

LEGACY BUSINESSES

DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE



Since 1971, DCPL's mission has been to preserve, protect and enhance the historic and built environment of our nation's capital.



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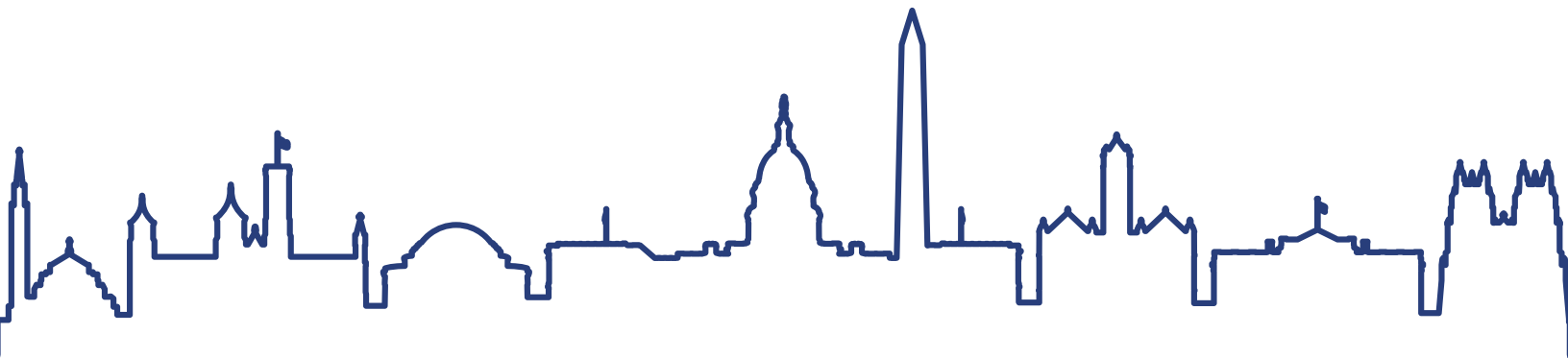
What is a legacy business?

In the simplest of terms, a legacy business is generally defined as a long-standing business that has contributed to a city's community history and cultural identity in a significant way. For over two centuries, Washington, DC has functioned as a center of urban life. As the city has grown and evolved, commercial businesses have benefited the population by providing services and spaces important to the community. In DC, there is a diner where everyone is accepted, a well-known (and rowdy) bar that has held wakes for community members, and a bookstore that acts as a sanctuary for Pan-African culture.

In the 1980s, sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term "Third Place" to define community spaces that existed outside of traditional work and home spaces. He defined third places as critical for a thriving civil society. Third places allow for informal conversations, interpersonal connection, and community advancement. In some cases, legacy businesses can provide these third places for the District as sources of cultural exchange, solace, and support.

Several municipalities and historic preservation organizations around the nation have explored the topic of legacy businesses, as these commercial establishments retain various tangible and intangible aspects important to historic preservation. These programs include financial, promotional, and/or education support for various businesses that meet a specific jurisdiction's eligibility criteria (e.g., for-profit, independently-owned businesses with less than 25 employees that have been in operation for at least 20 years).

In April 2023, the DC Preservation League is focusing on DC's long-standing businesses and researching their history, social value, and cultural impact on the city at large.



The DC Preservation League is inventorying legacy businesses that meet the following criteria:

Business must be currently operating and located within the boundaries of the District of Columbia

Business has operated and contributed to its community's history and/or identity for 20 or more years

Business is not franchised by or affiliated with a national, corporate chain

Business has had no more than four years of closure



What is the purpose of this publication?

Other cities across the United States have spearheaded legacy business programs, including Los Angeles, San Antonio, San Francisco, Birmingham, and Boston. In Los Angeles, for example, the historic preservation non-profit, the Los Angeles Conservancy, has been an advocate for legacy businesses and for launching a formal program, which the city has since established.

These programs have different goals with various levels of support for legacy businesses – Educational, Financial, and Promotional – but they all have one major theme in common:

The programs act as a way to highlight a city’s unique community history and cultural identity through evaluation of locally-owned, long-standing businesses.

The DC Preservation League intends for this report to be a starting point for future organizations and individuals to use in their research, support, or assessment of legacy businesses in Washington, DC. In addition to aiding academic groups and government agencies, this report is intended for a general audience. While legacy businesses have historically received long-term community support, gentrification and general neighborhood change is accelerating in the District, and it is essential that new residents become aware of legacy businesses.

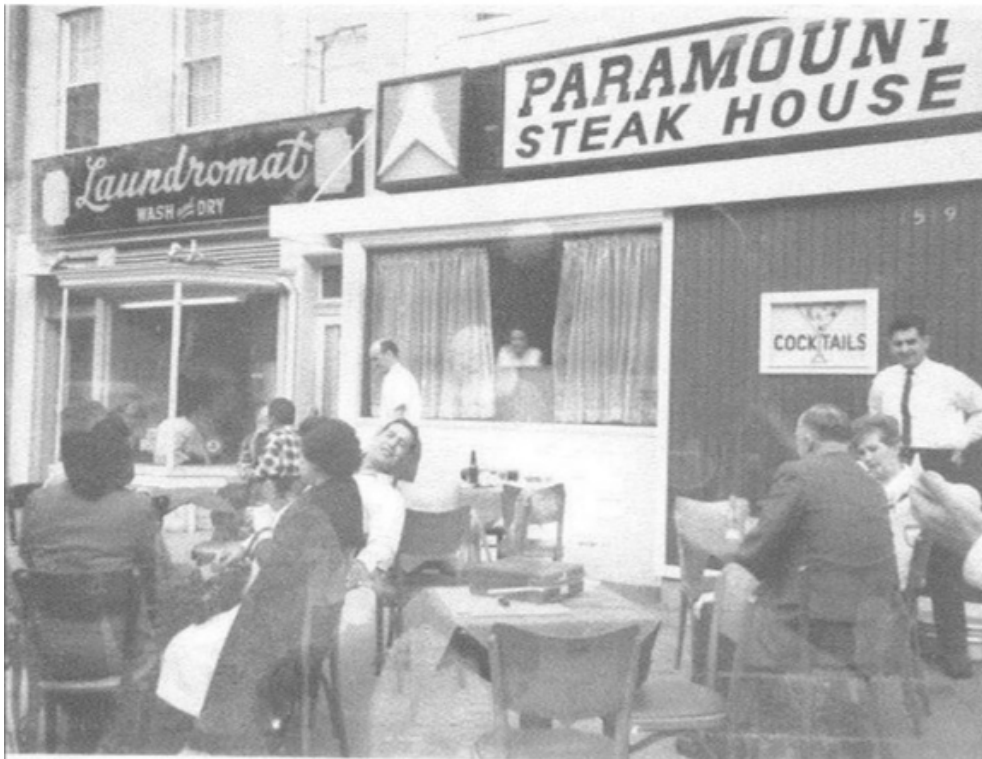


Image of Annie's exterior, c. 1960s. Courtesy of the Katinas family.

Why is DCPL involved?

Historic preservation requires a conscious awareness of places, people, and community space. Without an understanding of these legacy businesses and their influence on Washington's character and social history, it is impossible to fully appreciate the development of the city and its individual neighborhoods. Having a record of these businesses increases public awareness and creates a resource for historians, planners, sociologists, economists, government officials, and others who study the cycles of city life.



Preserve
Protect
Enhance

The DC Preservation League actively pursues people-focused preservation work, where individuals and their communities are not only included as part of the history of a place, but are recognized as **providing** the history of a place.

Legacy businesses enhance the District's character and provide a blueprint for a building's continued reuse. These businesses open the door to further preservation discussions surrounding community history, adaptive reuse, and the inclusion of diverse stories in preservation.

What is the connection between historic preservation and legacy businesses?

Legacy businesses are important places to consider when exploring and discussing people-focused historic preservation. They provide connections to a community's cultural heritage and often serve as stewards of historic structures that are important visible remnants of the city's past. Additionally, these businesses tend to be more recent than other historic landmarks, which often makes it easier for their communities and patrons to relate to and appreciate the impact of their legacies.

The DC Preservation League has made an initial identification of over 40 legacy businesses that contribute to the historical character and fabric of Washington, DC. This inventory is not final and is continually being expanded. For more information and to propose an addition to the list, please go to www.dcpreservation.org/legacy-businesses/.

The vast majority of the inventoried businesses are housed in buildings that were constructed more than fifty years ago. Two of the legacy businesses and their buildings are individual historic landmarks: Annie's Paramount Steakhouse (DC Inventory: 2020) and Tabard Inn (DC Inventory: 2020, and National Register: 2020). In addition, many of these buildings are within historic districts.

Legacy businesses contribute to a neighborhood's sense of place, character, distinctiveness, and vibrancy. People become attached to places, not only for their history and architecture, but also for their social and cultural values - whether it be a diner serving breakfast dishes, a corner pub featuring a variety of cold beers on tap, or a neighborhood movie theater showing old films. Additionally, legacy businesses can contribute to the local economy and heritage tourism by drawing individuals to historic districts and historic properties, as legacy businesses add to the elements that make a specific city - in this case, Washington, DC - a unique destination and place to live.





2023 featured businesses

1

Annie's Paramount Steakhouse

Established 1948

2

Ben's Chili Bowl

Established 1958

3

Miss Pixie's

Established 1997

4

The Potter's House

Established 1960

5

Diego's Hair Salon

Established 1968

Annie's Paramount Steakhouse

Established 1948



Initially opened as a family-run restaurant in the Dupont Circle neighborhood of Washington, DC, Paramount Steakhouse (later renamed Annie's Paramount Steakhouse) became a haven for the LGBTQ+ community, almost entirely by accident. George Katinas and his sisters—Annie, Sue, Kitty, and Sophie—were children of Greek immigrants who were dedicated to ensuring the restaurant's success. The Katinas family operated the restaurant as a family affair, treating customers like kin and working diligently to provide patrons with the best possible service and care. The restaurant became recognized for the family's openness, kindness, and acceptance of customers—in addition to the steakhouse's good food, lighthearted atmosphere, and a charismatic woman behind the bar: Annie.

Image of Annie's exterior, c. 1960s



Image of Annie's figurine, created for 70th Anniversary



Described as a “force of nature,” Annie Katinas Kaylor (1927–2013) is remembered fondly by patrons and family alike. Paul Kuntzler, a pioneering advocate for gay rights who visited the restaurant for the first time in the 1960s, described Annie as such: “She went out of her way to understand the lives of the people whom she was serving and to instill her values into the restaurant staff...It’s hard to think of anyone who isn’t gay or lesbian who played such a prominent role in the gay and lesbian community.”



"It's like a gay Cheers," says Georgia Katinas, granddaughter of George Katinas. "It's mostly gay but we're straight-friendly."

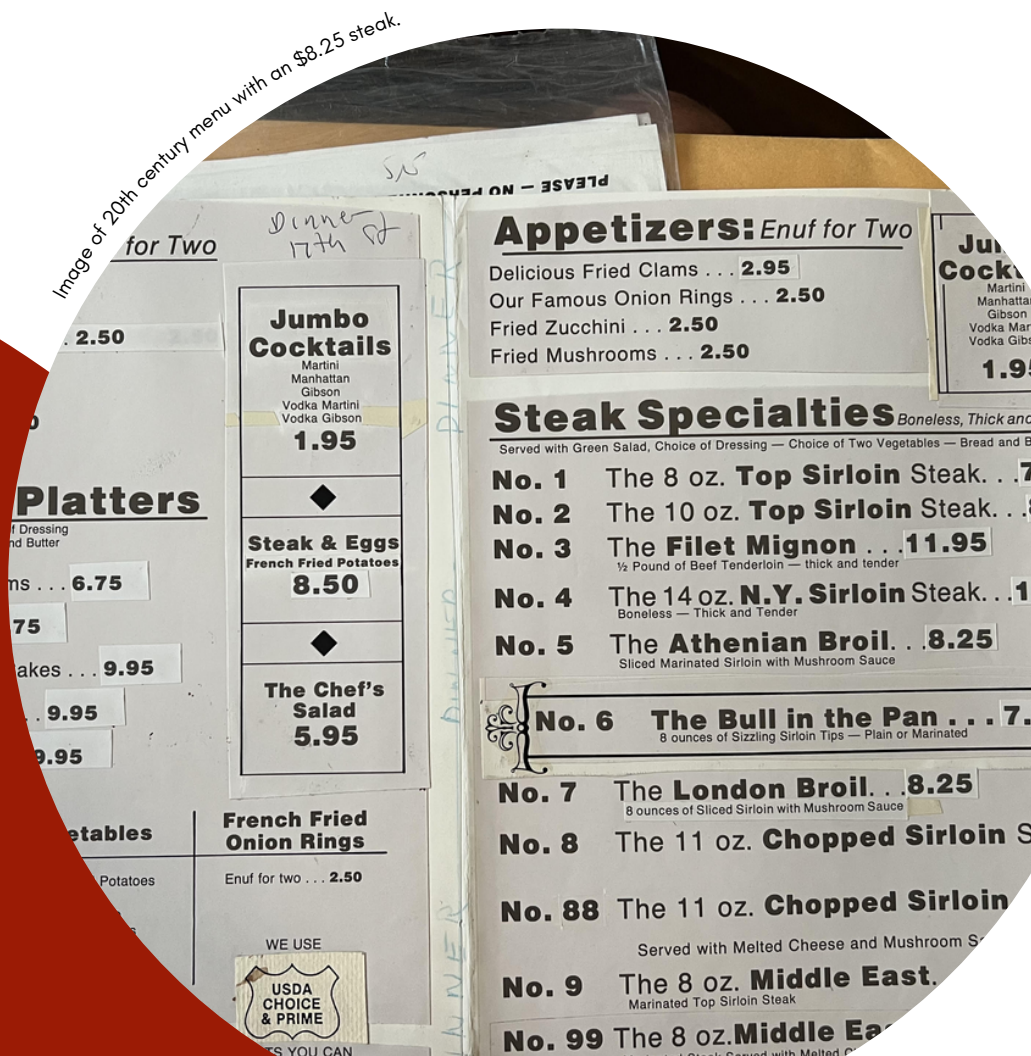


Renamed Annie's Paramount Steakhouse in 1962, the restaurant expanded in various locations across the District—however, the original location continued to act as a gathering place for the gay community of Washington. A family-owned and operated restaurant, Annie's involved the whole Katinas family and still does. In speaking with Georgia Katinas (present general manager of the restaurant along with her father and current owner Paul Katinas), she wanted to recognize that the entire family (in addition to loyal staff and patrons) made the business what it is today. "We've had a server who has worked here since 1975. People come in all the time and talk about how long they've been coming here."

Mano has been working at Annie's since 1975.



Image of 20th century menu with an \$8.25 steak.



In 1985, Annie's moved a block up the street to 1609 17th Street NW, while the original building became home to JR's Bar (1519 17th Street NW), which currently operates as a gay bar, carrying the legacy of Annie's acceptance and community cultivation into the present-day.

Annie's was added to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 2020, and celebrates its 75th Anniversary in 2023.



Annie's Paramount Steakhouse
Established 1948

Building Constructed 1904
Located In Dupont Circle Historic District

Ben's Chili Bowl

Established 1958



In 1956, Ben Ali walked into the Industrial Bank of Washington on U Street NW and was served by a teller named Virginia. He came back in the next day and waited to be served by her again. On the third day, he waited for her window to become available and slipped her a note with his phone number on it. A day or two later, he called the bank and asked for Virginia by name.

"Why didn't you call me?" He asked.

"I'm not in the habit of calling men I don't know, and I don't know you."

"Well what do you want to know?" And before she could ask a question, Ben went into the whole story of his life, from his early life in Trinidad to his studies in dentistry at Howard University.





"We had many mutual acquaintances, and he brought one to my house and he met my family on our first date. We were together 51 years," says Virginia Ali. "He asked me to marry him and he asked me to partner with him on a business idea for a restaurant. I said yes." Ben's Chili Bowl opened on August 22, 1958 under the leadership of Ben and Virginia Ali. "We knew we wanted to be in this area, which was called Black Broadway at the time. It was an entertainment center for the Black community, it had night clubs, music halls, theaters. We would be open from 11:00 AM to 3:00 AM, and it was busy! This building was originally a silent movie theater which turned into a pool hall. After we signed for the rental, I knew the community from working at the bank. We found an architect, a plumber, a contractor--all Black-owned businesses--and they worked for us up until the time they all retired. If we needed them, if we called them at 2 o'clock in the morning because a pipe burst, they'd get out of bed and come down here."



Equipped with a phenomenal chili recipe and fabulous customer service, Ben's Chili Bowl gained popularity among prominent African American performers on Black Broadway. "People like Nat King Cole could perform downtown, but they couldn't eat there. So they came here," Virginia explained. "This was a segregated neighborhood, and we all supported each other. A lot of people came through here, during the Civil Rights movement. In August of 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King would come in and eat chili cheeseburgers and drink milkshakes. He would tell me stories about meeting with Kennedy. Those marches took a lot of effort and planning, and he would come in and eat. This was a welcoming place to be, a community place."

Ben and Virginia Ali attended the March on Washington that August of '63, and Virginia remembered it fondly. "It was a beautiful sight, that sea of colors all swirled together." Five years later, however, tragedy struck with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. "I remember, someone rushed in the door and said he's been shot, but we didn't believe them. It wasn't until later when we heard it on the radio that we understood. People were openly sobbing, and then frustration set in, and then anger."

The 1968 Riots lasted four days and caused around \$175 million dollars worth of damage to the city. "We were the only place allowed to be open on this street during the curfew. Ben painted 'soul brother' on the window so people would know we were a Black-owned business. We were known in the community as a helpful place to the youth in the neighborhood. If someone came in and they were having trouble getting the money for their grandmother's prescription, we would cover it. They knew that. Nobody touched us."



The riots caused a massive amount of change in DC and resulted in demographic shifts, business turnover, and the movement of city amenities. Integration spatially altered the arrangement of DC's Black population, but Ben's Chili Bowl remained a space of community with high standards of customer service and a long list of famous clientele. Today, pictures of presidents, mayors, rappers, actors, chefs, comedians, and singers cover the walls at the restaurant's original U Street location. When asked about this trend, Virginia said, "We've had prominent people coming in since day one, but we're all just people. We just treat people the way we would like to be treated. That's all."



Ben Ali passed away in 2009, but Virginia is still involved at the restaurant which is now managed by all three of her sons. "I am so blessed. All my sons came back, and two of my daughters-in-law work here, too. Aren't I blessed?" Virginia says as she proudly points out memories on the walls of the restaurant. Towards the end of the interview, multiple people were pulling her aside to take photographs with her underneath the Ben's Chili Bowl sign. When DC Preservation League staff member Shae Corey asked her if she felt famous, she simply said: "Me? No, we're all just people."



Ben's Chili Bowl, Established 1958

Building Constructed 1909

Located In Greater U Street Historic District



Pixie Windsor was waiting tables at the Old Ebbitt Grill when she opened her first antique shop on August 1st, 1997. "The stars aligned...it was an ideal space. A dream," says Pixie of the 500 square feet that originally housed the antique store Madam Adam. "It was a one-woman show for a while," she says. "The ceilings were 18 feet high, so we stacked things vertically—we put the sofas on the sidewalk out front if someone wanted to try them out." The eclectic store is a reflection of Pixie's personal style and personality: colorful, unique, and warm.

Armed with the color pink and an aesthetic entirely its own, Miss Pixie's attracted a variety of customers and kept visitors coming back again and again with its wide range of ever-changing items. Pixie handles most of the purchasing for the store herself and currently has 14 (mostly part-time) staff members who assist her in the daily management of the store.

Miss Pixie's

Established 1997

The store moved to a variety of locations in the Dupont Circle and 14th Street neighborhoods based on changing rent and demand. Since 2008, it has been located on 14th Street NW, where it has become a must-visit storefront for Washingtonians who are either looking to furnish their homes or looking to browse. "We had a regular customer come into the store recently that had not been in for a while, said he missed his favorite space of meditation. Customers come in to wander or chat. It's a comfortable place to be!" The brightly-lit store is packed with antique tables, chairs, and sofas, while large bookshelves hold patterned teacups, mason jars full of marbles, and one-of-a-kind trinkets. Visitors sift through vintage photographs and postcards, some of which still have handwritten inscriptions professing love or describing a long-forgotten vacation.



In addition to serving as a space for individuals to find solace, Pixie uses the store to support community. "We've held art shows and exhibits, and we often have work by local artists for sale. We've had weddings, parties, memorial services, anniversary events, and even plays. A theater group used to practice in the back space. We used to have staff movie night too, and we'd set up the projector and sit on the couches. It was fun!"



In August 2023, Miss Pixie's will turn 26 years old. As a legacy business in DC, it is deeply connected to its owner: Pixie Windsor. The individuality of the store is closely tied to her name, her style, and her personality. Pop into the store when she's working the counter and say hello. You'll find her behind a big pink iMac, likely chatting with one of her customers or laughing at a joke. A masterful storyteller, great conversationalist, and clear style icon, Pixie Windsor is the proud owner of a legacy business that has weathered the storm of COVID in style--while covered in pink. **"It's just my favorite," she says, "it's such a happy color!"**



Miss Pixie's: Established 1997. Building Constructed 1933.

Located In Greater Fourteenth Street Historic District



The Potter's House

Established 1960



In the 1960s and 1970s, the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC was an epicenter of political activism in the city. Numerous organizations sprung up to provide collective solutions to the community's problems with attaining access to housing and education, and addressing food insecurity. In the midst of this clamor for equality and cooperative organization, The Potter's House emerged as a space designed to welcome ideas, action, and charity.

Inspired by the idea that Jesus Christ might just enjoy a seat at a lively tavern more than a solemn church pew, The Potter's House was founded in 1960 to welcome all people regardless of religious affiliation. Supported and run by the Church of the Savior, The Potter's House became a popular destination for deep conversations, art exhibitions, and candle-lit coffee drinking. Originally designed with white tablecloths and specialty desserts, the coffee shop supported the local community (both religious and secular) by combating poverty and injustice in the District.





The Potter's House partnered with the Church of the Savior to help shut down the infamous Junior Village in 1973, a city-run orphanage crippled by overcrowding, a lack of employees, and rampant sexual/physical abuse. Anti-war protestors, drummers from Meridian Hill Park, and Latinx immigrants new to the neighborhood all found their way into the orbit of The Potter's House.

In 1976, the Church of the Savior split into a multitude of churches, but these communities and their service-oriented mindsets remained at the coffee shop. Multiple service organizations found a home at The Potter's House, including Jubilee Jobs (assisted individuals with job placement), Sarah's Circle (services for senior citizens that enabled them to stay at home), Christ's House (homeless shelter), Samaritan Inns (addiction recovery), Academy of Hope (adult learning center), and Joseph's House (assistance for those dying of HIV/AIDS).

In the 1980s, The Potter's House became active in helping Central American refugees adjust to a new neighborhood and a new country. Some of these individuals began businesses right across the street (or in some cases, next door) to the coffee shop.

For the past 63 years, The Potter's House has evolved with the community that it serves, offering what is needed based on the issues at hand. Despite all of the social, economic, and political change that has affected Adams Morgan over the past six decades, The Potter's House remains a space of service, outreach, and neighborly conversation. Functioning uniquely as both a non-profit and a for-profit business, The Potter's House sells books that feed the mind and serves sandwiches that feed the body. Originally known for "soul food" dishes such as sweet potato pie and chicken biscuits, The Potter's House now features a plant-centric menu, and has given away more than 65,000 free meals in the past three years.





By feeding the mind, the body, and the soul, The Potter's House provides services that are essential to the people of Washington, DC.

So, next time you're on Columbia Road, stop by to pick up a book or coffee, strike up a conversation, or grab a bite to eat.

The Potter's House, Established 1960

Building Constructed 1910

Diego's Hair Salon

Established 1968





Diego D'Ambrosio (1934- 2021) first came to DC in 1961 with his wife Rosaria to work as a butler for an Italian diplomat and his family. Having trained as a barber in Italy, he applied for formalized immigration under the U.S.'s call for barbers/cosmetologists in the 1960s and settled in Adams Morgan near the Italian embassy. After working for a barber in Georgetown, Diego opened his own shop under the name "Hollywood Men's & Women's Hairstylists." The shop became colloquially known as "Diego's," and gained popularity with the political elite of Washington, DC, including two Chief Justices of the Supreme Court who only trusted Diego to cut their hair. "It started with the embassy network," says Diego's son, Fabrizio. "Dupont was different back then. There was always something going on at the circle, protests and hippie music and all types of people were here. A Sikh community moved in when I was younger, and I loved seeing them. All that's different now, but my dad loved this neighborhood."



Diego D'Ambrosio was a force of nature, meeting consistently high standards and holding his staff to the same. His reliable presence at the store, friendly demeanor, and relationship-building with customers made Diego's Hair Salon a busy place of business. "One employee worked here for 40 years. All the barbers and stylists were great when they started here, and Dad was a mentor to the younger ones," says Fabrizioio.

In addition to caring about his clients, Diego dedicated himself to the Dupont Circle neighborhood. "He was the kind of person that, if something wasn't getting done properly, he would find a way to do it himself," Fabrizioio says. Diego contributed to street cleaning efforts and neighborhood beautification, in addition to serving in the Police Reserves.



Image of Diego's styling chair, with a circle worn into the floor from his work.

Diego's Hair Salon

Established 1968

Building Constructed 1927

Located In Dupont Circle Historic District

On April 23, 2010, the block of Q Street beside the shop was renamed "Diego D'Ambrosio Way" in honor of Diego. "That was a very special day," says Fabrizio. DC's mayor was in attendance at the ceremony, in addition to a swath of political figures sporting haircuts by Diego. Diego D'Ambrosio served the Dupont Circle community for 56 years. Today, his shop continues on under the co-ownership of his sons, Fabrizio and Marco D'Ambrosio. "I used to style my teddy bears, but neither me nor my brother ended up cutting hair," says Fabrizio. "I did work in the shop, answering phones, for a while though." The brothers were born in DC and are committed to carrying Diego's legacy forward. "COVID was hard, but we're still here," says Fabrizio. "We'll still be here."

Further Resources

General Information

Small Business Anti-Displacement Network: <https://antidisplacement.org/tool/legacy-business-programs/>
Business Preservation Assistance Program: <https://www.districtbridges.org/business-support/bpap/?ctx=>

Government Agencies & Resources

Department of Small and Local Business Development: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/service/DCMS>

Legacy Business Supplemental Microgrants (COVID-19): <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/page/legacy-business-supplemental-microgrants>

Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development: Commercial Property Acquisition Fund.
<https://dmped.dc.gov/page/commercial-property-acquisition-fund>.

Testimony of Tazra Mitchell (Director of DC Fiscal Policy Institute) to the DC Committee on Business & Economic Development Performance Oversight Hearing, January 15, 2022: <https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/1-15-20-Legacy-Small-Business-Committee-on-Business-and-Economic-Development.pdf>

Additional Legacy Business Programs/Research Projects

Baltimore Heritage, Inc. Legacy Business Program: <https://baltimoreheritage.org/programs/legacy-business-program/>

Birmingham Legacy Business Program: <https://www.birminghamal.gov/legacy-business-program/>

City of Laurel, Maryland. Legacy Business Grant Program: <https://www.cityoflaurel.org/ecd/business-and-property-development-programs/legacy-business-grant-program>.

Evanston Legacy Business Program: <https://www.cityofevanston.org/business/legacy-business-program>

Legacy Businesses in Arlington: <https://elizabethmortonphd.com/legacy-business/>

Los Angeles Conservancy Legacy Business Program: <https://www.laconservancy.org/curating-city-legacy-business>

San Antonio, Office of Historic Preservation Legacy Business Program:
<https://www.sanantonio.gov/historic/LivingHeritage/LegacyBusiness>

San Francisco Heritage Legacy Business Program: <https://www.sfheritage.org/saving-whats-special/legacy-businesses/>

Seattle Legacy Business Study:
https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/economicDevelopment/22820_Legacy_Report_2017-09-25.pdf

Tucson Legacy Business Program: <https://tucsonchamber.org/chamber-edge/staying-power-introducing-the-city-of-tucson-legacy-business-program/>

Common Questions

Where can I find more information on other legacy business programs?

Information about other legacy business programs is available in the resources section of this packet located on page 34 (previous page). For even more information about other legacy business programs, contact DCPL Staff Member Zachary Burt (zach@dcpreservation.org) or visit www.dcpreservation.org/legacy-businesses/.

My business doesn't meet one of the general requirements. Can I still submit my business to the program?

Yes. This is an ongoing project.

I would like to be included in next year's list of featured businesses. How can I apply?

You can apply for inclusion on the Legacy Business List through DCPL's webpage application, available here: www.dcpreservation.org/legacy-businesses/. On the form, please indicate that you would like to be considered for a featured spot in the 2024 Legacy Businesses publication. Featured businesses must have an individual be available for an in-person meeting with DCPL staff members prior to inclusion.

I have a question that you didn't answer. Who do I contact?

For all general inquiries that are not answered in this report, email the DC Preservation League's general inbox through info@dcpreservation.org.



Contact Us

www.dcpreservation.org

info@dcpreservation.org

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