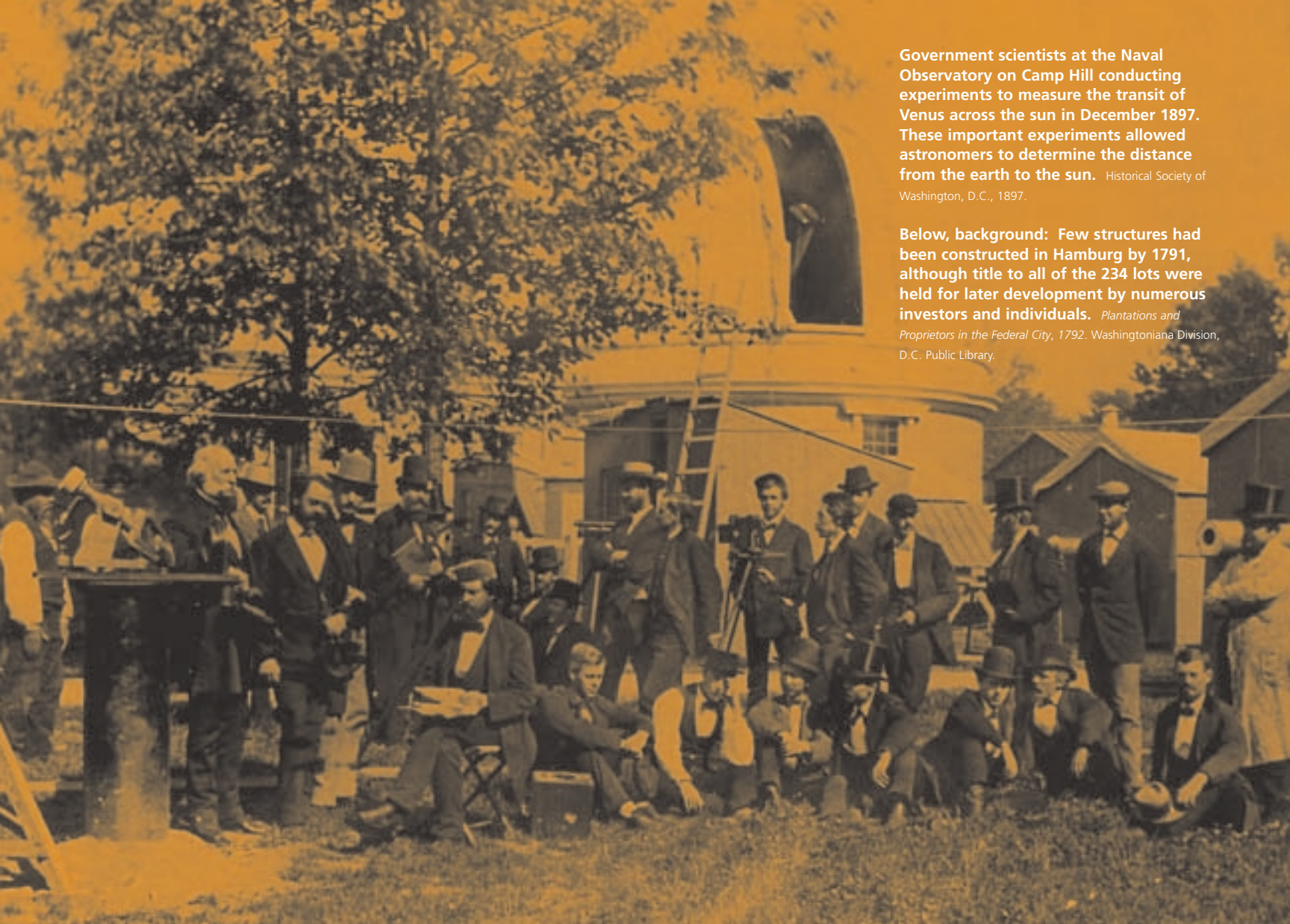
Camp Hill, Peter's Hill, Reservation Number 4, University Square, and Observatory Hill were all names used to identify the hill overlooking the Potomac River. Today, the original Naval Observatory building is part of the Navy Medical Department's headquarters and is a National Historic Landmark.

When the city was first being planned, Thomas Jefferson proposed this prominent site for the U.S. Capitol. However, in laying out the city of Washington in 1791, Pierre L'Enfant designated the hill, with its commanding position above the river, as a site for fortifications to protect the new capital. The federal government subsequently acquired the area bounded by E Street on the north and 23rd and 25th Streets to the east and west for government use.

When the fledgling federal government moved to Washington, D.C. in 1800, the Marines who accompanied the move camped on the hill until barracks were built for them in southeast Washington two years later. The hill thus became known as Camp Hill. A decade later, the area



View from Washington Monument looking northwest along Virginia Avenue. The mansion in the right corner is the Van Ness mansion, demolished for the Pan American Building at 17th and Constitution Avenue, N.W. Visible in the distance are the massive gas tanks and smoke stacks that characterized the Foggy Bottom neighborhood in the 1890s. Washingtoniana Division, D.C., Public Library, ca. 1890s.



Government scientists at the Naval Observatory on Camp Hill conducting experiments to measure the transit of Venus across the sun in December 1897. These important experiments allowed astronomers to determine the distance from the earth to the sun. Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1897.

Below, background: Few structures had been constructed in Hamburg by 1791, although title to all of the 234 lots were held for later development by numerous investors and individuals. *Plantations and Proprietors in the Federal City, 1792*. Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library.

served as a troop encampment for the militia in the War of 1812. Although early plans for the city indicate fortifications on the site, none appear to have been built. The National University, which George Washington envisioned for the city, was also proposed for the site but was never built.

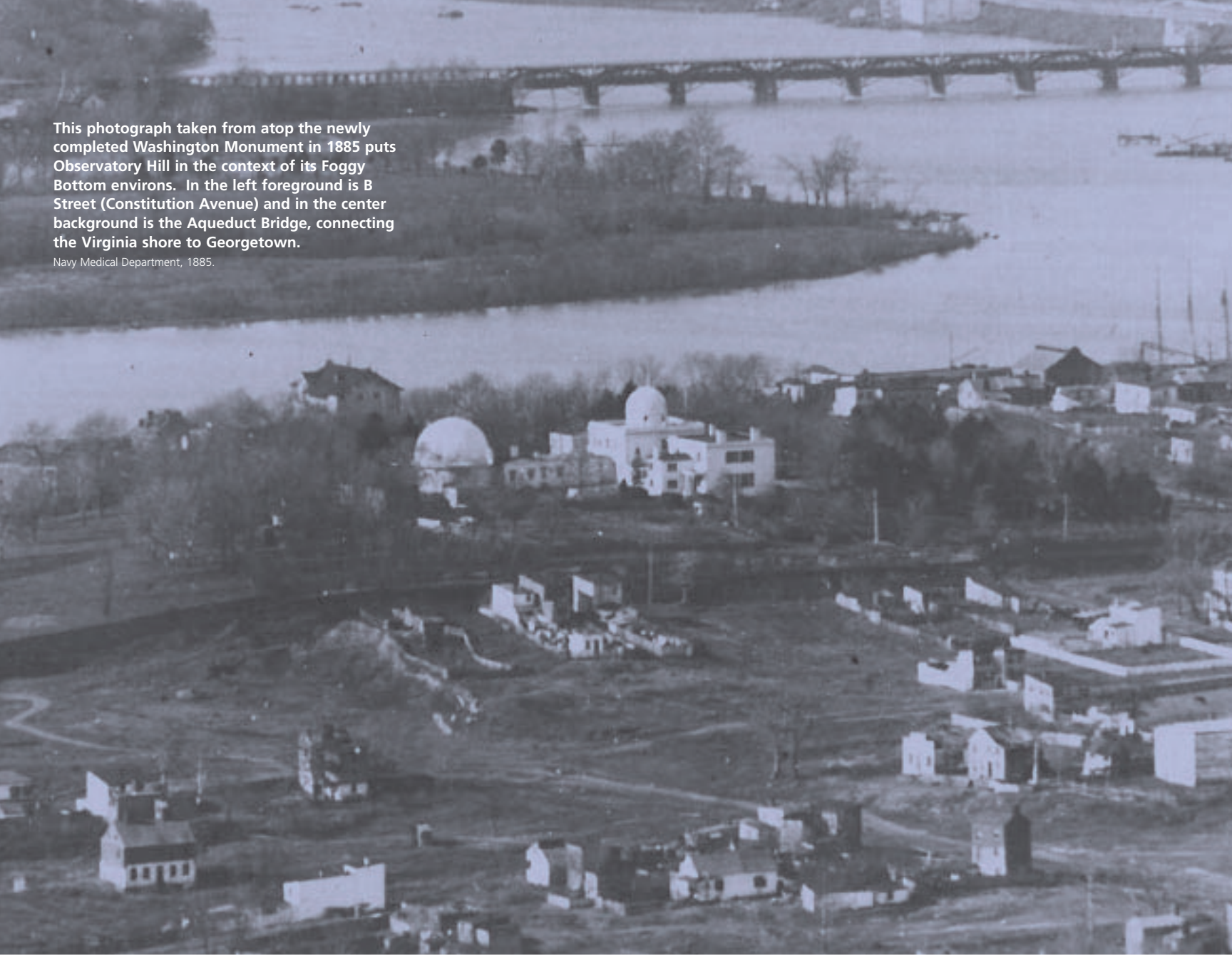
In 1842, the hill was selected as the location of the new Naval Observatory. Over the next fifty years its scientists became internationally renowned for their work in both oceanography and astronomy. The Observatory's first superintendent, Lieutenant Matthew F. Maury, was known as the "Pathfinder of the Seas" for his pioneering work in oceanography. A Virginian, he resigned his commission at the outbreak of the Civil War to serve in the Confederate Navy.

In 1849, decades before the Greenwich Meridian was accepted as the international standard, Congress authorized the establishment of an American Meridian. As mandated by Congress, the north-south line dividing the eastern and western hemispheres passed through the dome of the Observatory. It is marked by a plaque at the southeast corner of the intersection of 24th and H Streets, N.W. Although most navigators

did not accept the American Meridian, it was widely used by surveyors mapping the American West. Many of the boundaries of western states were set along lines measured from the American Meridian. The Utah-Nevada border, for example, is exactly 36 degrees west of 24th Street, N.W. The United States abandoned the American Meridian in 1884, when it accepted the Greenwich Meridian as the international standard.

Beyond its geographical role, the Observatory played a critical part in establishing a standard time. Prior to the Civil War, time was determined locally. As the nation prospered and the network of railroads developed, the lack of a standardized time was an increasing problem. In 1869, the Observatory began transmitting time signals by telegraph to most railroads operating in the south. Additional time signals were transmitted to New York City in 1872, and by the next year, Western Union was transmitting time signals from the Observatory to almost every state.

The work undertaken at the Observatory produced important astronomical discoveries. After the Civil War, the Observatory commissioned the construction of the world's largest telescope.



This photograph taken from atop the newly completed Washington Monument in 1885 puts Observatory Hill in the context of its Foggy Bottom environs. In the left foreground is B Street (Constitution Avenue) and in the center background is the Aqueduct Bridge, connecting the Virginia shore to Georgetown.

Navy Medical Department, 1885.

Installed in 1873, the telescope was used by Professor Asaph Hall when he discovered the two moons of Mars on August 11, 1877.

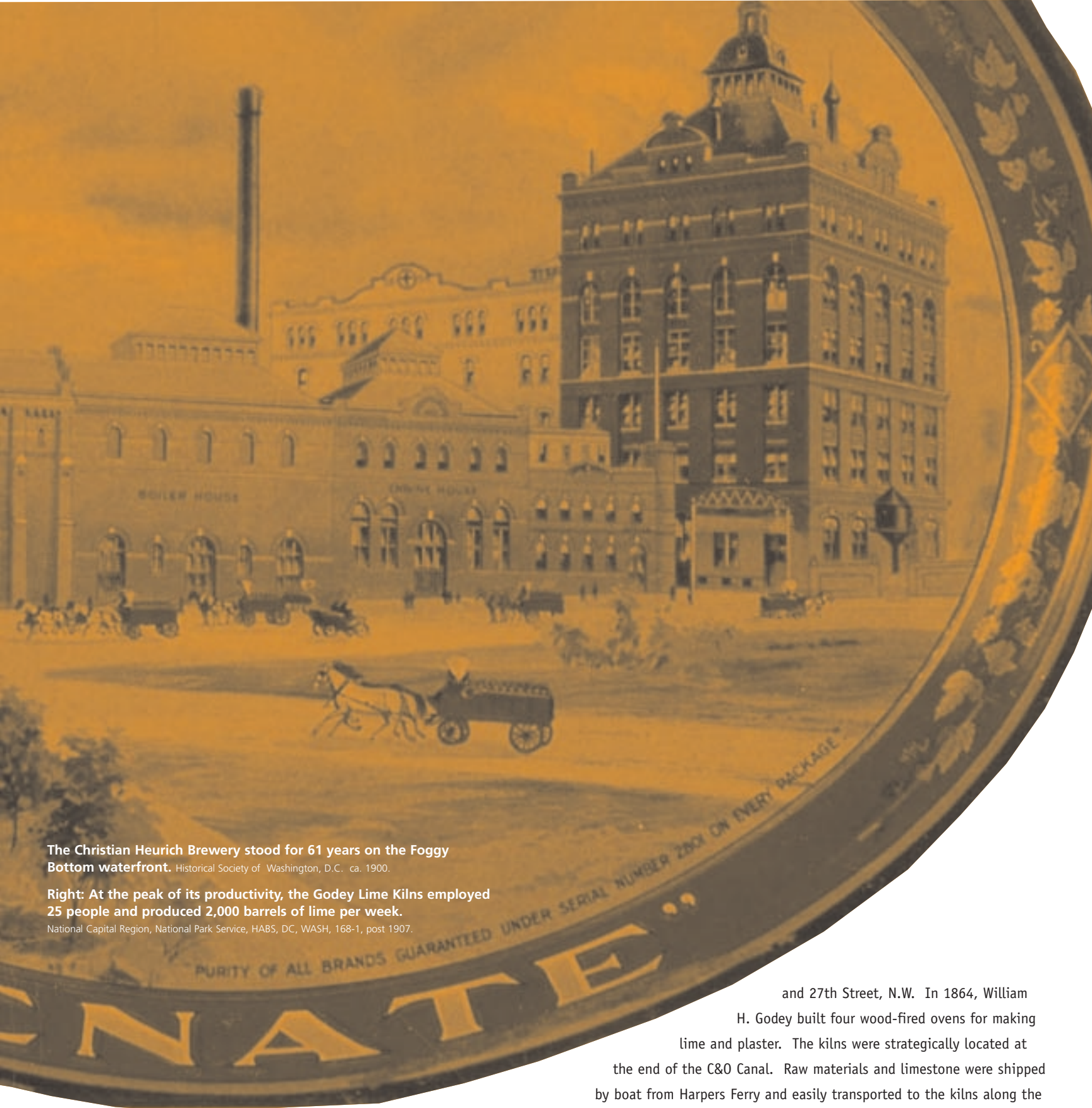
The Observatory's site proved to have serious problems. Fog rising from the Potomac River often clouded the view. Wharves and other riverfront development slowed the flow of the river, leading to the growth of mosquito-breeding swamps. Consequently, Observatory superintendents and staff suffered frequently from bouts of malaria. An astronomer at the Observatory described the area as one of the most unhealthy and dismal parts of the city.

In 1893, to escape from both fog and disease, the Naval Observatory moved to its current site on Massachusetts Avenue. The old building was transferred to the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and became a hospital. Conditions in the area improved when, early in the 20th century, the swamp and tidal flats at the base of Observatory Hill were filled in and the Mall extended westward. The Navy constructed

additional buildings on the Hill and located the Naval Medical Center there before constructing its present hospital in Bethesda.

Early Industries of Foggy Bottom

Many of the earliest businesses in the city were located along the waterfront where wharves were constructed to support the associated industries and warehouses. In the 1870s, John Albert started a brewery that later became the Abner Drury Brewery. In 1873, Christian Heurich and Paul Ritter established the Heurich Brewery on 20th Street near Dupont Circle. By 1895, the Heurich Brewery was so successful that a new all-brick, fireproof building was constructed at 25th and Water Streets, N.W. These operations initiated many years of brewing in Foggy Bottom that lasted until the middle of the 20th century. In 1806, George Way and Andrew Way, Jr. founded a glass factory known locally



The Christian Heurich Brewery stood for 61 years on the Foggy Bottom waterfront. Historical Society of Washington, D.C. ca. 1900.

Right: At the peak of its productivity, the Godey Lime Kilns employed 25 people and produced 2,000 barrels of lime per week.

National Capital Region, National Park Service, HABS, DC, WASH, 168-1, post 1907.

as the "Glass House" on the riverbank at 22nd Street. According to local historian John Clagett Proctor, the window glass made at the "Glass House" was superior to most glass made in this country and was held by glaziers and others in high regard. Local histories describe the festive openhouses at the factory where glassblowers made special toys and bottles for visitors. The Godey Lime Kilns were located at Rock Creek

and 27th Street, N.W. In 1864, William H. Godey built four wood-fired ovens for making lime and plaster. The kilns were strategically located at the end of the C&O Canal. Raw materials and limestone were shipped by boat from Harpers Ferry and easily transported to the kilns along the riverbank. Remnants of the Godey Lime Kilns, which operated until 1908, have been designated as a landmark archeological resource listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Historical Society of Washington, D.C. ca. 1900.

Impact of the C&O Canal

Begun in 1828 and completed in 1850, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal stimulated Foggy Bottom's residential, commercial, and industrial growth. The Canal was a lively source of activity and income for Washington from the 1850s to its demise in the 1920s.

The population of the area more than doubled from 1850 to 1860, with the majority of the newcomers described as unskilled workers. The Canal also attracted ambitious businessmen such as Captain William Easby, a Yorkshireman, who started the Foggy Bottom shipyard in 1829. Other industries, including lime kilns, a wood yard, an icehouse, and a factory producing plaster, ammonia, and fertilizer, were thriving at this time. This industrial area was home to one of the most ethnically diverse communities in Washington—locally employed working class immigrants. By 1871, 500 boats were transporting goods along the Canal. A devastating flood in 1889 and the increased importance of rail diminished the significance of the Canal. The Canal eventually closed in 1924.

The Heurich Brewery originally stood at 1229 20th Street, N.W. These workers (right) helped construct the new, fire-proof building (background) at 25th & Water Streets, N.W., completed in 1895. Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1895.



Early Physical Development

The Foggy Bottom Historic District is primarily a residential district comprising approximately 135 structures in four squares. Most of the building stock dates from the last quarter of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century. The houses are predominantly narrow, brick rowhouses, unpretentious in scale and detailing. They form a cohesive neighborhood of modest housing, varied within a limited range of types and styles. The buildings are usually two and, occasionally, three stories in height with flat-fronts and simple, corbeled cornices and spare ornamentation. Throughout the historic district, examples are found of the pressed and molded brick detailing used by builders to make even modest houses appear distinct.

The earliest houses were individually constructed rowhouses built for owner occupancy. Notable among these is a group of five buildings along 25th Street, N.W., including the frame house at the corner of 25th and I Streets, N.W., which may have been associated with the Underground Railroad.

In addition to the rowhouses built by individuals for their own

Impact of the Civil War

The Civil War strongly affected the Foggy Bottom area. Soldiers' tents lined the Potomac, and military horse corrals were located at the foot of 22nd and 21st Streets near the river. A military camp, Camp Fry, was established south of Washington Circle along 23rd Street. It was the quarters for invalid soldiers, members of the Veteran Volunteer Corps, who guarded government buildings in the area.

Civil War soldiers parading at Camp Fry on 23rd Street, N.W.. The equestrian statue of George Washington in Washington Circle seen in the background of the photograph was erected in 1860.

Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1861.



900-910 25th Street, N.W. Built in 1885, these two-story rowhouses exemplify the use of decorative brick on modestly scaled buildings in Foggy Bottom. EHT Traceries, Inc.

Below: Corner of 25th and Eye Streets, N.W. The corner building is the oldest structure in the historic district. Dating to the Civil War, the frame house is associated with the underground railroad. The brick rowhouses seen behind the frame dwelling at 822, 824, 826 and 828 25th Street were constructed between 1878-1884. G.W. University, Gelman Library University Archives, ca. 1950s.



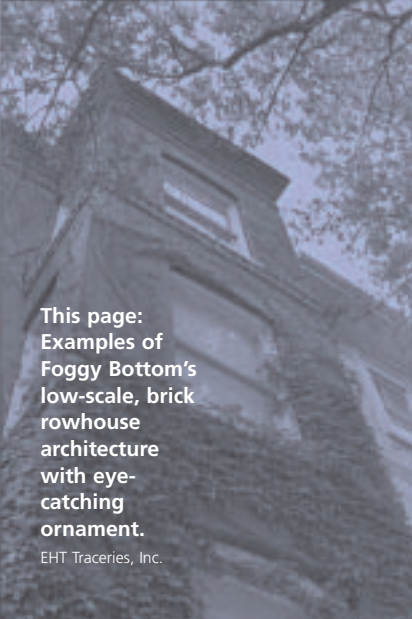
occupation, there were small groups of two or three attached houses built by Foggy Bottom residents on speculation. Irish immigrant Peter McCartney is associated with more buildings of this era in Foggy Bottom than any other person. McCartney began as a carpenter and soon established a successful contracting business. His skill with brick and wood is found throughout the historic district including the corbelled brick cornices and delicate jigsaw work on the houses at 25th and Eye streets, N.W. James Scanlon, also from Ireland, began his career as a

bartender and eventually owned a prosperous saloon. With commercial success, Scanlon turned his attention to speculative development in the neighborhood. Scanlon's speculative venture on 25th Street, N.W., consisted of a group of rowhouses that were modest in size, with brick cornices representative of the decorative details typical of the area.

After the Civil War, many skilled and unskilled immigrant laborers were attracted to Foggy Bottom by the booming industrial economy. The long blocks of flat-fronted, two-story rowhouses, generally built after 1885, represent the culmination of the vernacular tradition. Within one block in the historic district are a dozen groups of rowhouses, both on the primary streets and in the alleys, built in blocks of four, six, or as many as sixteen units. Although some of these rows are attributed to noted Washington architects, including Albert Beers and Nicholas R. Grimm, they are simple, repetitive interpretations of a stock vocabulary of architectural forms.

Two alleys, Snow's Court and Hewes' Court, were among the earliest inhabited alleys in the city. Snow's Court was named for C.A. Snow, publisher of the *National Intelligencer*. Snow built four frame dwellings during the 1850s in this alley. The frame dwellings were among the first of their kind to appear in an alley in Washington and served as





This page:
Examples of
Foggy Bottom's
low-scale, brick
rowhouse
architecture
with eye-
catching
ornament.

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Right, top to
bottom: Alley
dwellings in Snow's
Court date from the
early 1880s. These
long rows are two
stories high with a
modest corbeled
brick cornice. EHT
Traceries, Inc. Snow's
Court between 24th
& 25th streets, N.W.
Washingtoniana Division, D.C.
Public Library, 1953.
Designed and
constructed in 1889
by local builder Peter
McCartney, 2534 K
Street, N.W. was
built for Peter
McIntyre as a store
and dwelling.
McIntyre operated
his grocery store and
lived in the building
through the 1910s.

EHT Traceries, Inc.



forerunners for the frame rowhouses of the 1870s. During the Civil War, Snow's houses were used as army barracks. Following the war, construction of alley houses continued in Snow's Court at a rapid rate, as it did in other alleys throughout the city. In 1892, concerns over the squalid and overcrowded conditions in Washington's alleys prompted a prohibition on the construction of

alley dwellings. Large-scale demolition of alley dwellings occurred throughout the city during the first two decades of the 20th century, and an additional wave of demolition took place in the 1930s and 1940s. These attempts were largely successful, and much of the city's



alley housing stock were demolished. Vestiges of these modest, brick dwellings remain in neighborhoods like Foggy Bottom, Mount Vernon, Blagden Alley, and the near Northeast quadrant of the city.

Foggy Bottom's residential architecture illustrates the physical development of a working class community—in its architectural vocabulary, in its craftsmanship, and in its building types. The houses that comprise the Foggy Bottom Historic District are modest in scale and size. Their style and ornament reflect unpretentious circumstances. Their number and grouping correspond with the cohesiveness of the community. This vernacular urban housing represents the ethnic background, traditions, and skills of its residents, where the developers, builders, and architects were often successful members of the community building in direct response to their neighbors' needs.



The George Washington University

The George Washington University, initially Columbian College, established its main campus at its present Foggy Bottom location in 1912. President Charles H. Stockton reorganized the financially unsound University in 1911 and moved it from its location at 15th and H Streets, N.W., to a rented facility at 2023 G Street, N.W. Under Stockton's leadership, The George Washington University became financially stable and emerged as one of the city's leading educational institutions.

In 1922, a plan to create a central campus for the University was conceived by Washington architect Albert L. Harris. The plan was to develop Square 102 (bounded by G, H, 20th, and 21st streets, N.W.) with eight buildings that would serve as classrooms and offices.

The historic Woodhull House anchors the square. Built by Maxwell Woodhull in 1855, 2033 G Street, N.W., was donated to the University by Woodhull's son in 1921. Woodhull had been instrumental in the University's decision to move its campus, and his bequest of the house created a focal point for the University's further development of Square 102.

Erected in 1924 as a classroom building by the Wardman Construction Company, Corcoran Hall was the first building constructed for the

University on its Foggy Bottom campus. It was designed as a joint effort of noted Washington architects Albert L. Harris and Arthur Heaton.



George Washington University courtyard looking toward Corcoran Hall, the first building constructed for GW on its Foggy Bottom Campus, and Lisner Hall the first building devoted to library use at the University. Library of Congress, Horydczak Collection, ca. 1920-1950.


Stockton Hall, built in 1925, was designed to complement Corcoran Hall and house the University's Law School. Stockton Hall was the second building constructed on the campus and the second collaboration of architects Harris and Heaton.

Dr. Cloyd Heck Marvin led The George Washington University community from 1927 to the end of the 1950s. During the first decade of Dr. Marvin's administration, Bell Hall, Strong Hall, Stuart Hall, the Hall of Government, and Lisner Library were erected, and the hospital complex was established across from Washington Circle.

Designed in the Colonial Revival style, the red brick Hattie M. Strong Hall for Women was dedicated in 1935. Strong Hall was made a reality after Mrs. Henry Alvah Strong gave the University \$200,000 for a women's dormitory. It was the first residence hall built by the University.

The Hall of Government building was also a gift of Mrs. Strong. It was designed by Waldron Faulkner in 1938, and constructed by the Charles H. Tompkins Company. Its distinguishing feature is an Art Deco allegorical figure above the entryway, which is flanked by limestone pilasters and benches.

Named for philanthropist and University trustee Abram Lisner, the Lisner Auditorium was constructed between 1941 and 1943. Like the Hall of Government, Waldron Faulkner also designed Lisner Auditorium. The auditorium is spare in detailing and finished in marble, a requirement of Lisner's gift. It stands as a skillfully executed architectural achievement for the University campus and an important cultural resource for the city of Washington.



Designed as classrooms, Bell and Stuart Halls on G Street, N.W. were the University's first institutionally scaled buildings that contrasted with the domestic scale of its previous structures. Library of Congress, Horydczak Collection, ca. 1934-1950



Looking south toward federal offices from 22nd and Pennsylvania Avenue showing new large-scale apartment buildings and the historic low-scale residential community. G.W. University, Gelman Library University Archives, July, 1931.

Below: In 1947, the Washington Gas Light Company dismantled the factory and accompanying tanks and smokestacks. The last gas tanks were removed from the Foggy Bottom neighborhood in 1954. Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1950.

17092 H.C

20th Century Developments

In the early 20th century, after the railroad and automobile had eclipsed local waterways as a means of transportation, many of the industries in Foggy Bottom were closed, and the area went into a period of decline. As the industries disappeared, the ethnic communities dispersed as well. Having been sustained by jobs at the local breweries, Foggy Bottom incurred additional economic stress as a result of Prohibition (1920-1930). The Heurich Brewery managed to survive until 1960, but never regained its pre-Prohibition prosperity. In 1947, two events opened up the area to private investment: the relocation of the U.S. State Department to a new building at 23rd and D streets, N.W. and the closing and demolition of the large Washington Gas Light Company factory at 26th and G streets, N.W. Great portions of the neighborhood were eventually transformed by the construction of high-rise apartment buildings, alley parking lots, highways, and urban renewal projects such as Columbia Plaza.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the intrusion of major interstate highways, the ongoing development of a large urban university, and the construction of large apartment complexes continued to whittle away at the two- and three-story rowhouses. Concerns over the loss of Foggy



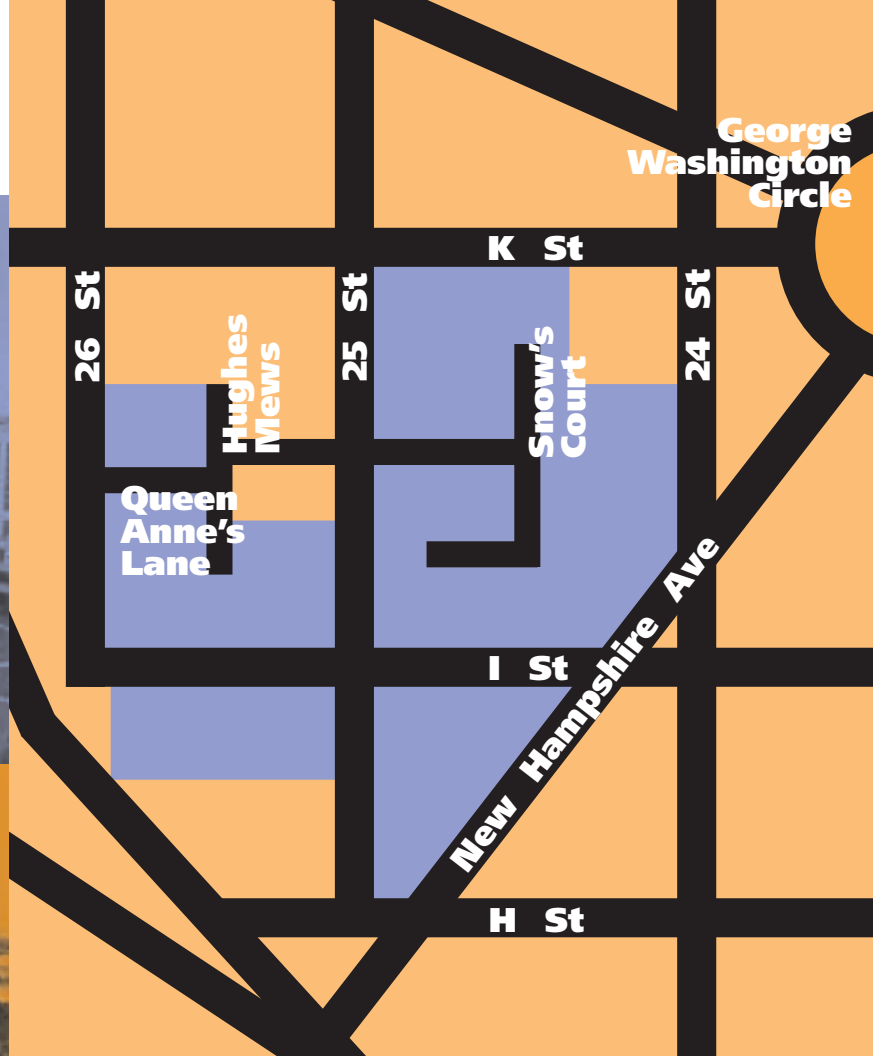
Bottom's historic building fabric prompted the formation of the Foggy Bottom Restoration Association.



Top: The three-building Watergate Apartment complex was constructed between 1965 and 1971. The complex was named after the monumental flight of steps down to the Potomac River from the plaza in front of the Arlington Memorial Bridge. The “Water Gate” was perceived as the ceremonial entrance to the city from the Potomac River. Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library, ca. 1970s.

Bottom: Designed by noted American architect Edward Durrell Stone, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opened in 1971. The white marble structure is 600 feet long and soars 135 feet above Washington’s Potomac River. Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library, 1971.

In the 1980s, the Foggy Bottom/West End Architectural Survey was undertaken by E.H.T. Tracerics, Inc. for the D.C. Preservation Office. This comprehensive survey collected data on the historical and physical character of the area. The results of the survey were used to establish the Foggy Bottom Historic District, designated as a D.C. Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.



FOGGY BOTTOM HISTORIC DISTRICT

Foggy Bottom Historic District

EHT Tracerics, Inc.

Sponsored by the D.C. Preservation League

Brochure design by Hennessey, Ink

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