

Pennsylvania Avenue between 6th and 12th Streets, few squares had more than half a dozen dwellings, and most had no improvements. East of 12th Street most streets remained unimproved and there were virtually no habitations except for a few close to Pennsylvania Avenue. Only some of the principal routes to the Maryland side of the Eastern Branch were laid, including Pennsylvania Avenue to the southeast and Maryland Avenue, which connected to Benning Road at 15th Street, N.E. A wooden toll bridge was constructed in 1800 at Benning Road, and at Pennsylvania Avenue in 1804, with a third wooden bridge built at 11th Street, S.E. soon thereafter.<sup>93</sup> East Capitol Street, somewhere between 9th Street and Lincoln Park, “remained so undeveloped before the [civil] war that it was used for horse races.”<sup>94</sup>

On Capitol Hill east of 13th Street, four wood-frame houses improved three squares while Square 1114, adjacent to Federal Reservation 13, had the only brick house in the area. Identified residents in 1801 included William and Ruth Ann Young, Aquila and Elizabeth Wheeler, William Cranch, and Charles Minifie.<sup>95</sup> Young was a prosperous farmer who had inherited more than 40 squares in the eastern part of Capitol Hill from his father in 1779. He lived with his family in a wood-frame house on a bluff overlooking the Eastern Branch.<sup>96</sup> The property also included a kitchen and four log buildings, which may have been quarters for the ten slaves he owned in 1790. Wheeler operated the “Upper Ferry,” at 14th Street and Virginia Avenue, S.E. His wife, Elizabeth, was the sister of William Young and had also inherited property on Capitol Hill from her father. Cranch was a lawyer and Chief Judge on the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia (1805-55). He also organized the Supreme Court decisions and assisted in their publication. A cousin of John Adams, Cranch lived in a wood-frame house fronting Pennsylvania Avenue in Square 1044, east of 13th Street, S.E. Minifie, a businessman selling maritime supplies, was a member of the Chamber of Washington City in the District of Columbia in 1803 and 1805. Owning numerous lots in the eastern part of Capitol Hill, Minifie is believed to have erected a house in Square 1046, at the corner of Pennsylvania and Georgia

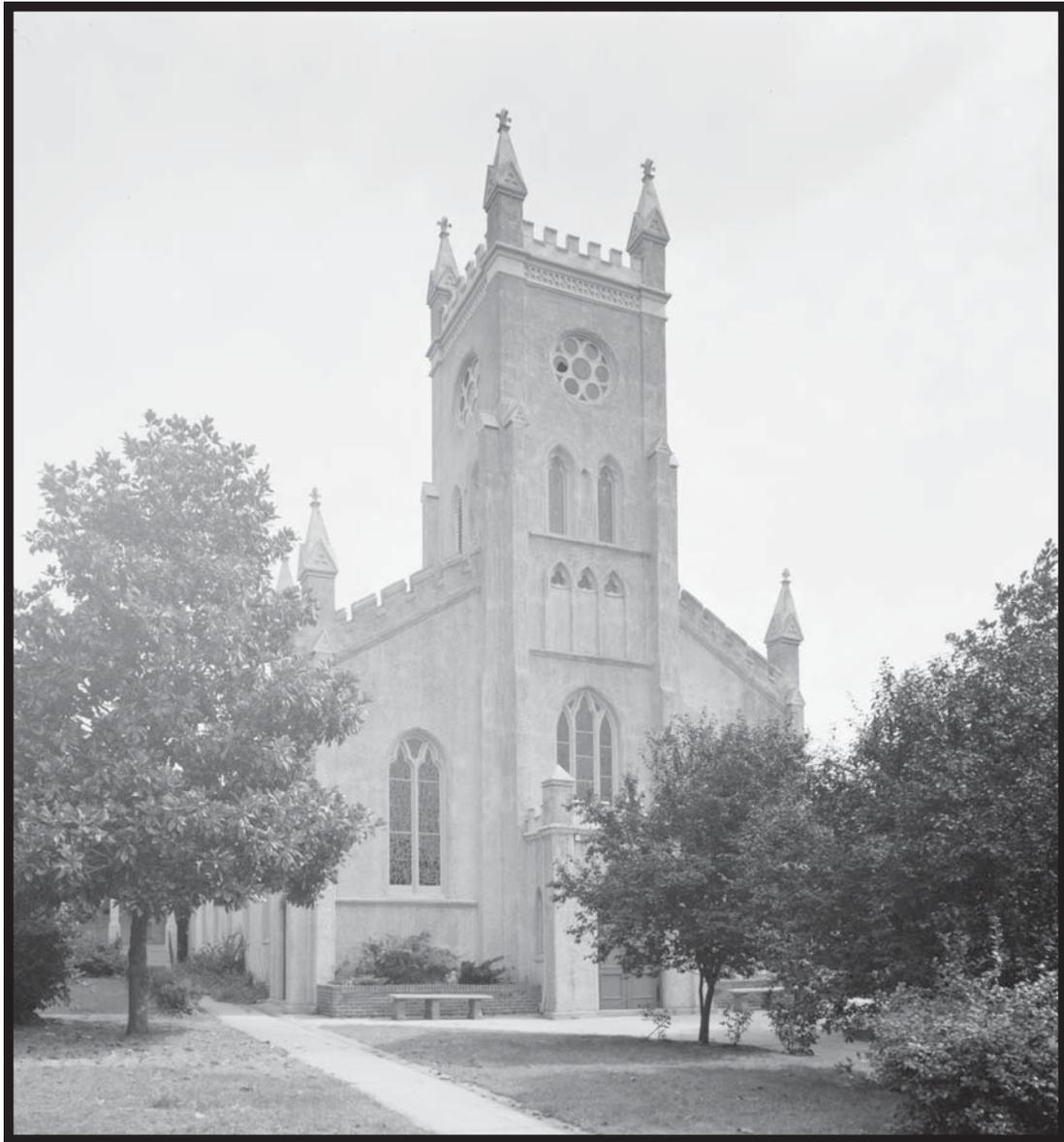


FIGURE 18: Ronald Comedy, *South Front-Christ Church, 620 G Street Southeast, 1974.* (Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress)

(later Potomac) Avenues sometime between 1801 and 1803.<sup>97</sup>

In the northeast, and still a part of Washington County, the 700-acre tract known as Long Meadows in the far northeasternmost corner of Capitol Hill to the east of 15th Street and north of C Street—later known in part as Rosedale and Isherwood—showed great promise for development. In 1813, Dr. Thomas Ewell advertised that he had “purchased the whole of the Tract of Land called Long Meadows, on the boundary line of the City and the Turnpike road to Baltimore, for the purpose of selling half of it to persons who will engage to improve and cultivate it. No property within the District presents more important advantages...the favorable state of the Land for cultivation; the facility with which any part of it may at all times be enriched when exhausted by the deposits on adjoining marsh...; the quantity of timber and wood on the Land, and the extent of its meadow ground.... There is a Mill Seat on the place, afforded by a very



FIGURE 16: George William Baist. *Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 3, Plate 31. 1903. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)

remarkable spring, having a fall of 30 feet.”<sup>98</sup> Yet, like much of Capitol Hill East, the tract remained rural in nature, with both agricultural and wooded lands.

The undeveloped nature of the easternmost end of Capitol Hill along the Eastern Branch made it a suitable location for cemeteries during a period when most public- and church-sponsored burial grounds were intentionally set well beyond residential development because of the fear of disease and the need for open land.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, the adjacent Reservation 13 had been designated as “Hospital Square,” which would allow quick and easy interment of the deceased. By 1846, the Washington Asylum, which included an infirmary, workhouse, and almshouse, had been relocated to Reservation 13 from its original site on M Street, N.W., between 6th and 7th Streets, and a few burial grounds were established to the east of 16th Street, S.E. The largest of these was Congressional Cemetery (1807), located initially on three squares at 18th and E Streets. The final resting place of many nationally significant figures, Congressional Cemetery was a “beautiful burial ground situated about a mile and a half east of the Capitol....” The cemetery was described in the *National Intelligencer* in 1839:

The property then included an “area of about ten acres, surrounded by a substantial brick wall, with three handsome gateways leading into the cemetery, through which run several fine avenues and smaller walks, ornamented with trees and shrubs, that are now beginning to give it the appearance of a garden. The site of this grave yard has been most judiciously chosen. It commands a fine view of the surrounding country and the Anacostia, which flows at a short distance below it, and, in a calm summer evening, when the water is still and placid, reflects from its polished bosom the beautiful landscape on the opposite side of the river.”<sup>100</sup>



FIGURE 17: Theodor Horydczak, *Congressional Cemetery*, *Senators in Congressional Cemetery*, 1920-1950.

Eastern Burial Ground, the first of two public cemeteries established in 1798 by the commissioners of the City of Washington, was located just beyond Capitol Hill in Square 1026 between H and I Streets at 13th and 14th Streets, N.E. By 1827, the cemetery was not regularly in use, but continued to accept bodies for burial until about 1858.<sup>101</sup> The Old Ebenezer Cemetery was incorporated in 1824 by the Fourth Street Methodist Church (Methodist Society, Ebenezer Station) and was located adjacent to Congressional Cemetery on Square 1102 between 17th and 18th Streets, and D and E Streets, S.E.<sup>102</sup> By 1858, Ebenezer M.E. Church (“Little Ebenezer”), having split in 1827 from the Fourth Street Church, established the Ebenezer AME Cemetery in Square 1089 between 16th and 17th Streets, at C and D Streets, S.E.<sup>103</sup> These two smaller Methodist cemeteries continued as burial grounds for their members until the late-nineteenth century when the graves were relocated to other cemeteries. Congressional Cemetery, a nationally significant cemetery still in existence today, would eventually expand to encompass 35 acres and is the site where many of the deceased at Old Ebenezer were reburied; at least some of the bodies from Ebenezer AME Cemetery were taken to the District crematory during the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>104</sup>

An article in the *Evening Star* recalled the lack of development at the eastern end of Capitol Hill by 1850:

...[with] not much settlement near [Congressional Cemetery] other than by the Washington Asylum or poorhouse on reservation 13, north of the cemetery, in 1846, and the travel thereto by officers, with their prisoners somewhat livened up the neighborhood. Along K street were a few gardens. The house of Mr. [William] Clark... stood alone on 14th street and in the neighborhood of Georgia avenue, now Potomac avenue, 11th and 12th streets were some little settlements. John Neale, who afterward was the superintendent of the cemetery, lived here in the forties.<sup>105</sup>

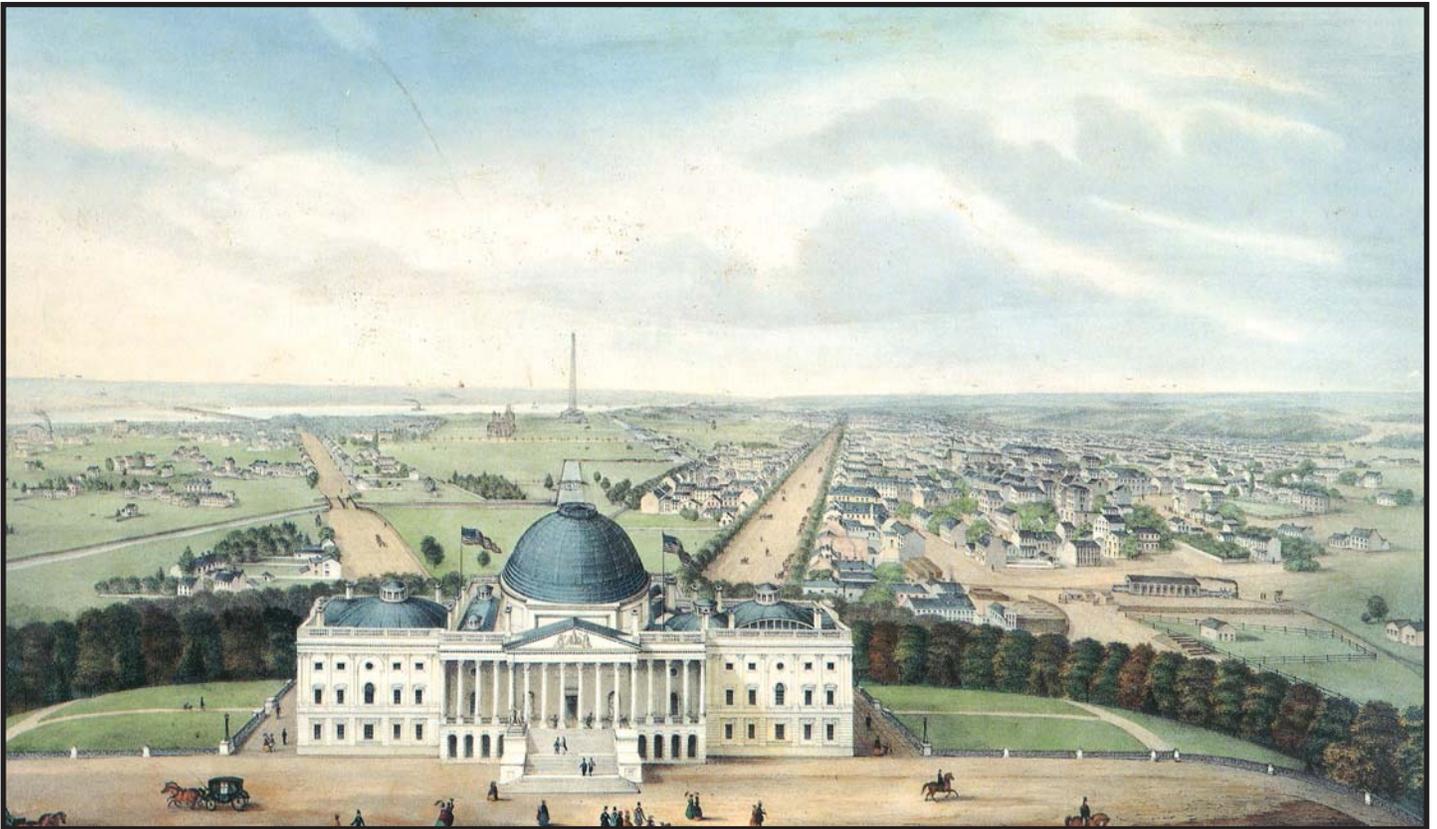


FIGURE 18: Robert P. Smith, *View of Washington*, 1850. From John W. Reys, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capital Since 1790* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 123.

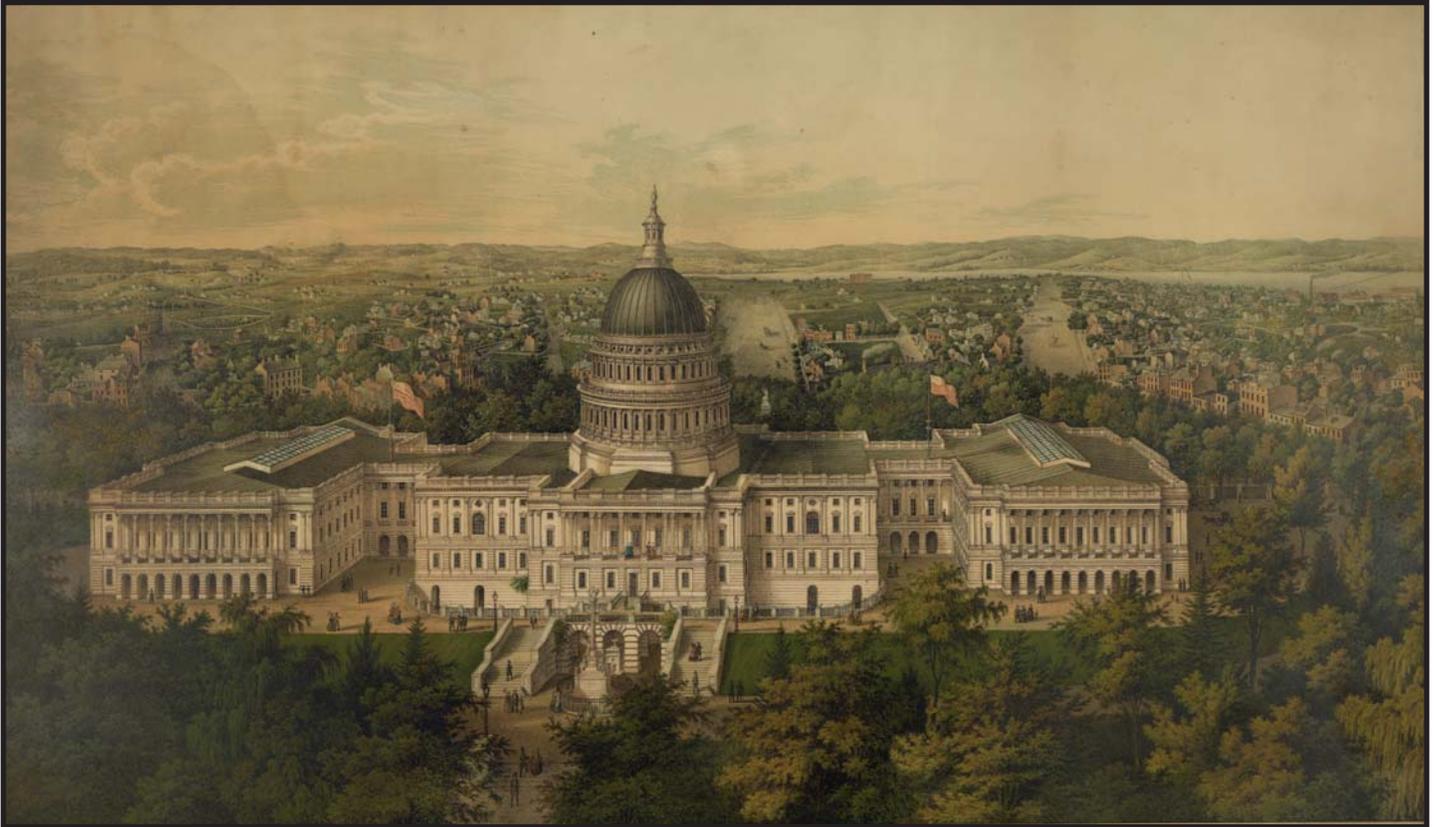


FIGURE 19: E. Sachse, *Panoramic View of Washington City from the Dome of the Capitol, Looking East*, 1857. (Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress)

## 6. EMPTY BLOCKS: CAPITOL HILL DURING THE CIVIL WAR

As it was in the late eighteenth century when the capital city was founded, the future of the Union during the dark years of the Civil War depended heavily on the stability and continued growth of the City of Washington. Although it had been several decades since construction had begun, the U.S. Capitol remained incomplete throughout the war years, although work continued, including construction of the building's dome.<sup>106</sup> President Abraham Lincoln, much like George Washington before him, believed the continued construction of government buildings was “an important symbol of the permanence of the Union.”<sup>107</sup> Development of the neighborhood around the Capitol in the northeast reflected the incomplete nature of the building itself, with improvements to some degree on only those squares immediately surrounding it. The neighborhood in the vicinity of the Navy Yard, in contrast, had expanded at a much faster rate, stretching northward to D Street and along Pennsylvania Avenue to blend somewhat seamlessly with the buildings surrounding the Capitol grounds on its southern side.

Residential growth created a demand for infrastructure, especially for piped water. Initially, a six-inch pipe connected the Capitol to a spring about 2½ miles away in the far northeastern corner of Capitol Hill, where Rosedale and Isherwood would later be platted. Brick reservoirs were also established on either side of the federal building. In November 1852, the U.S. Army Engineer Department assigned then-Lieutenant Montgomery C. Meigs with the task of surveying the city, devising a plan, and estimating the cost of “determining the best means of affording the cities of Washington and Georgetown an unfailing and abundant supply of good and wholesome water.”<sup>108</sup> Meigs prepared a 55-page report that included the numbers of houses and shops located on each square in the federal city. On the 188 subdivided squares from the Capitol to 6th Street, Meigs recorded 766 houses and 19 stores. Within this area west of 6th Street, there was no construction noted north of C Street, N.E., while a great many

buildings were located to the south around the market square at K and L Streets between 5th and 6th Streets, S.E. To the east of 6th Street, the 315 squares had been improved by 571 houses and 41 shops. Minimal construction had reached eastward to 15th Street, with nothing north of D Street beyond 13th Street, S.E. With improvements on only three squares north between A Street, S.E. and F Street, N.E., development was concentrated to the south of East Capitol Street, particularly on Navy Yard Hill. Reservation 13 was divided with Asylum Square to the north and Marine Hospital Square at the south, with the poorhouse at the center along 19th Street, S.E.<sup>109</sup> Marion Park, at the confluence of 4th and 6th Streets at South Carolina Avenue, developed with modest wood-frame and brick houses surrounding it. Although not shown as open space on the L'Enfant Plan, the land had been purchased in 1791 as part of a street right-of-way. “The neighborhood around this square developed somewhat earlier than other parts of Capitol Hill owing to its proximity to the Marine Barracks and the Navy Yard.”<sup>110</sup>

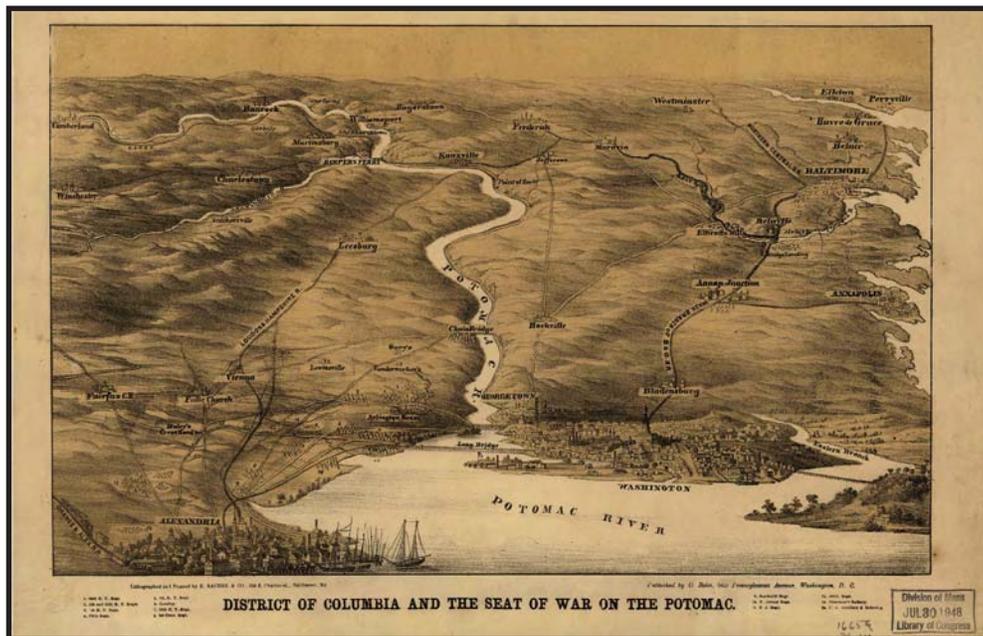


FIGURE 20: Casimir Bohn, *District of Columbia and the Seat of War on the Potomac*, ca. 1865. (Courtesy of DC VOTE)



FIGURE 21: A[libert] Boschke, *Topographical Map of the District of Columbia, Surveyed in the Years 1856-1859, 1861*. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)