

## I. CAPITOL HILL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

### 1. STATUS OF CAPITOL HILL EAST, CA. 1900

At the turn of the twentieth century, Capitol Hill was only partially developed, with 12th Street perceived as the dividing line between the developed and undeveloped sections. The city's expanding population had stimulated growth eastward and northward. Yet, the area to the east of 12th Street and south of Maryland Avenue was still considered undesirable because of the proximity of the disease-bearing Anacostia Flats, as well as the penal institutions run-down hospital for the indigent on Reservation 13. These were viewed as depressing land values and retarding the area's growth. In 1901, the East Washington Citizens Association, having failed to get the jail removed, protested to the District Commissioners:

The growth of the city eastward is retarded: a wall is practically erected on or about the vicinity of Twelfth street east, beyond which no building is being, nor will be, done that would be creditable to a section of the city within twelve squares of the Capitol building. The association desires that no obstruction to building or menace to health shall exist east of the Capitol building. Improve the Anacostia River and do away with the buildings we all so much desire removed.<sup>1</sup>

The 1903 Baist and 1904 Sanborn maps confirm that 12th Street was the dividing line between the largely developed squares on the west side near the U.S. Capitol and the mostly undeveloped squares on the east side of Capitol Hill. East of 12th Street, south of Maryland Avenue and north of Pennsylvania Avenue, there were some scattered groups of small row houses, generally of wood frame, and some squares with freestanding wood-frame dwellings on large lots created in the original subdivision. Other squares were completely vacant, having never been improved.

The easternmost part of Capitol Hill, east of 15th Street, was predominantly an



FIGURE 35: George William Baist. *Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 2, Index Map. 1903. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)

industrial area. With its extensive unimproved acreage, this area had become home to a number of commercial and industrial enterprises that took advantage of low land values. These included three large car barns that the street railway companies serving Capitol Hill had constructed in the 1890s. The Hygienic Ice Works, now owned by the American Ice Company, had been expanded to occupy most of the square at 15th and E Streets, N.E. The National Capital Brewery plant was on Square 1042 at 13th and D Streets, S.E. The Coliseum, with auto and cycle race tracks, occupied Square 1056 at North Carolina Avenue and B Street, N.E. (now Constitution Avenue, N.E.). Maps show other small businesses, including a pie company, greenhouses, and coal yards located on sparsely settled squares east of 15th Street. Railroad tracks ran between L and M Streets, S.E., and the gasworks were located on Square 1025 at the edge of the Anacostia River.<sup>2</sup>

### *Harbingers of Change*

Despite repeated congressional delays on funding enhancements to the Anacostia Flats, and improvements/removal of the institutions on Reservation 13, there were numerous indications that real estate investors, the business community, and city planners were all looking eastward at the potential of the largely undeveloped areas of the Capitol Hill plateau beyond 12th Street by the beginning of the twentieth century. Both the national economy and the city's growth contributed to setting the stage for the eastward expansion into Capitol Hill East. By the turn of the century, the housing market was booming again, recovering from the shortage caused by the Panic of 1893 that reduced housing construction in the ensuing years. The city's population continued to grow substantially in each decade, as the federal government expanded to meet the needs of a growing nation. The citywide population of 279,000 in 1900 would reach 331,000 by 1910.<sup>3</sup> Streetcar lines radiating from the city's center were extended in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, enabling the residents to seek out less congested areas and to live further than walking distance from their places of work and religious centers.

The 1903 Baist map reveals that investors were planning future development in Capitol Hill East consisting of modest row houses. Numerous original lots with 50 to 75 feet or more of frontage were shown as having been subdivided into multiple narrow lots that were still vacant. For example, all of Square 1054 (between C, D, 14th, and 15th Streets, N.E.) had been subdivided into small lots by 1903 and it had been bisected by a minor street known as 14th Place, thus doubling the number of dwellings that could be constructed. Although subdivision prepared the way for development, many of these property owners appear to have been investing for the long term, waiting for their property to appreciate. In a number of squares in the southeast quadrant, including Square 1060 at South Carolina and Massachusetts Avenues, Square 1069 east of 15th Street between A and B Streets, and Square 1077 along Pennsylvania Avenue east of 15th Street, some original lots had been subdivided into multiple narrow lots suitable for the construction of modest-sized dwellings while other lots retained their original configuration. Because of a local government directive intended to encourage development, construction of wood-frame buildings was allowed in the area east of 15th Street by 1900.<sup>4</sup> Yet, development remained stymied despite the ability to erect more inexpensive structures; no permits were granted for the construction of wood-frame housing at the easternmost end of Capitol Hill until 1902.

Another harbinger of future development was the involvement of citywide organizations, which “[f]ollowing the segregated patterns of the time, citizens associations were organizations with white members and civic associations had black members.”<sup>5</sup> This included the all-white East Washington Citizens Association that lobbied for the bridge over the Anacostia River. The actions of this larger community organization were augmented by associations with more defined geographic interests, including but not limited to the Northeast Citizens Association (1892), Southeast Washington Citizens Association (1907), and Southeast Civic Association (1929). In addition to general health and safety concerns, the Southeast Civic Association lobbied for the special interests of

black residents, particularly in matters pertaining to education and recreation facilities.<sup>6</sup>

Organizations such as these along with federal planners pressed for the reclamation of the Anacostia Flats for both health and economic reasons. Late in the 1890s, mosquitoes had been proven to be the vectors for malaria and the Flats were a major breeding ground for them. In 1900, Washington's Board of Trade added its voice to those calling for action to improve the conditions along the Anacostia Flats. It voted to call on Congress for immediate action to clean up the Flats with regard to two health issues: the use of sand filtration of the District's water supply to eliminate typhoid and the dredging of the Anacostia River to fill in its marshes in order to control malaria. Beginning work on the river was proclaimed to be an "immediate necessity" in order "to rid us of this pernicious disease, improve large areas of now valueless property and remove the blot upon the beauty of the city."<sup>7</sup>

The Senate Park Commission, better known as the McMillan Commission, addressed the Anacostia Flats issue in its 1901 Park Plan. The plan included an "extensive discussion of the Anacostia River, the deplorable condition of the flats and the advisability of creating a water park to rehabilitate that part of the city."<sup>8</sup> This was a dramatic departure from previous planning for the Anacostia River and the Flats, which had been part of an overall plan to improve navigation on the Anacostia River while reclaiming the Flats through filling with dredge from the river. It was expected that the creation of new valuable land area would pay for the cost of dredging. The McMillan Commission drew upon the 1898 Army Corps of Engineers report recommending a comprehensive plan of dredging the river to create a deeper channel as well as draining and filling in the marshes. However, while the Army Corps of Engineers' plan anticipated naval and commercial use of the waterfront, the Park Commission envisioned landscaped parkland with walks, drives, and recreational facilities and a water park with lakes and basins that would serve boaters and swimmers. Park development was

never considered until the Senate Park Commission proposed the creation of land and water recreational areas. Over time, this concept, which was endorsed by the East Washington Citizens Association, took hold and guided the eventual development of the area. The *Washington Post* and local businessmen joined in the calls for action on the reclamation of the Flats.<sup>9</sup>

It was a decade before the growing chorus of voices of urging action resulted in congressional appropriations to start the cleanup but the wide support for the reclamation probably gave investors confidence that it would be done in the foreseeable future.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITOL HILL EAST, 1900 THROUGH WORLD WAR I

In the first decade of the twentieth century, development on Capitol Hill progressed eastward to about 14th Street which, like 12th and 13th Streets, had been graveled but not paved. Squares were not fully developed but rows of brick dwellings, generally on lots less than 20 feet wide, had been constructed on most squares. East of 14th Street, many of the streets were not even graveled except for B Street, S.E. (today Independence Avenue, S.E.), which provided direct access to Reservation 13, and E Street, S.E., leading to Congressional Cemetery. Few squares this far east had been improved, save those fronting along 15th Street. Development along Pennsylvania Avenue was stimulated by the extension of the streetcar route from its original 8th Street terminus to 17th Street, S.E., in 1901.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, by 1909, rows of speculative single-family housing had been constructed in squares along the streetcar's extended line.

In 1901, the *Washington Post* described the area roughly to the east of 12th Street in Capitol Hill East as becoming attractive to home buyers who were looking for modestly priced housing with modern conveniences. The newspaper noted that:

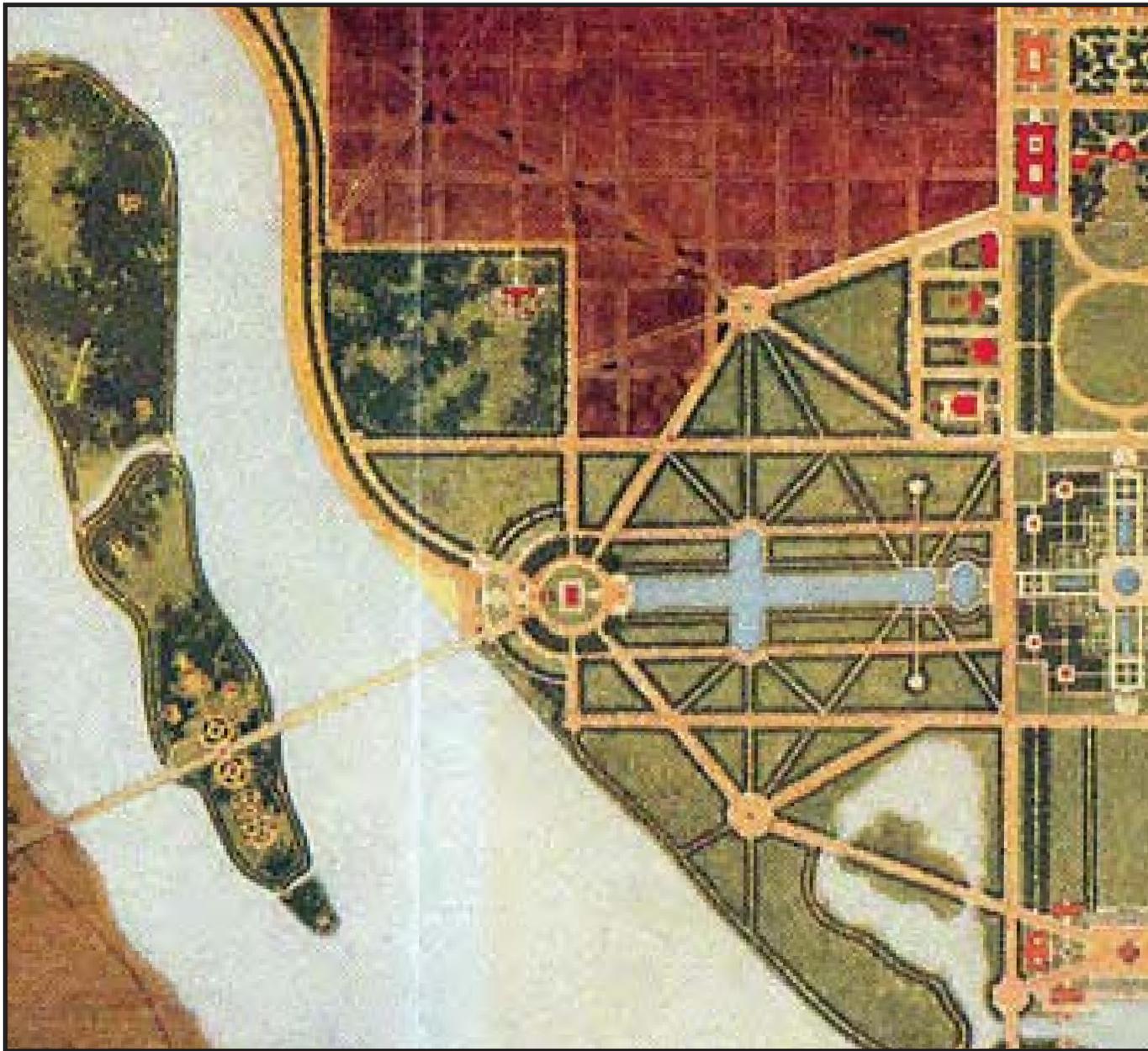


FIGURE 36: The Senate Park Improvement Commission of the District of Columbia, *The McMillan Plan*, 1901. (Courtesy of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress)

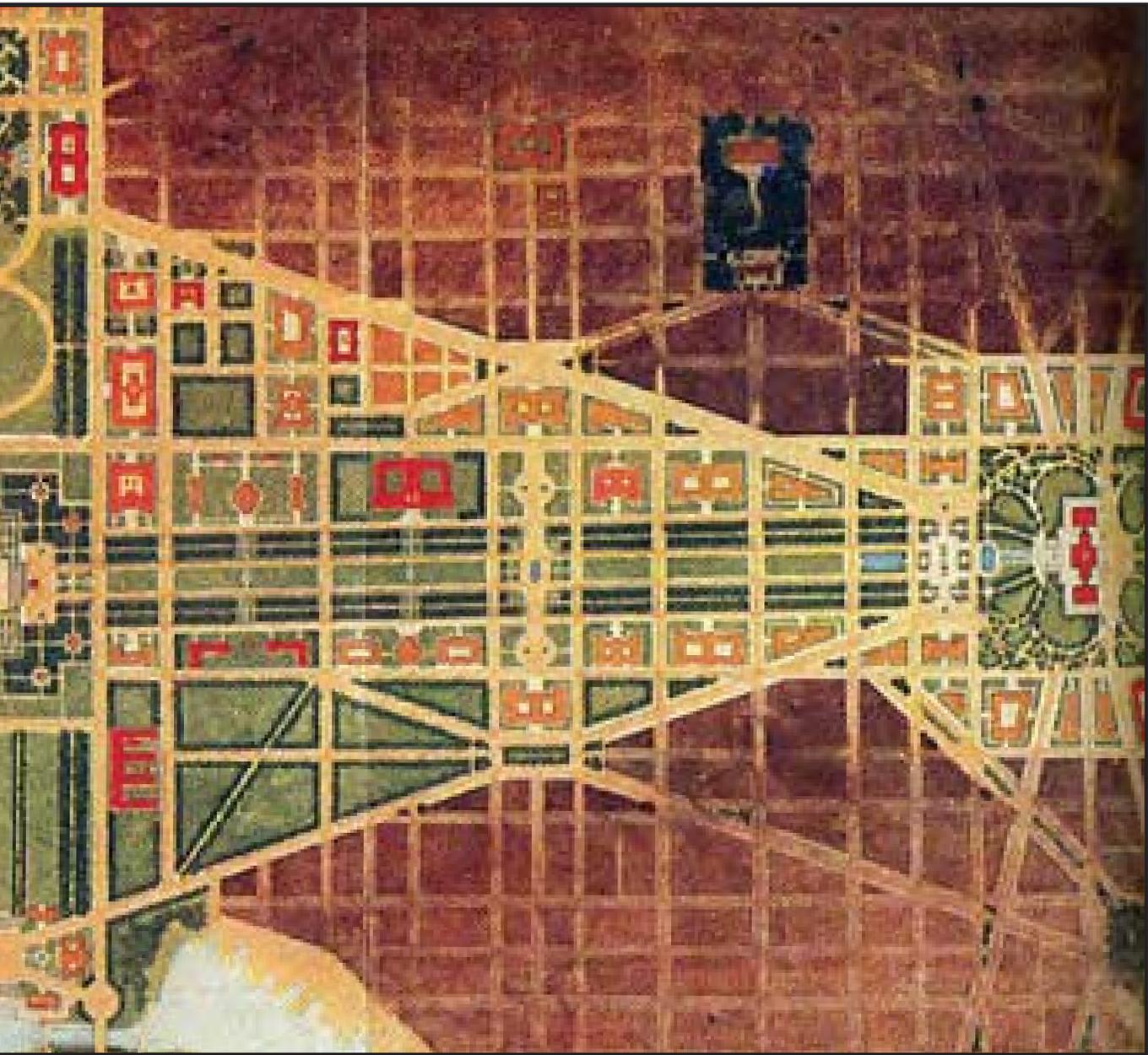




FIGURE 37: George William Baist. *Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 2, Plate 32. 1909. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)

There has been an increased demand for property in East Washington, many people with moderate incomes are finding property in this locality not only reasonable but convenient to the business section of the town. In recent years the character of the houses which have been erected in that section compare favorably with those of the upper Northwest, and apartment houses are also being put up...blocks which only two or three years ago were barren ground are now covered with pretty, attractive residences, which, though small, have all modern improvements.<sup>11</sup>

### *Anacostia Flats*

As the need for available modern housing increased, two of the issues hindering eastward development on Capitol Hill were addressed to some degree. Work had begun on dredging the Anacostia River and filling the Flats near the Navy Yard. Nevertheless, the Anacostia Flats continued to be an inhibiting factor in the eastward development of the area. The work, begun in the vicinity of the Navy Yard, proceeded slowly. In 1906, Captain Spencer Cosby of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who was in charge of reclaiming the area around the Navy Yard, reported that 90% of the work still remained to be done.<sup>12</sup> Two years later, he noted that dredging had improved navigation in the area of the Navy Yard and that 110 acres of the Flats below the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge had been filled but that 86% of the project remained to be done.<sup>13</sup> Although the Flats were widely recognized as a source of malaria, and area residents, Navy Yard officials, and *Washington Post* editorials all called for their removal, Congress was slow to appropriate adequate funding for the work.<sup>14</sup> In 1914, the District's newly appointed Engineer Commissioner pointed out that the estimated cost of the reclamation project was \$2,000,000 and that Congress was appropriating just \$100,000 a year, at which rate the project would take 20 years to complete.<sup>15</sup> His estimate was prescient.

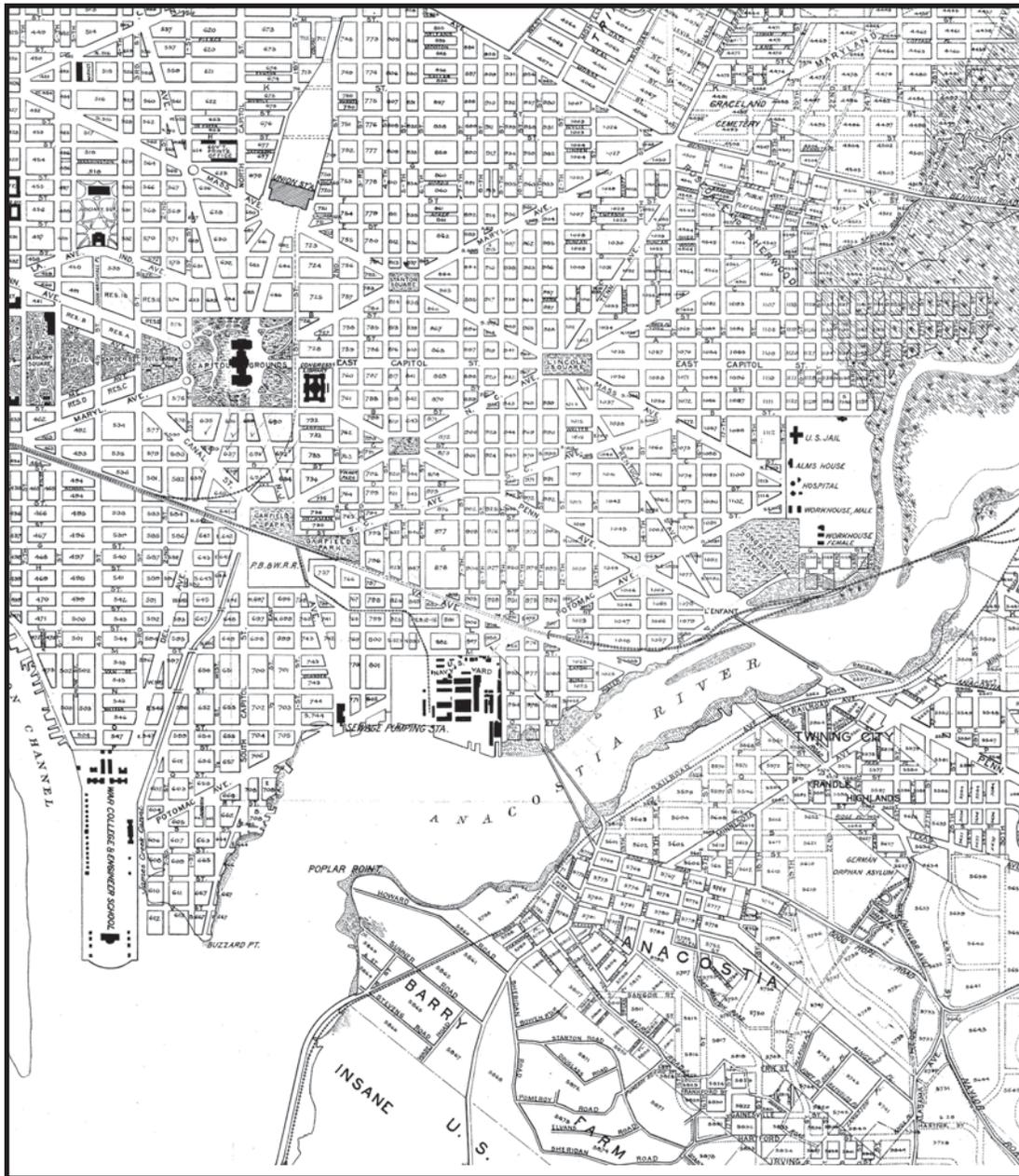


FIGURE 38: Office of Engineer Corps. *City Plan of Washington, D.C., 1911.*

Between 1910 and 1920, both Congress and the District Government acted to address the problems created by the Anacostia Flats, thus making Capitol Hill East more attractive to developers and potential residents. Plans for the Anacostia Flats were revised in 1916 and, four years later, the Army Corps of Engineers officer in charge of the reclamation effort announced that the work was half completed.<sup>16</sup> This included the construction of sea walls up to Benning Bridge and dredging of the river. Plans were in place for an extensive park with a half-mile-long lake, now known as Kingman Lake.

### ***Federal Reservation 13***

In 1900, a *Washington Post* reporter who visited Reservation 13 reported that, “In all there are some forty buildings on this reservation, four of the principal ones being the United States jail, the almshouse, the workhouse for females and the workhouse for males.”<sup>17</sup> Workhouses were used for incarcerating prisoners (often for vagrancy) whose terms were 6 months or less. Many were employed on city projects ranging from street cleaning and repairs to farming of crops to supply the kitchens of the institutions on the reservation. The city was continuing to invest in buildings on Reservation 13 to address serious overcrowding of the facilities, including an addition to the almshouse and more workhouse accommodations for both male and female prisoners.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, public pressure for removing these facilities was increasing. The Board of Trade, representing major business interests in Washington, added its voice to those of Capitol Hill residents who had long been advocating removal of the public institutions from the Reservation.<sup>19</sup> By 1903, a new site for the hospital and almshouses had been acquired in Northwest Washington on Brightwood (now Georgia) Avenue near the filtration plant.<sup>20</sup> Although city officials, including the Washington Asylum’s superintendent, continued to advocate physically separating the Asylum’s institutions for the care of the sick and the poor from its penal facilities, Congress withheld appropriations for the new construction in the face of neighborhood opposition from the proposed northwest location,

leaving the facilities at Reservation 13 for the time being.<sup>21</sup>

In 1908, the East Washington Citizens Association renewed its efforts to have the penal institutions removed from Reservation 13. The *Washington Post*, reporting that the “jail crusade is growing,” wrote that, “Now the desire for the removal of these institutions has extended beyond the discussions of this association, and has become a matter which has awakened widespread interest among the residents of the section concerned. There are few...who do not view with aversion the presence within a stone’s throw of their homes of those malefactors and outcasts housed in the District jail and workhouse.... [T]he residents of the southeast regard this environment...as a serious obstacle to its development.”<sup>22</sup>

Congress finally heeded calls to remove some of the penal institutions from Reservation 13 by enacting legislation that authorized the District government to relocate the workhouses and a reformatory outside the city limits. In 1909, the District commissioners called for bids on suitable relocation sites in Maryland or Virginia and, in 1910, Congress authorized funding for moving prisoners to the as-yet-undetermined site.<sup>23</sup> By 1911, new workhouses had been constructed in Occoquan, Virginia, and the male and female prisoners had been moved there.<sup>24</sup>

Between 1910 and 1920, both Congress and the District government continued to address the need to relocate or improve facilities on Reservation 13, thus making Capitol Hill East more attractive to developers and potential residents. By 1915, the president of the East Washington Citizens Association spoke of the “gratifying success” in achieving the removal of “the workhouse, the almshouse, the old men’s home and the tuberculosis patients and a large share of those in the jail.”<sup>25</sup> The jail, however, continued to be used, principally for prisoners awaiting trial, until the 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

Facilities for the care of tubercular patients were built on the Brightwood Avenue site but local opposition thwarted plans to locate the municipal hospital there.

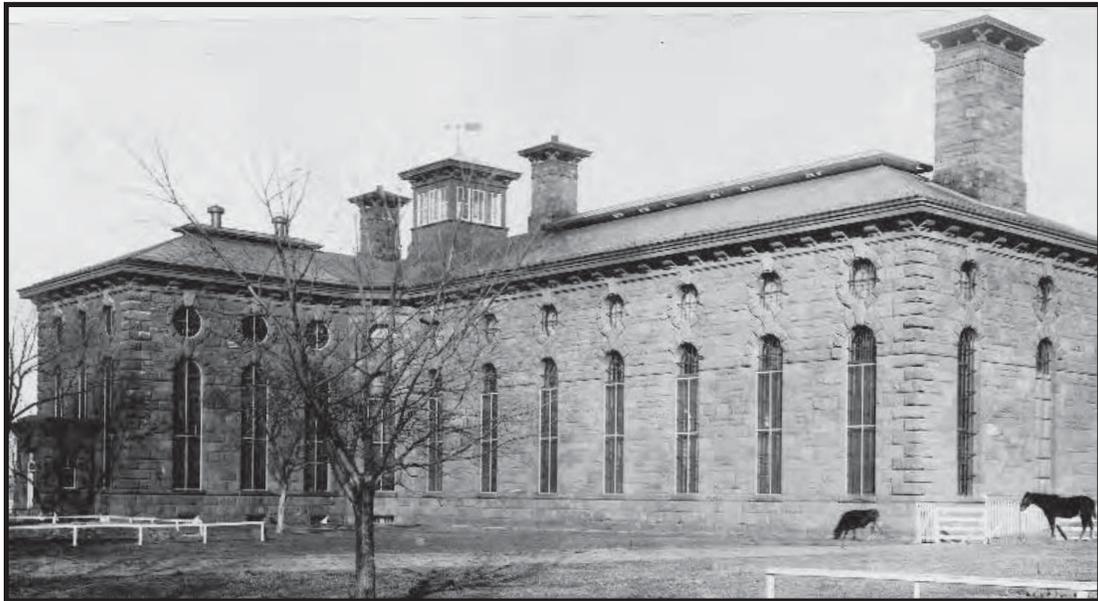


Figure 39: *District Jail, Washington, D.C. ca. 1909.* (Courtesy of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress)



Figure 40: Theodor Horydczak, photographer, *Gallinger Municipal Hospital, 1949.* (Courtesy of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress)

Long-stalled plans to replace the outdated Washington Asylum with a new hospital were not fully implemented until 1922. Named Gallinger Hospital, the new facility was constructed on the southern portion of Reservation 13 on the line of Massachusetts Avenue extended. The facility was renamed the District of Columbia General Hospital in 1953.<sup>27</sup>

### *Infrastructure of Capitol Hill East*

The pace of development in Capitol Hill East picked up after the turn of the twentieth century as infrastructure improvements were extended eastward. The 1909 Baist map shows that much of 11th Street was paved and virtually all streets west of it were improved with some form of paving. Streets within a block of Lincoln Park had almost all been improved. To the west of 15th Street, 12th, 13th and 14th Streets and a few of the cross streets between them were graveled. Yet, 15th Street and virtually all streets east of it were still unimproved except for Pennsylvania Avenue and access roads to Reservation 13 and Congressional Cemetery, which were macadamized.<sup>28</sup>

Six years later, the 1915 Baist map shows that very little additional progress had been made in paving streets in the eastern portion of Capitol Hill. However, water and sewer lines had been extended to most squares between 15th and 17th Streets and, for a few squares, extended as far as 18th Street.<sup>29</sup> Between 1915 and 1921, however, numerous streets between 12th and 15th Streets were paved with sheet asphalt or asphalt block, most notably in the area of Tennessee Avenue northeast of Lincoln Park. Additional streets south of Lincoln Park also were paved. Yet, east of 15th Street virtually no additional paving was done.

The 1919 Baist map documents the proposed diagonal extension of North Carolina Avenue to the northeast of 16th Street, N.E. Intended to intersect with Benning Road, North Carolina Avenue was to cut through six squares in Rosedale, substantially altering or eliminating over fifty buildable lots needed to



FIGURE 41: George William Baist. *Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 2, Index Map. 1909. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)



FIGURE 42: George William Baist. *Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 2, Index Map. 1915. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)



FIGURE 43: George William Baist. *Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 2, Index Map, 1921. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)

house the burgeoning population seeking to live in Capitol Hill East. The squares to be bisected by the extended road were developed in the late 1930s and 1940s, leaving North Carolina Avenue as a paper street that terminated at C Street.

### *Twentieth-Century Developers and Residents of Capitol Hill East*

It had been quite common in the mid-nineteenth century for small builders and

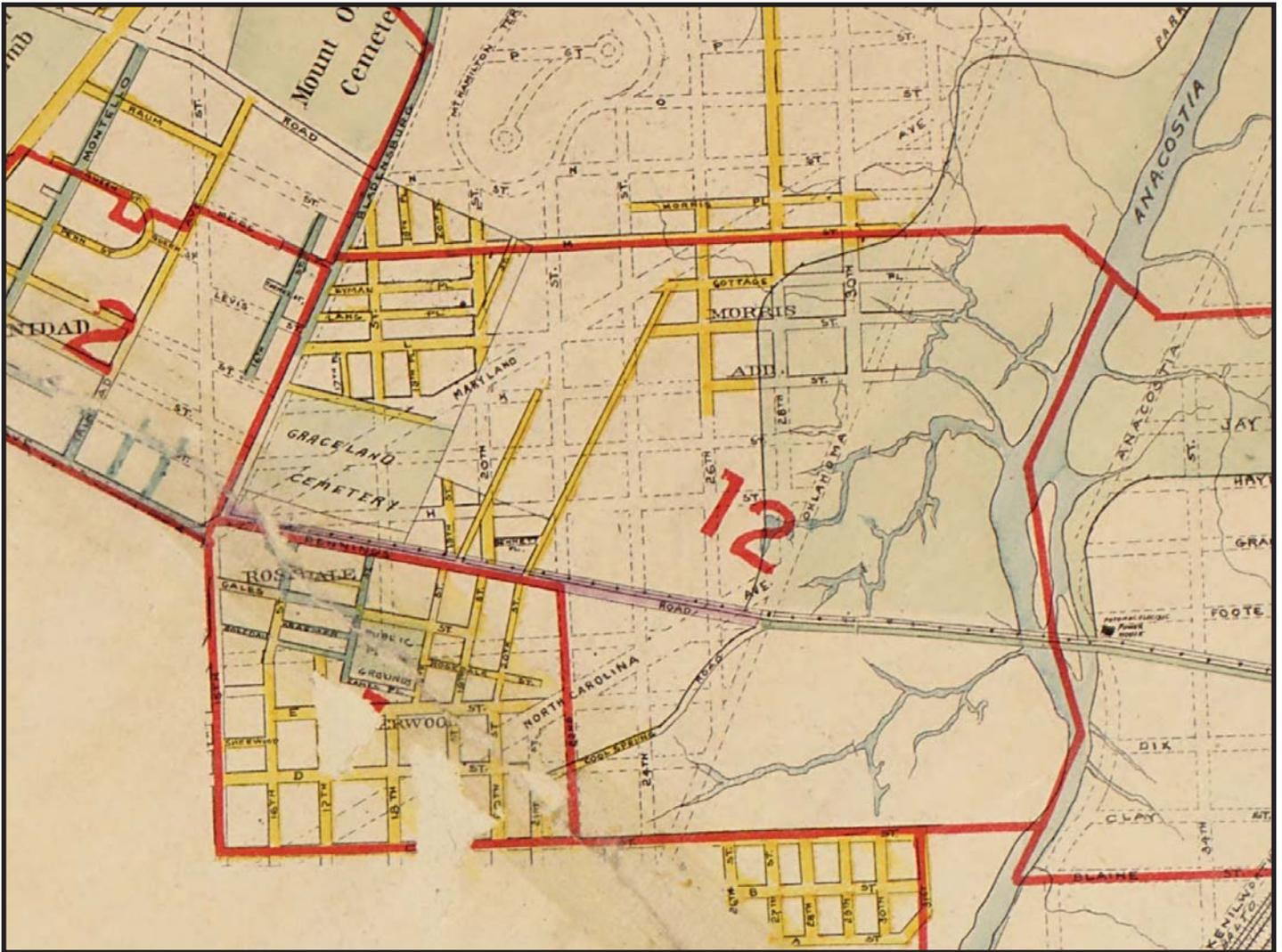


FIGURE 44: George William Baist. *Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 4, Index Map, 1919. (Courtesy of Geography and Maps, Library of Congress)

other individuals of relatively modest means to invest in real estate by buying a lot or two on which they built speculative or rental housing. Yet, the Depression of 1893 bankrupted some of the most successful master builders of the era, notably Charles Gessford, who had been very active in developing Capitol Hill west of 12th Street. This left a void, which by the early twentieth century, was filled by entrepreneurs who were not trained in the building trades. With a background in business, however, these men saw the potential of Capitol Hill East. They acted as large-scale developers, acquiring multiple lots that they then improved with rows of permanent housing. Two of the most prolific developers in Capitol Hill East during the first two decades of the twentieth century were Herman Howenstein and Harry Kite. Sometimes a freelance architect was retained, but more often, a staff designer was hired to ensure streetscapes presented a stylistically cohesive design. Advertisements for the dwellings often emphasized quality of construction, affordability, and convenience to transportation in contrast to some northwest neighborhoods that explicitly sought higher income residents.

Herman R. Howenstein, whom the *Washington Post* described in 1901 as making a specialty of property in Northeast Washington, was a lawyer who began his career as a real estate salesman and had established his own company by 1899.<sup>30</sup> Several years later he began investing in real estate and building speculatively. Howenstein's name first appears in District of Columbia building permit records in June 1902 as both owner and builder.<sup>31</sup> His first development in Capitol Hill East was the construction of seven dwellings northeast of Lincoln Park in Square 1033 (bound by C Street, Constitution Avenue, Tennessee Avenue, and 14th Street, N.E.) in 1907. Of the 1,365 buildings he constructed prior to the 1929 Depression, almost one quarter were in the Capitol Hill East area and several more were in other parts of Capitol Hill. Most of the dwellings Howenstein constructed elsewhere in the city were similar in form and price range to those he built in Capitol Hill East, with real estate sale prices being one of the greatest differences. In 1909, he built nine-room dwellings in Mount Pleasant priced at \$7,000, while his six-room houses on 14th Street near Lincoln Park

were put on the market in 1910 for \$3,750, with the eight-room corner house advertised at \$4,500.<sup>32</sup> The *Washington Post*, in an article about Howenstein's 1909 Bloomingdale houses, which it described favorably as a "row of colonial box houses," stated that they were "of the same design and character as those built by the Howenstein company in other parts of Washington," including the northeast quadrant.<sup>33</sup> The builder specialized in brick porch-front row houses, which were generally of beige brick, often with a straight-sided false mansard roof and gable dormer.<sup>34</sup> The newspaper described the 21 dwellings erected in 1916 in the 1300 block of A Street, N.E., as another of Howenstein's "small home" developments.<sup>35</sup> In a brief 1922 character sketch, the *Washington Post* described Howenstein as "untiring in his efforts to build sufficient small houses to satisfy the needs of Washington residents."<sup>36</sup>

Harry A. Kite, another of Washington's leading speculative builders in the 1910s and 1920s, constructed numerous row houses in the Capitol Hill East area. He was active throughout the city and built over 1,500 buildings in Washington, D.C., before his premature death of a heart attack at age 49 in 1931.<sup>37</sup> His work included apartment buildings and large single-family dwellings for individual clients in addition to the modest row houses he constructed for the Capitol Hill market. His first project within the Capitol Hill East area was the construction of 25 row houses in Square 1033, northeast of Lincoln Park in 1911. The size and price of these dwellings were keyed to their location, with houses only 12 feet wide on Warren Street, and 16 feet wide on Tennessee Avenue and C Street. The Tennessee Avenue houses were about 20% more expensive than those on C and Warren Streets. In 1916, Kite built additional rows on Tennessee Avenue and Warren Street. The wider Tennessee Avenue houses were 50% more expensive than the earlier ones, which suggested that Tennessee Avenue, close to Lincoln Park, had become a more desirable address in just five years. Conversely, the estimated cost of Kite's 1916 two-bay dwellings on Warren Street was 30% lower than the dwellings he constructed in 1911. Kite is credited with a total of 422 single-family houses and apartment buildings in Capitol Hill East.

While Howenstein and Kite built extensively in Capitol Hill East over the course of their careers, most other major Washington builders are only minimally represented in the area. These include Morris Cafritz, W.C. & A.N. Miller, Middaugh & Shannon, and Harry Wardman.<sup>38</sup> The most accomplished builder in Washington, D.C., Wardman was largely responsible for introducing mass-produced residential development to the city in the early twentieth century. The several rows Wardman built in Squares 1044 and 1045, within walking distance of the Navy Yard, in the first decade of the twentieth century are the only examples of his work in the Capitol Hill area. The row houses stand at 752-768 13th Street, S.E., 701-715 14th Street, S.E., and 1332-1354 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E. However, Albert H. Beers, Wardman's chief architect from 1905 to 1911, also designed for other builders including Harry A. Kite. Beers pioneered the front porch row house design that is now ubiquitous in many neighborhoods, including Capitol Hill East.

In Square 1044 on 14th and G Streets at Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., Wardman completed three rows of dwellings for an estimated \$1,500 each in 1907. The houses were notably similar to those he constructed the same year in the 1300 block of Newton Street, in the northwest neighborhood of Columbia Heights. Although the architectural detail was somewhat more elaborate on Newton Street, both examples had a footprint of about 600 square feet. The flat-fronted row on 14th Street, designed by Albert Beers, is clad in brick laid in Flemish bond on the façade. The stylistic ornamentation is provided by the heavily ornamented wood entablature, complete with molded frieze, modillions, brackets, and ogee cornice. Each building is three bays wide with jack and splayed arch lintels of stone. Raised porches, each with differing supports, have exposed rafter ends and an ogee cornice.

Although the residents of Capitol Hill East were predominantly white, the area continued to be racially mixed at a time when exclusive covenants were

coming into use in some developing Northwest Washington neighborhoods. For example, the 1920 census shows that the houses constructed by Harry Kite on Tennessee Avenue in 1911 and 1916 were home to white owners who held mid-level white- or blue-collar jobs such as government clerks and Navy Yard employees. The houses Kite built on Warren Street, N.E. in Square 1033 were all occupied by persons described as mulatto, of whom about half owned their dwellings. Most men were laborers and many of the women were laundresses, quite a few of whom had their own businesses taking in laundry. The dwellings on the east side of Warren Street, constructed by a number of different builders, were all rental properties housing African Americans. Both whites and African Americans resided on B and C Streets, N.E., bounding Square 1033, although the vast majority were listed as mulattos and African Americans. The white residents in this area tended to be from the neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia, or immigrants moving from such countries as Russia. Regardless of race, they worked in the local shops or as laborers for the nearby railroad or federal government. Many of the women were employed as laundresses or cooks in the homes of private families, or remained at home to raise children.

A comparative sampling of residents living in the row houses built by Herman Howenstein in 1911-12 in the 1300 block of G Street, S.E., reveals that most of the heads of household in 1920 were skilled workers, many of whom were machinists or other employees of the nearby Navy Yard. A great number worked for the Government Printing Office and other nearby federal agencies, the railroad, and various private businesses. The few professionals included one auditor, one attorney, and one physician. Wives did not work outside the home and grown daughters or female boarders held office jobs. All were white and almost all were born in the United States. Most families owned their homes and a few households included boarders or a second rent-paying family.<sup>39</sup>

### *Alley Dwellings*

Although legislation had been enacted in 1892 to improve conditions of those living in alleys, the reform movement and resulting legislation were aimed at eliminating alley dwellings altogether, a process that proved painstakingly slow. Enforcement of the laws did inhibit the construction of new alley dwellings in the developing parts of the city, including Capitol Hill East. At the turn of the twentieth century, only nine squares east of 12th Street included alley dwellings.<sup>40</sup> Comparatively, Capitol Hill to the west of 12th Street had 42 alley communities, while the greater concentration with nearly 60 alleys was located in the southwest quadrant of the city. The larger northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C. had over 125 alley communities with the greatest number of dwellings located between North Capitol Street and 14th Street, N.W.<sup>41</sup>

By 1906, long-awaited legislation was enacted that allowed for the condemnation and demolition of alley dwellings. Although this did not stop the construction of new alley dwellings, it did spawn efforts to create more suitable affordable housing. Promoted as a practical enterprise rather than philanthropic housing organization, the Washington Sanitary Improvement Company (WSIC) sought to make decent model housing for low-income families a sound investment for builders and company investors. Dr. George M. Kober, a leading reformer and co-founder of WSIC, believed social problems could be improved through environmental change. Kober professed:

The primary object of habitation is to secure protection from the influence of heat, cold, rain, sunshine and storms, and thus promote the health and happiness, and indirectly also, the morals and culture of the human race...the influence of sanitary houses can not [sic] be over-estimated.<sup>42</sup>

The WSIC did not redevelop inhabited alleys, proclaiming the “cost of assembling such property and turning alleys into through streets was prohibitive.”<sup>43</sup> Rather, to keep costs down, WSIC assembled unimproved building lots on existing

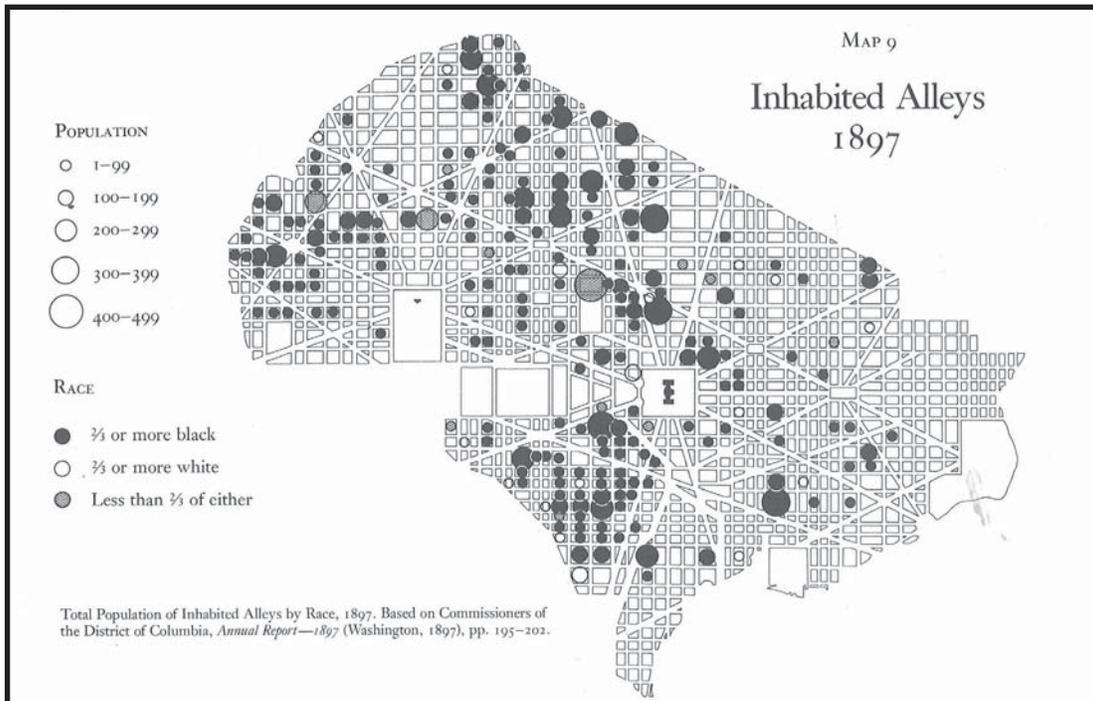


FIGURE 45: *Total Population of Inhabited Alleys by Race, 1897.* From James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2004), 44.

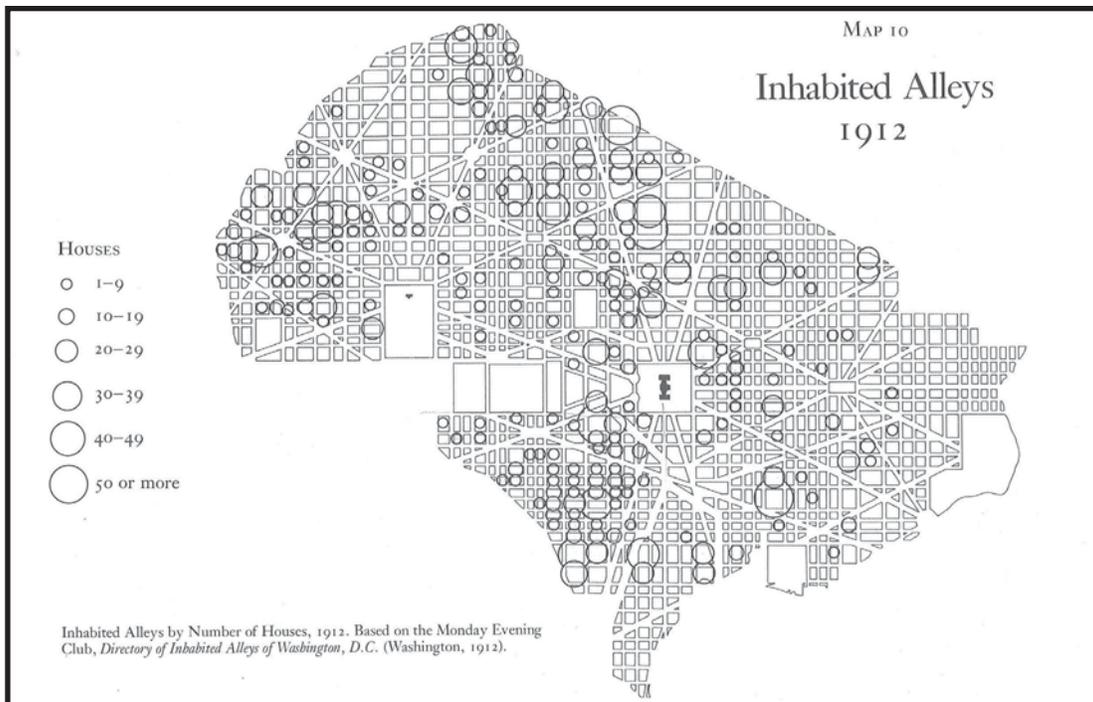


FIGURE 46: *Inhabited Alleys by Number of House, 1912.* From James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2004), 46.

streets at the developing edges of the city, where land was less expensive yet reasonably accessible to jobs. Square 1047, with 29 buildable lots fronting L and 13th Streets, S.E., met these qualifications because it was within walking distance of the Navy Yard and the Pennsylvania Avenue streetcar line. Appleton P. Clark, Jr., one of Washington, D.C.'s leading architects who was involved in numerous civic organizations, designed most of the philanthropic units built for the WSIC, including the row houses in Square 1047. The two-story brick dwellings, each containing two flats, were constructed in 1911 for an estimated cost of \$2,120 each.<sup>44</sup> The model houses were each two bays wide with narrow, standard, and paired window openings symmetrically fenestrating the façade. Stylistic ornamentation was notably modest with just brick arches and lintels, continuous belt courses, and corbeled brick cornices. With the rehabilitation of many of the houses for single-family occupancy in the late twentieth century, the second entry openings have been infilled in part or totally with window sashes and/or bricks. The T-shaped alley dividing Square 1047 remains intact, providing access to the rear of the properties where garages, sheds, and parking spaces have subsequently been added.

By 1914, the housing reform movement had reached its peak, enlisting the efforts of First Lady Ellen Wilson. Her deathbed request for legislation ending the occupancy of alley dwellings was delayed by the activities of World War I. Despite the new law and vigorous reform efforts, little change had occurred in inhabited alleys citywide. Yet, the residential occupancy of alleys on Capitol Hill East was declining as alley structures more commonly were used for businesses such as coal and wood yards.<sup>45</sup> The advent of affordable automobiles also created a demand for garages and repair shops. Accordingly, some alley dwellings were converted into garages or were demolished to allow for the construction of private garages as evident at Square 1047.

With the exception of Square 1027, by the end of the 1960s, virtually all of the alley dwellings in Capitol Hill East had been demolished. Alley dwellings remain

extant on the south side of Linden Court, which bisects Square 1027 just south of H Street between 13th and 14th Streets, N.E. These narrow row houses, standing just two stories in height and two bays wide, were constructed in 1892 for owner/builder James W. Hercus for an estimated cost of just \$600. Although similar alley dwellings on the north side of Linden Court were razed for the 1938 construction of the Atlas Theater, these remaining buildings survived as commercial property, predominantly used as storage, during the mid-twentieth century. Now restored as single-family dwellings, the brick houses have brick arched windows and entry openings, corbeled brackets, denticulated cornices, and continuous belt courses.

### ***Transportation: Trains, Streetcars and Automobiles***

The growth of Washington, D.C. as the nation's capital required construction of a railway station befitting its status. The existing train station and tracks on the National Mall were removed and in 1901, the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) announced their intent to erect the new terminal between Massachusetts Avenue and H Street, west of 2nd Street, N.E. The construction of Union Station, begun in 1903, effectively destroyed the downtrodden neighborhood to the immediate north, known as "Swampoodle," transforming the northwestern corner of Capitol Hill into the city's primary transportation hub.

With streetcar tracks running directly behind the imposing new railroad station, which opened in October 1907, the Columbia Railway Company streetcar line was temporarily interrupted while a "lengthy underpass known as the H Street Subway" could be constructed.<sup>46</sup> The new street actually ran under the many railroad tracks accessing Union Station. Additionally, enabling legislation was passed by Congress in 1908 to allow for the extension of streetcar lines to run directly to Union Station or to intersect with existing lines traveling to or near the railroad station. This included the extension of the Navy Yard line that initially ran up 8th Street, S.E. to Pennsylvania Avenue and towards Georgetown. The

extended line traveled up 8th Street, crossing H Street and then continuing along Florida Avenue to U Street and eventually to the District-Maryland line on Connecticut Avenue, N.W. The intersection of the line, under the consolidated control of the Capital Traction Company, allowed passengers to transfer at the midpoint of the H Street corridor, either continuing on the Columbia Railway Company line or walking eight blocks to Union Station.

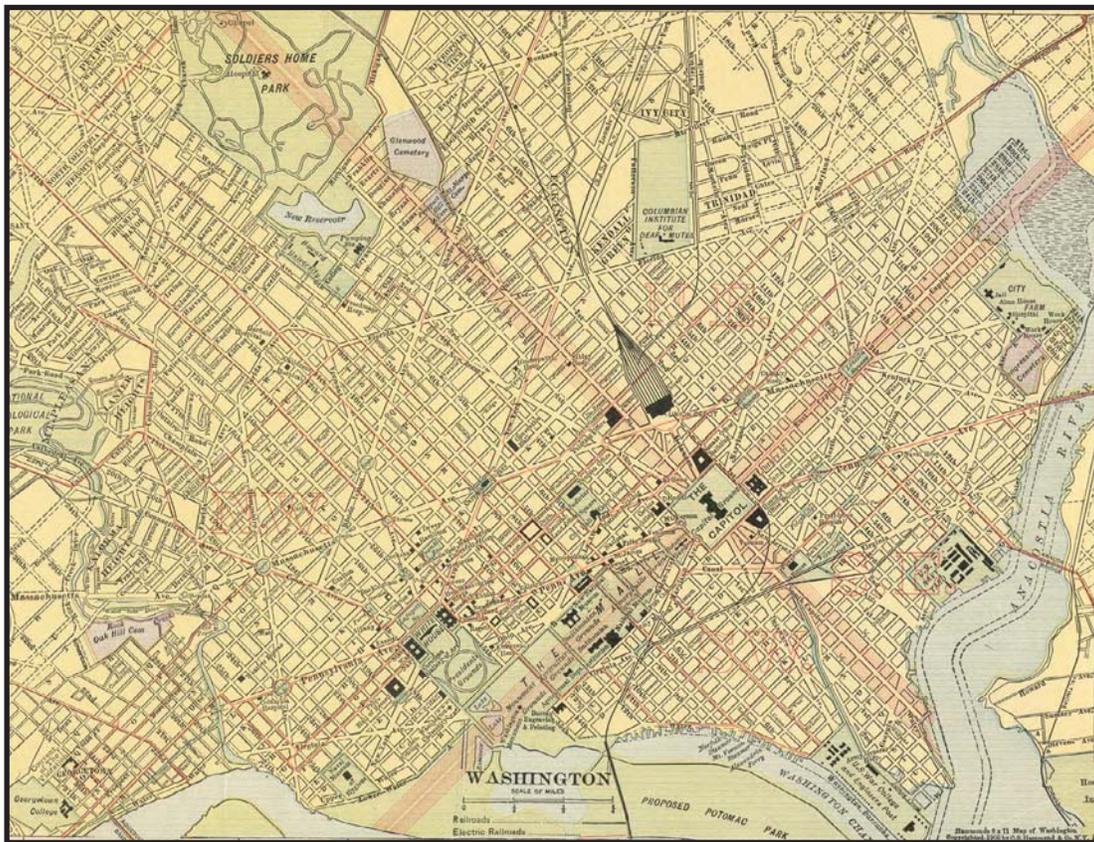


FIGURE 47: C.S. Hammond. *Hammond's Map of Washington, 1908*. (C.S. Hammond & Co. N.Y.)

Despite the improvements in streetcar and railroad transportation, by the second decade of the twentieth century, the automobile had revolutionized transportation as mass production placed cars within reach of the middle class. Thus, proximity to places of employment and access to public transportation became less critical for potential buyers. Rather, the addition of a garage in which to house and park the automobiles became an essential feature many future homeowners sought.

As early as 1912, Herman Howenstein was advertising the new row houses he constructed on 12th Street, S.E., as having “room for stable, garage, and garden.”<sup>47</sup> Four years later, he was marketing six-room row houses at 726-730 15th Street, S.E., as having a “Garage In Your Cellar.”<sup>48</sup> The increasing number of dwellings constructed with garages in Capitol Hill East in this decade indicates that even the purchasers of relatively modest row housing could afford automobiles and were no longer solely dependent upon public transportation.

By the late 1910s, numerous rows were constructed with garages accessed by alleys at the rear of the properties. The freestanding garages—predominantly constructed of wood frame—were one story in height, with little stylistic expression. The attached garages, like those provided by Howenstein, were located within the raised basements of rear projecting bays. Also showing little ornamentation other than brick construction consistent with that of the main house, the projecting garage bays are one story in height with vehicular openings as the only fenestration. Many have been augmented on the roofs with enclosed additions or open porches/decks. Garages would become a standard feature in Capitol Hill East by the second quarter of the twentieth century.

### ***Commercial and Industrial Activities***

The principal commercial area serving Capitol Hill East to the north was the H Street corridor, in the northeast quadrant. Not intended by Pierre L’Enfant to be

a primary corridor, H Street was transformed into an important transportation route by the introduction and later electrification of streetcars in the second half of the nineteenth century. Development commenced with the construction of fashionable Victorian-era row houses that were promptly altered to provide commercial spaces on the first stories for local merchants. Residents from neighboring Capitol Hill and beyond regularly traveled to visit the myriad of shops, markets, and social activities lining H Street between 2nd and 15th Streets. By 1913, the corridor offered residents a full range of entertainment venues with more theaters than any other street in the city.

In contrast to the commercial strip along H Street, within the Capitol Hill East area to the south, much of the commercial activity would have occurred along or near Barracks Row, located between Pennsylvania Avenue and the Navy Yard along Eighth Street, S.E.<sup>49</sup> Additional commercial activity consisted of small businesses scattered throughout the neighborhood, including those lining Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E. These businesses served the daily needs of the local clientele, who could walk just a few steps to a nearby store. Understanding the needs of area residents, developers and builders often incorporated commercial space, with residential housing above, in their new construction. Corner buildings, visible from the various streets making up the intersections, typically housed the businesses, whether purpose-built commercial or rehabilitated ground-floor residential space. The typical commercial business occupying a corner building was a grocery, drug store, saloon, or laundry. Buildings on the interiors of the squares were occupied on the first stories by the shops of cobblers and barbers. Some one-story alley buildings were purpose-built commercial, providing the required space for wheelwrights and blacksmiths, and later garage or auto-related businesses.

Examples of one-story commercial properties in Capitol Hill East include a purpose-built drug store at 1444 Independence Avenue, S.E. (1915), with canted entrance and store windows on each side, that continued to operate as a drug

store until 1986, and is now a medical supply store; and a purpose-built corner store in a triangular-shaped building at 328 Kentucky Avenue, S.E. (1922), that has changed uses over the years from a grocery store, to a barber shop, then a TV repair shop, and finally to its present day use as a liquor store.<sup>50</sup>

As Capitol Hill East began to develop, many of the industrial businesses closed or relocated. In Square 1031, the late-nineteenth-century brick works of Isaac and Jacob Childs had closed by 1903. Bounded by C and D Streets at 14th Street, N.E., the square remained largely undeveloped until 1913 when developer/builder Harry A. Kite charged architect A.E. Landvoight with the design of 83 single-family row houses of brick with full-width front porches and projecting garage bays. The florist greenhouses of Robert Bowdler were located on 1.43 acres of land in Square 4511, bounded by 17th and 18th Streets south of Benning Road. The property at 1723 Benning Road, N.E. had been used in the cultivation of flowers since the late nineteenth century. The Bowdler family sold the flowers at Center Market, now the site of the National Archives. Although an iron-and-glass greenhouse was added to the Capitol Hill East property in 1929, within ten years, all of the greenhouses were demolished and replaced by six apartment buildings. L.R. Ray designed the multi-family housing complex for owners, Louis L. and Robert Bowdler, who abandoned the floral business in favor of residential development.

The area's two large industrial businesses, the American Ice Company (Hygienic Ice Plant) in Square 4544 (northeast) and the National Capitol Brewery in Square 1042 (southeast), continued to operate throughout the pre-World War I period. While the ice company continued to operate well into the mid-twentieth century, with the advent of Prohibition (1920-33), the brewery facilities on D Streets, S.E., were rehabilitated to become the Cary Ice Cream Company (it was later renamed Meadow Gold Products).<sup>51</sup>

### *Schools and Playgrounds of Capitol Hill East*

Most of the schools that came to serve the area east of 15th Street were constructed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century for students within the developed areas of Capitol Hill. Because new schools were sited where large lots could be acquired to allow for school grounds and future expansion, they were often located at the periphery of these developed areas. Therefore, the schools in or near Capitol Hill East predated much of the development that eventually surrounded them. Elementary schools (grades 1-8) serving white pupils during the first two decades of the twentieth century included Cranch (1872), Maury (1886), Madison (1889), Tyler (1891), Pierce (1894), James Buchanan (1895), Edmonds (1902), and Bryan (1909).<sup>52</sup> Schools devoted to the education of African American pupils in Capitol Hill East included Lovejoy (1872, rebuilt 1901) at 12th and D Streets, N.E., and Payne (1896) at 15th and C Streets, S.E. Lovejoy, like most of the city's late-nineteenth-century school buildings, was deteriorated and inadequate to accommodate the growing number of pupils. George F.T. Cook, the superintendent of the Colored School Divisions, in calling for Lovejoy's replacement with a modern eight-room school house, stated that, "Due provision for the enrollment of the school population in its vicinity even now requires not only better but ampler accommodation than the present building affords. This need is annually increasing, from the fact that the lower rent in this section of the city, when compared with that in most other sections, attracts and will continue to attract large numbers of this population."<sup>53</sup> Yet, the school would not be quickly replaced nor adequately repaired for a number of years.

In the slowly developing neighborhood of Rosedale, two schools were constructed in the first decade, which were also intended to serve adjacent communities. The W.B. Webb School (now known as Miner) at 15th and Rosedale Streets was dedicated in 1901 and the Henry T. Blow School at 19th Street and Benning Road opened in 1906. These schools were designed with eight rooms,

each with a capacity of 40 pupils, to serve grades one through eight.<sup>54</sup>

In October 1906, the Public Library of the District of Columbia opened the Rosedale Station, one of just eight deposit stations citywide at that time. The library stations were “the nearest approximations to branches that the library [had].”<sup>55</sup> The central library would provide from 300 to 1,000 volumes and the necessary supplies for circulation, with all activities conducted by volunteer librarians. Philanthropic organizations undertook construction and maintenance of the deposit stations, with no funding from the Public Library. The Rosedale Mission was the first organization to solicit for the establishment of the Rosedale Station, which was later supported by the Noel House Association when it was relocated to 602 17th Street, N.E. in Square 4540. The brick building, completed in 1909, also provided “under one roof an audience room, club rooms, carpenter and printshop [sic], reading room, gymnasium and apartments for the resident workers.”<sup>56</sup> Katharine M. Johnson, Rosedale’s volunteer librarian who was employed at the central library, reported that, “Our shelving room is still inadequate, over 500 books being confined in one small bookcase in the hallway of the mission, but we expect to remedy this later.” She went on to note the opportunities in this area of Capitol Hill East, “Rosedale Station is the only library in this community. Only the fringes of the neighborhood need have been touched as yet. It is an excellent field for larger work, and this we hope to do in the future.”<sup>57</sup> The Rosedale Station was closed in 1914 when funding for a librarian was no longer available; the building, later rehabilitated to serve as the home of the Pilgrim A.M.E Church, was razed to allow for the construction of three brick duplexes in 1949.

In the first part of the twentieth century, across from the public library station on 17th Street, N.E., stood a large playground, created by the joining of Squares 4533, 4534, and 4535. Each of the squares had been previously subdivided into nearly 60 lots apiece but not improved and maps delineated the extension of roads yet laid. The public park, bounded by Eames Place and Gales Street

between 17th and 18th Streets, boasted the “entrance piece” of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad depot as a playhouse for area children. The depot, razed in 1908 with the construction of Union Station, had been located at New Jersey Avenue and C Street, N.E. Historic maps document the entrance piece, which measured 20 feet by 30 feet, was located along 17th Street at its intersection with Kramer Street, south of Gales Street.<sup>58</sup> By the early 1920s, the railroad depot entrance was removed to allow for construction of a two-story community house of concrete block and a pool.

Commercial recreation was provided in Square 1056, between 15th and 16th Streets to the north of A Street, N.E. The entire square was home to the Coliseum Track, which was constructed in 1901. A wood-frame automobile and cycling track, replete with grand stands and bleachers, was touted in the Evening Star for attracting some of the world’s greatest cyclists.

The coming of these champions is a tribute to the Coliseum track, which they regard as the finest and fastest in the country, and the city affords them a climate and chance for road work not found elsewhere. Indeed, it is certain that from now on the Coliseum will be the scene each season of the training and development of all the future motor champions. The new manager of the Coliseum has taken hold with characteristic energy, and will leave no stone unturned that will promote the advancement of this modern, and thrilling sport that already has supplemented everything but base ball [sic], and may, indeed, cause an exodus among the bleacherites before long in favor of the motors.<sup>59</sup>

Despite its attraction, the Coliseum was closed and the facility demolished in 1907 to allow for the construction of single-family row houses developed by the Kennedy & Davis Company.