

MORGAN-LOTHROP HOUSE

705 East Capitol Street, Southeast
Washington, D.C.

Square 898
Lot 26

The Morgan-Lothrop House, one of a row of five brick homes built in 1876-1877, was owned and occupied for more than 55 years by two Washington families. One of these families, Dr. Edwin S. Lothrop and his wife Alice, resided at 705 East Capitol Street during the first third of the twentieth century. Dr. Lothrop during this period became one of the most prominent physicians in the District of Columbia. Long before this, Ward and Amanda Morgan, both natives of Pennsylvania, had purchased the house in January 1877 and become its first occupants. Ward, a high official in the Division of Printing and Engraving for the U.S. Treasury Department, lived at the 2½-story post-Civil War rowhouse for the remainder of his life, and it was not sold by his heirs until after the turn of the century.

The lives of both the Morgans and the Lothrops are closely intertwined with the history of 705 East Capitol Street. But there are shorter-term owners, as well as renters, who contributed to the house's history, not to mention the row's builders, two men named Carpenter, probably brothers, who were nearby residents of Capitol Hill but whose livelihood in the local home construction industry appears to have been fleeting. These people and others, such as the pre-1877 landowners at 7th and East Capitol Streets, and the house's present owner-occupants, the Beemans, will now be discussed in more detail in the following pages. The story begins with a brief overview of the early years of the neighborhood, and the land at the corner of 7th and East Capitol Streets where five brick houses would be built towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The History of Lots 9 and 10 Up to 1877

If the aspirations of the city's late eighteenth century planners had been realized, East Capitol Street would have been lined to the Anacostia River with stately residences by the time of the Civil War. But because the city grew in an unforeseen northwesterly direction, Capitol Hill did not become as fashionable or as densely populated as initially expected. East Capitol Street, one of the neighborhood's most prominent thoroughfares, did acquire large and architecturally splendid buildings before the Civil War, but

not that many, and most were put up in the two decades prior to the War. Even ten to twenty years after the War, when a building boom engulfed the city and had a notable impact on the physical development of the Hill, there were stretches of East Capitol Street with large vacant lots or old rundown frame houses intermixed with lavish three and four-story Victorian dwellings. But clearly the neighborhood was in the process of significant change.

Nicholas McCubbin was probably not a wealthy man. City directories from the 1850s to 1870s list him as a gardener or simply "laborer", hardly well-paying occupations. But McCubbin owned a large portion of square 898 from before 1854 to well after the Civil War. Square 898 included all of the land between 7th, 8th, East Capitol and A Streets, Southeast. Of particular significance is the fact that he owned all of lots 9 and 10, the land which coincided pretty closely with what are today 701-709 East Capitol Street. All in all, McCubbin owned between one-third and one-half of the land on square 898. On lots 9 and 10* stood three small frame buildings by the early 1870s. They had probably been there since the 1850s or before, although this could not be documented from existing archival records. We do know that McCubbin himself lived, if not in one of these three wooden houses, at least close to the corner of 7th and East Capitol, as his address beginning in the 1853 city directory was "east side 7th Street east between East Capitol and A south," which was about as precise an address as one encounters before Civil War Washington.

Gradually, Nicolas McCubbin began to sell off his holdings on square 898, as the price of land increased in conjunction with speculative building. In 1859 lots 9 and 10 combined were assessed at \$428; in 1872 they had appreciated to \$2,751. McCubbin died in the late 1870s but his widow and son continued to live at 16 7th Street (and later 712 A Street) well into the 1890s. Even though they still owned land near the corner of 7th and East Capitol, around 1870 they had sold lots 9 and 10, with the still-standing frame buildings, to Charles Junken.

Not much is known about Charles Junken or the land's next owner, Isaac Wetherill. Each owned the land for approximately two to three years. The two small wooden buildings on lot 9, assessed at \$150 each (excluding land value), and the \$200 building on lot 10 appeared to be typical of the square's state of development in the early 1870s during

* 705 East Capitol Street, being the center house of the row, is situated on part of both old lots, although when the five houses were built in 1876-77 the lots were renumbered to coincide with their new dimensions.

Junken's and Wetherill's possession. The 1873-1874 Faehtz real estate directory shows 16 frame structures existent on square 898, but no bricks. Altogether, there were five frame buildings between 7th and 8th Streets on the south side of East Capitol.

Charles W. Junken, who owned the land from approximately 1870-1873, first appeared in Washington directories after the Civil War as a clerk with the United States Survey. After living near Logan Circle in the 1860s, he moved to Capitol Hill's B Street (now Constitution Avenue), N.E. around 1870 and made this his home for more than two decades. He later became an assistant superintendent of the renamed Coast and Geodetic Survey. His ownership of lots 9 and 10 appears to have been a short-term speculative venture only.

Isaac Wetherill bought lots 9 and 10 around 1873 and sold them around 1876 to the future rowhouses' developers, the Carpenters. The old frame buildings were still standing when Wetherill disposed of the property, still valued at \$2,750, in the mid-1870s. An 1876 deed between Wetherill and the Carpenters, although it relates to other property, describes Wetherill as a Bostonian, which explains his absence of directory listings in these years. His profession and reasons for purchasing the East Capitol Street land are not known.

The developers, Samuel and Thomas M. Carpenter, subdivided lots 9 and 10 in 1876 into five building parcels. Whether they completed construction of the five houses, including 705 East Capitol Street, in 1876 or whether building continued through the winter of '76-'77 is not clear. However, it seems pretty certain that the houses were well underway in 1876 since there is no official building permit for the dwellings (a city requirement beginning in 1877). Both Samuel and Thomas M. Carpenter were listed, appropriately, as "carpenters" in the 1875 directory. The terms "carpenter" and "builder" in that year were commonly interchangeable, with the separate profession of architect only beginning to emerge for middle-class residential design. To demonstrate the impreciseness of the terms, Samuel Carpenter had become a "contractor" by 1877, and Thomas had become a "builder," according to directories, although it is doubtful that their occupational skills or duties changed measurably. Both the Carpenters lived two blocks away at 8th and A Streets in 1877, when 705 East Capitol Street was first being occupied. Unfortunately, there are very few directory listings for the Carpenters after 1880, with Thomas shown briefly as a Treasury Department clerk in the early 1880s. It is likely they were casualties of an increasingly saturated profession, with the proliferation of builders, carpenters, contractors and architects in the Nation's Capitol after the Civil War. Yet they left their

lasting mark on East Capitol Street with the design and construction of five well-proportioned and solidly middle-class rowhouses within a half-mile of the United States Capitol. And fittingly, although these were not houses designed individually by academically trained architects, but by speculatively-oriented builders, the houses still bear hand-crafted touches and aesthetically pleasing ornamentation that became less and less common in the next 50 years. The row still is officially titled "Carpenter and Carpenters' Subdivision of Lots 9 and 10 in Square 898" to distinguish it and pay tribute to its original developers.

Ward Morgan: First Owner/Occupant of 705 East Capitol Street

On January 2, 1877 Ward Morgan, who had just been promoted to Superintendent of the Printing Division of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, purchased 705 East Capitol Street for \$2,200. (A previous November 1876 deed of trust had been executed between Morgan and the Carpenters, an indication that the actual sales price may have been much higher than the \$2,200 referred to in the mortgage.) Morgan had been living nearby at 6th and A Streets, S.E. since about 1874, working as a clerk for the engraving office. He and Amanda, both having been born in Pennsylvania in the early 1840s, had been married since at least 1862, if census records are correct. Ward Morgan would own and occupy 705 East Capitol Street until his death around 1895, and his widow and then his heir James L. Morgan would own and rent the property until 1901. From about 1877 until his death in 1894 or 1895, Ward Morgan was one of the highest officials within the Treasury's money printing bureau. His East Capitol Street house in fiscal year 1878 was assessed at more than \$3,500, a considerable amount in an era when a well-paid bureaucrat earned about \$1,600 a year. Morgan and his wife certainly witnessed considerable change and growth in their neighborhood from the 1870s to 1890s, as well as a continuing increase in land values, and it is likely that they would have lived at 705 East Capitol Street well into the twentieth century if not for Morgan's premature death at age 55.

In contrast to the prevailing custom of a widow remaining in the house for a long period of time after the husband's death, Amanda Morgan stayed at 705 East Capitol Street only for a year or so after Ward died. She decided to move to 6th Street, N.W. around 1896 even though the house remained in the family's hands for another five years. James L. Morgan, who had been willed the property after Ward's death, sold it to Mary V. Withers in the spring of 1901, thus ending a quarter century of possession by the house's first owners.

for the house's top-floor addition as well as general interior restoration in their first years of ownership. A native of San Francisco, Mr. Beeman came to Washington in 1964 as administrative assistant to Congressman Phillip Burton. He has also been director of the Washington office of the Presbyterian Church and staff director of the Democratic Caucus for the House of Representatives. Currently he serves as political and legislative director for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Mrs. Beeman, a native of the State of Idaho, has been an aide to Congressman Henry Waxman as well as a founder of a Capitol Hill boutique called Mamori, of which she is currently co-owner. The Beemans were married in 1974. Recently they have acquired the house next door at 707 East Capitol Street, also part of the row which the Carpenters built in 1876-77.

The Morgan-Lothrop House At the End of 1982

At the center of the almost-intact row of Carpenter houses, the Morgan-Lothrop House retains its nineteenth century charm on Capitol Hill's most architecturally distinct street. Standing the original two full stories, with a slanted, shingled roof blending in the third-story addition, and with an English basement, the house is a symmetrical three bays wide, with the raised first-floor entrance on the left. The windows are shuttered and are long and narrow, one over one, with brick keystone lintels which were originally in a hoodmould pattern (the stems have since been removed). The cornice has heavy decorative consoles and brackets, typical of the period of the house's design, and a complementary cornice for the door frame. The oversized door also has a large glass transom, and its entranceway is accessed by a wrought or cast iron staircase. The interior of the Morgan-Lothrop House retains many of its original features -- the mantels, woodwork, plaster ceiling medallions, and wood floors -- which lend it a nineteenth century ambience. The liberal set-back from the street affords the house a rather large front yard, which is landscaped and separated from the public sidewalk by the ubiquitous nineteenth century Capitol Hill railing. Painted a greyish-blue with dark grey and blue trim, the exterior of 705 East Capitol Street, combined with the other four houses of the row, presents an imposing architectural portrait and contributes significantly to the character of this block of Capitol Hill's Historic District.

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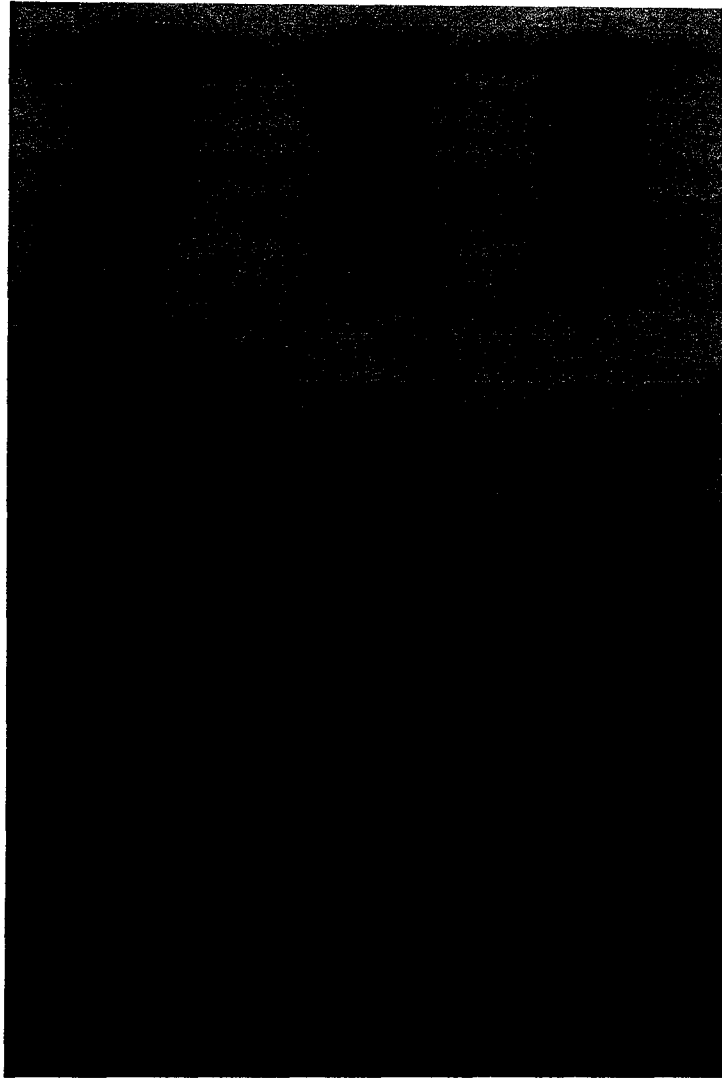
10 September 2000

My name is Kent Ozkum, and I was the owner of 705 East Capitol, S.E., from 1994 until June of 2000. I bought the house one year after moving down to Washington to accept a position at Providence Hospital, a Daughters of Charity (Catholic) hospital in Northeast D.C.. I had just finished my residency in Anesthesiology at the University of Rochester (N.Y.) and I had planned a move to a larger metropolitan area at that time. When relocating to Washington, I was looking for a more urban environment with a great community, a sense of history, interesting architecture, and some open spaces....After looking in several neighborhoods, Capitol Hill was a perfect fit.



It was an interesting time to be looking to buy a home in the city. Sharon Pratt-Kelly was Mayor, and there had been an ongoing exodus of people from the city for years. Crime was up and the city services were at an all-time low, which is saying a lot for D.C.. At the time, Washington was commonly referred to as a 'murder capitol' of the United States, based on statistics from several years earlier which did indeed place Washington ahead of all other cities in murders per capita!

When I bought the house, it had been tenanted for seven years, and it showed. The current tenants, three young women, were known for their parties and did not want the house to be sold. Consequently, they made sure the place looked a wreck, which wasn't hard to do, as the owners had neglected the building for years. Trash and laundry filled the rooms... as Phyllis Jane Young (our very Southern southern Virginia real estate agent) said diplomatically, "I just hate it when the panties land crotch side up!".



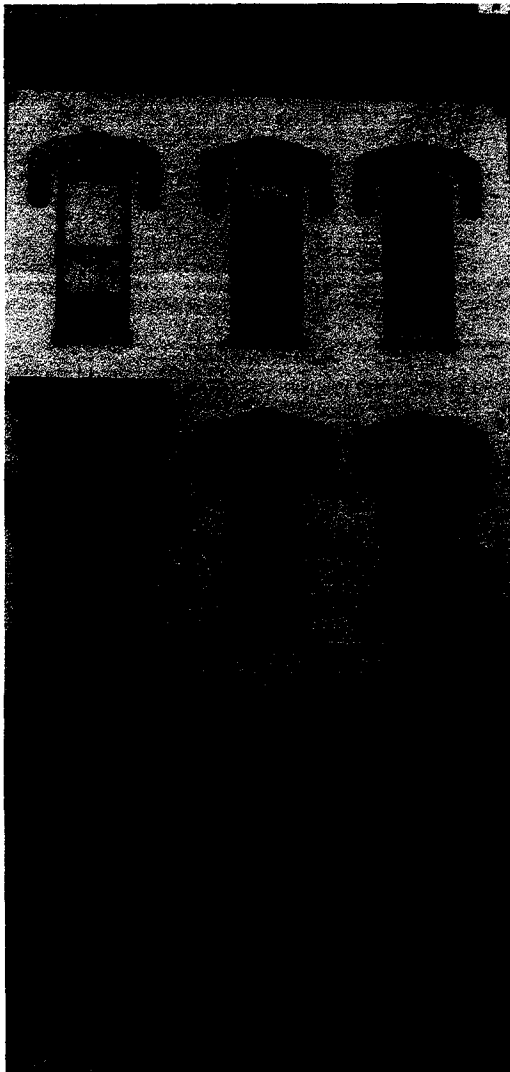
After moving in, there was much work to be done. Over the years of my ownership, I completed many repairs and improvements to the property, sometimes not exactly by choice. One good example was when Jim Hackley, 703 East Capitol, called the day after closing with the 'good and bad news'. The bad...that the water main in the front yard of the house had burst overnight and the front yard was pumping full of muddy clay water. The good news...that at least it was running into the street, NOT into the house! The D.C. Water and Sewer Authority workmen showed up, and in classic D.C. government employee style, watched as one guy dug an eight foot by eight foot hole in the front yard, while the remaining seven watched. The old galvanized piping had rusted out and they would replace the meter and connection, but the remaining piping into the house wouldn't last another couple years. I ran next door and explained the situation to Jim, who suggested (given his years of experience dealing with the city), suggested that maybe I should bribe them to do all the work! One thousand dollars later, and half the crew had stayed behind and were working feverishly to finish the project, which they did. That's why 705 East Capitol always had such good water pressure while I lived there!

Other projects I completed while living at '705 East Cap' included:

- Replacing all the flashing and shingles on the mansard roof.
- Replacing the flat roof over the third floor and both skylights.
- New flashing and shingles on the rear roof over the stairwell.
- A new plaster ceiling in the 2nd floor front room.

- A boxwood parterre in front of the house.
- Replacing the brick eyebrows on the front of the house that had been removed to accommodate shutters in the 70's?
- Replacing the front inner and outer twin doors.
- Extensive rewiring and replumbing of the basement apartment.
- A new kitchen in the basement apartment.
- Restoration of the façade sashes with double pane glass and modern slide mechanisms for insulation and noise protection.
- New coach lamps on the front of the house.
- New French doors onto the third floor deck.
- A new A/C condenser and air handler.
- A new brick floor in the basement hallway.

There were countless other smaller projects that took my time while living at East Capitol, and over time, I grew tired of the ongoing upkeep and maintenance needed. After planning an extensive renovation, Will Morrow (my partner of three years) and I decided that we preferred a smaller house with a bigger yard, so we began the process of preparing the house for sale.



While living in Capitol Hill, some of our favorite things to do included:

- Hanging out on the front steps to watch the world go by.
- Breakfast on Saturday morning at the Market Lunch at Eastern Market.
- Sunday morning walks through the National Arboretum with the dogs, Ralph, Sasha and Bailey.
- Hayden's liquor store home delivery!
- The flowering trees and dog park at Lincoln Park.
- Frager's Hardware before their renovation.
- Half price burgers on Monday's at Mr. Henry's.
- Lamb saag and chicken Makhani from Aatish, the Pakistani restaurant on the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue.

I wish the new owners all the best of luck with their new home at 705 East Capitol...it was truly a wonderful place to live!

Kent Ozkum

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KOZ', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the top of the 'O'.