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Lafayette Park



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Fig. 1.--President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson strolling in Lafayette Park, July 16, 1964, accompanied by reporters and Secret Service agents.

Lafayette Park

Washington, D.C.

by

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HISTORIAN, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION HISTORICAL RESEARCH SERIES, NO. 1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ★ NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Washington 1964

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Stewart L. Udall, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
George B. Hartzog, Jr., Director



The National Park System, of which Lafayette Park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.



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NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

HISTORICAL RESEARCH SERIES

No. 1. Lafayette Park

(In Preparation)

No. 2. Franklin Park

No. 3. Dupont Circle

No. 4. Farragut Square

No. 5. Lincoln Park

No. 6. The Frederick Douglass House

No. 7. Memorial Stones of the Washington Monument

Preface

This historical survey of Lafayette Park is a preliminary study and the first in a series of documented historical monographs to be published on the park areas and historic sites of Washington under the jurisdiction of the National Capital Region of the National Park Service. Each study will cover the legal origin and administrative authority of the specific park or historic site, the developmental stages in park landscaping, and the present use and value to the community. They are specifically designed to illustrate the historical significance and value of each park or historic site, to aid in preserving their natural beauty from the inroads of non-park projects, and to serve as authoritative reference works on the specific subjects of the papers.

Under present development plans for Lafayette Park, the National Capital Region has authorized the preparation of the plan approved by the late President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, in 1962. It was completed by the well-known American architects, John Carl Warnecke and Associates, who are currently carrying out restoration and other construction work on Lafayette Park and Square under the supervision of the National Capital Region. The present design, a copy of which is included in this study as Figure 38, is intended to give dignity and unity to Lafayette Park in keeping with its historic relationship and significance to the White House. It seeks to create as extensive a view as possible from the Executive Mansion through Lafayette Park and up Sixteenth Street without moving the statue of General Andrew Jackson. The four statues to heroes of the American Revolutionary War will be retained in their present locations. Provision will be made for the seating of visitors and for the passage of pedestrians through the park area. Colorful displays of seasonal flowers and shrubs will continue to enhance the enjoyment of the park by Washington residents and visitors to the Nation's capital.

Lafayette Park is a rectangular area of approximately seven acres of land which, originally, was included in the President's Park according to the plans of Major Pierre L'Enfant. Thomas Jefferson decided that it was too extensive an area to be included in the White House grounds and authorized its separation into a park area for the use of residents and visitors to Washington. In 1824, it was named Lafayette Park in honor of Major General Marquis de Lafayette, hero of the American Revolution, following his triumphal visit to the United States.

The earliest definitive landscape treatment of Lafayette Park was designed in 1853 by the leading American landscape architect of the day, Andrew Jackson Downing. Basically, Lafayette Park is a compromise between the formal style of European continental gardens and English naturalism. Throughout the years, Downing's plan has been adhered to with only slight modifications being made thereto as the major landscape work was carried out by the Army Corps of Engineers from 1872 to 1888, and during 1936 and 1937 by the National Capital Parks, forerunner of the present National Capital Region. Under current development plans for Lafayette Square, Downing's plan will continue to be adhered to as the outstanding features of the area are being restored and new federal buildings are being constructed in such a manner that the peaceful vista of Lafayette Park will be retained.

Since this historical survey of Lafayette Park is designed as a pilot model, I have included all pertinent documentary material from the files of the National Capital Region. Photographs are from the files of Abbie Rowe and the Information Branch. Early sketches of Washington and plans and drawings of the landscaping of Lafayette Park are from the Land Records, Graphics and Map Division. Correspondence is from the Mail and Records Branch. My own personal interviews and ground surveys provided coordinating facts essential to the study.

September 1964

G.J.O.

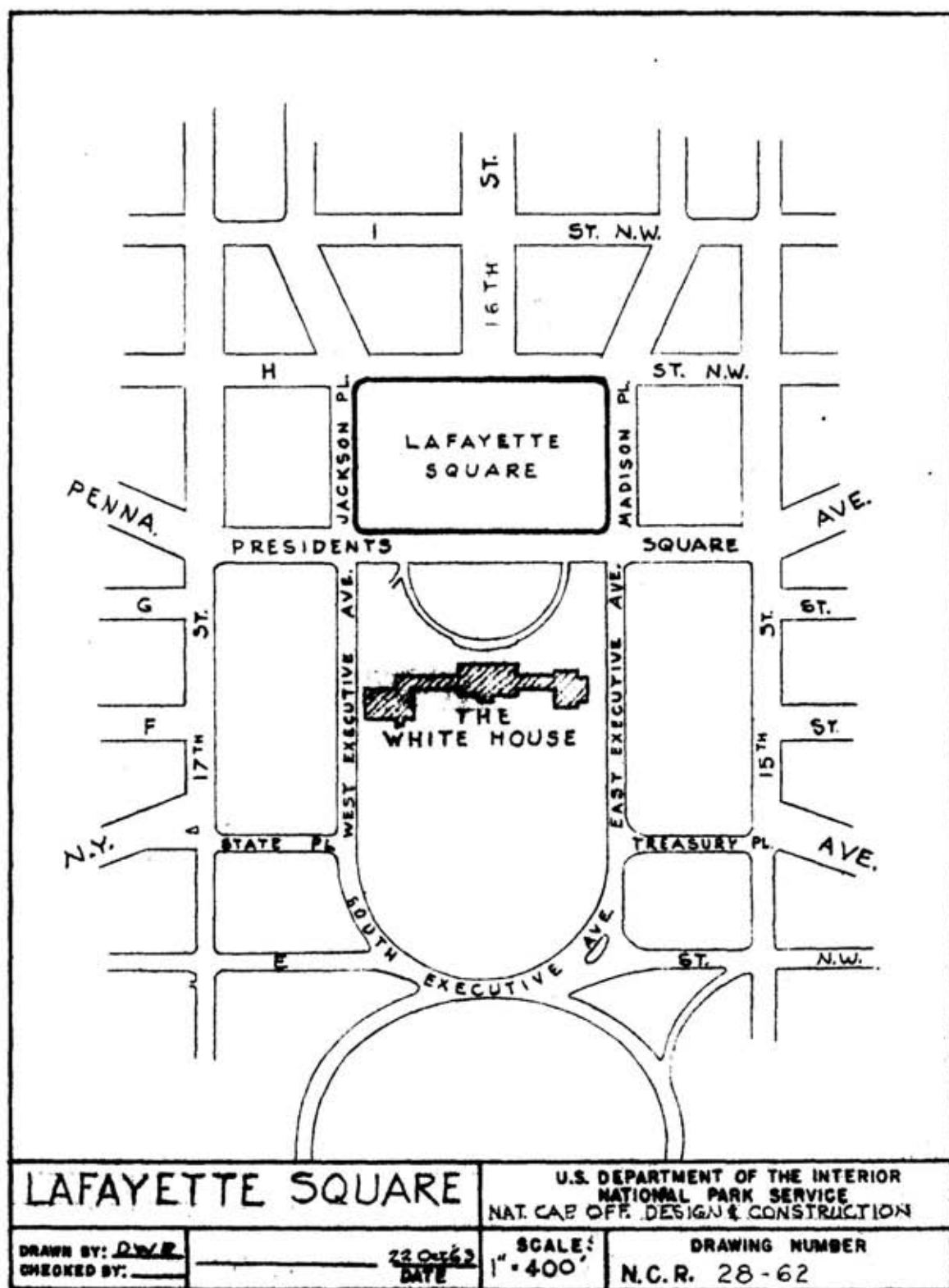


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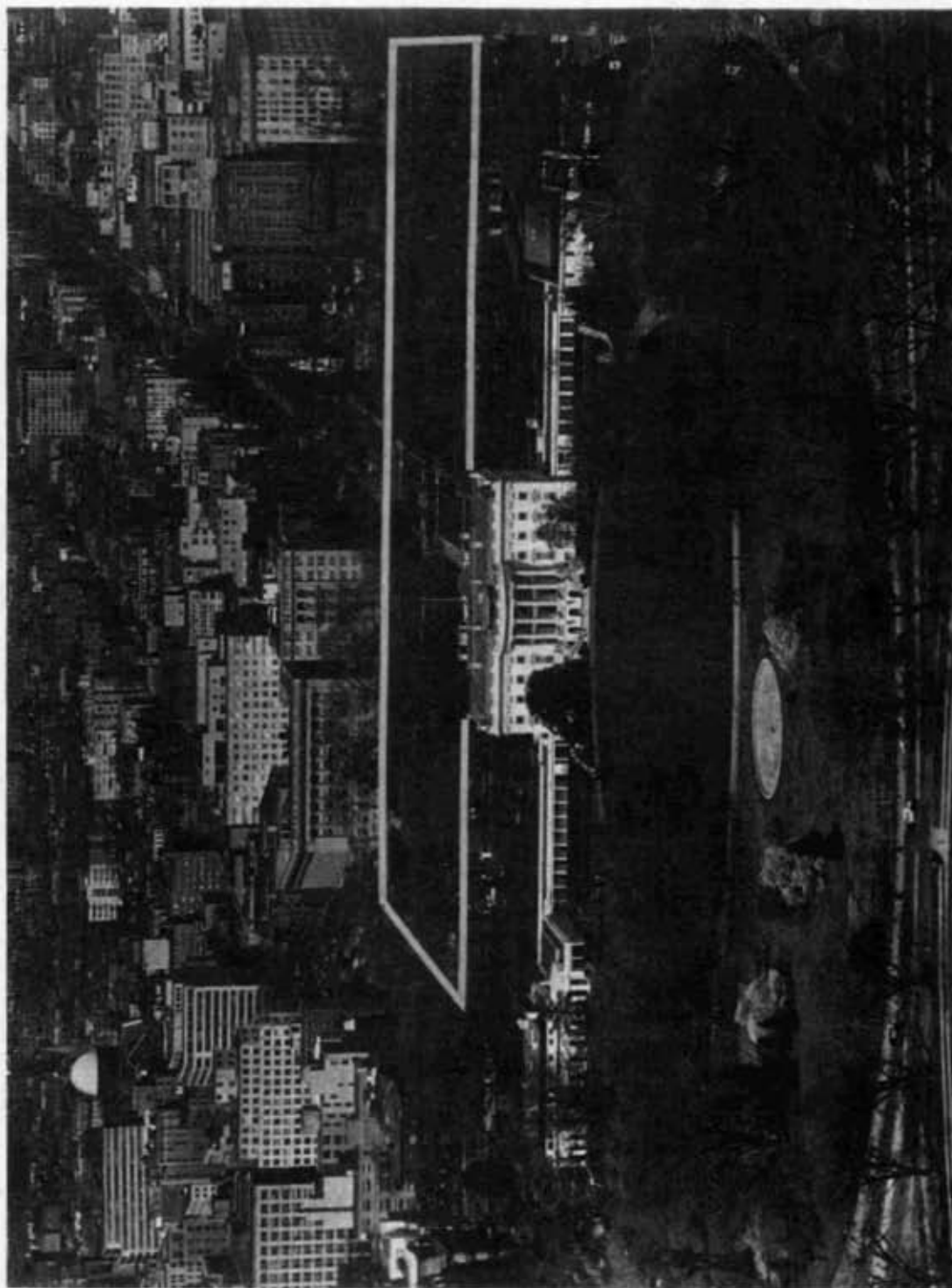


Fig. 3.—South front of White House and outline (in white) enclosing limits of Lafayette Park to the north. Dome of St. Matthew's Cathedral, scene of the State Funeral Mass on November 25, 1963, for the late President, John F. Kennedy, appears in upper left.

ADMINISTRATION OF LAFAYETTE PARK

Organization.--The administration of Lafayette Park, as part of the system of Public Buildings and Grounds of the Nation's Capital, dates back to 1791. A brief resumé of its legal evolution is considered essential to an understanding of any discussion of the development of the area.

Congress empowered the President by the Act of July 16, 1790,¹ to appoint three Commissioners to lay out a district or territory for the permanent seat of the Government of the United States. It directed the Commissioners to provide suitable buildings for the Congress, the President and for public offices of the Government. The district laid out under this authority was named the Territory of Columbia; the Federal City was named the City of Washington.

The Office of the Commissioners was abolished by the Act of May 1, 1802,² and their duties devolved upon a Superintendent of Public Buildings to be appointed by the President of the United States. Section 5 of the Act of April 29, 1816,³ abolished the Office of Superintendent of Public Buildings and his duties devolved upon a Commissioner of Public Buildings.

When the Department of the Interior was created by the Act of March 3, 1849, Section 9 provided: "That the supervisory and appellate powers now exercised by the President of the United States over the Commissioner of Public Buildings shall be exercised by the Secretary of the Interior."⁴ By the Act of March 2, 1867, the Office of the Commissioner of Public Buildings, after functioning for almost 51 years, was abolished. Its duties were assigned to the Office of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army.⁵ On March 13, 1867, the Chief of Engineers assigned an Engineer officer to be "in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds." For 58 years these duties were administered by that office until by Act of February 26, 1925, Congress created the independent office of Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital.⁶ The Director performed the duties previously assigned to the Chief of Engineers, and reported directly to the President.

In 1933 control of the National Capital Parks was returned to the Department of the Interior and Lafayette Park became an important unit of the nationwide National Parks system.⁷ Today Lafayette Park is administered by the Director, National Capital Region (Landscape Division), and forms one of the most important units in the chain of parks of the Nation's Capital.

¹U.S. Statutes-at-Large, I (Boston, 1845), 130.

²*Ibid.*, II (Boston, 1856), 175.

³*Ibid.*, III (Boston, 1846), 324.

⁴Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, 1933 (Washington, 1933), p. 1. Cited hereafter as DAR (Director's Annual Report).

⁵U.S. Statutes-at-Large, XIV (Boston, 1876), 466.

⁶DAR, p. 1.

⁷National Capital Region, Parks of the National Capital (Washington, 1963), p. 1.

Fig. 4.--Overlay showing original holdings of patentees with superimposed sketch of the future Washington, according to Dr. Joseph M. Toner.

HISTORICAL DATA

Introduction.--Lafayette Park, known for many years as the President's Square and, later, Lafayette Square, is one of the outstanding historic sites of the Nation's Capital. Situated on United States Reservation No. 10, it was originally one of the first parcels of land donated by the original patentees to the District Commissioners for the formation of the Federal City in 1791. Although the question has never been formally resolved because of the controversy surrounding the writings of various authors on the history of the Nation's Capital and its public buildings and parks, the weight of authority appears to indicate that the original site of the President's House (the White House) and the area to the north (the present Lafayette Park) was originally part of the land holdings of David Burnes (then known as Beall's Levels) and of Samuel Davidson (then known as Port Royal).¹ Port Royal was the area of the future Lafayette Park.²

Prior to acquisition of the site, however, George Washington experienced difficulties in negotiating with the original landowners, particularly "the obstinate Mr. Burnes."³ David Burnes owned a tract of two hundred and twenty-five acres (225) near the mouth of what was then called Tiber Creek. The Davidson tract included the area which subsequently became known as Lafayette Square. Although Burnes was one of the longest to hold out against selling his land to the Federal Government at £25 per acre, his signature was the second to appear on the original sales agreement of March 30, 1791. A condition of the sales agreement permitted the owner to use the natural resources of the land after its sale until the government decided to make use of it. In addition, the portion of land to be used for streets was not to be paid for by the Federal Government.⁴

Evolution of the site.--While no definite landscape plan appears to have been immediately laid out for Lafayette Park, nor for any other area of the Nation's Capital in its embryonic stages of development, early city plans show that the area had been set aside to be landscaped as the city grew.

¹See "Sketch of Washington in Embryo, previous to its survey by Major L'Enfant, compiled from the rare historical researches of Dr. Joseph M. Toner," in Senate Document No. 178, 75th Congress, 3d Session, *A Manual on the Origin and Development of Washington*, by H. Paul Caemmerer, Ph.D. (Washington, 1939) p. 7. In this sketch, Dr. Toner apparently placed an overlay of the Ellicott Plan of 1792, distinguished primarily by Ellicott's straightening of Massachusetts Avenue as compared with the L'Enfant Plan, over his sketch of the original land holdings. For divergent views on the subject, see Major Gist Blair, "Lafayette Square," in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, XXVIII (1926), 133-173. Blair discounts the theory that the land on which Lafayette Park was laid out was originally part of the Burnes tract or of the George Walker holdings, taking as his authority a letter of Col. T. A. Bingham, dated March 30, 1899, cited by Dr. Samuel C. Busey in his work *City of Washington in the Past* (Washington, 1898), pp. 42-43.

²See Figure 5.

³Louise Payson Latimer, *Your Washington and Mine* (New York, 1924), p. 19.

⁴Caemmerer, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

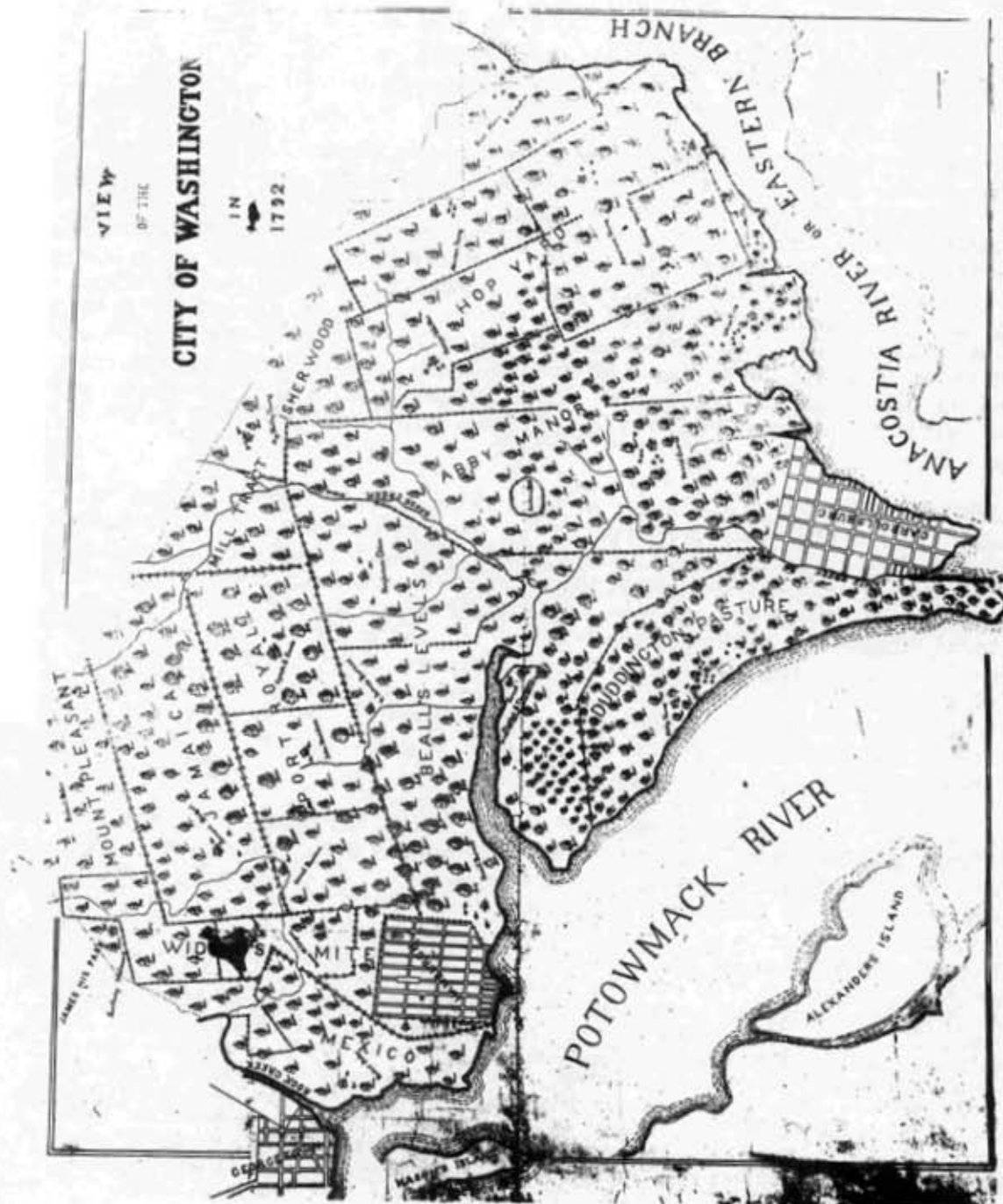


Fig. 5.--Sketch showing land holdings of original patentees, 1792.

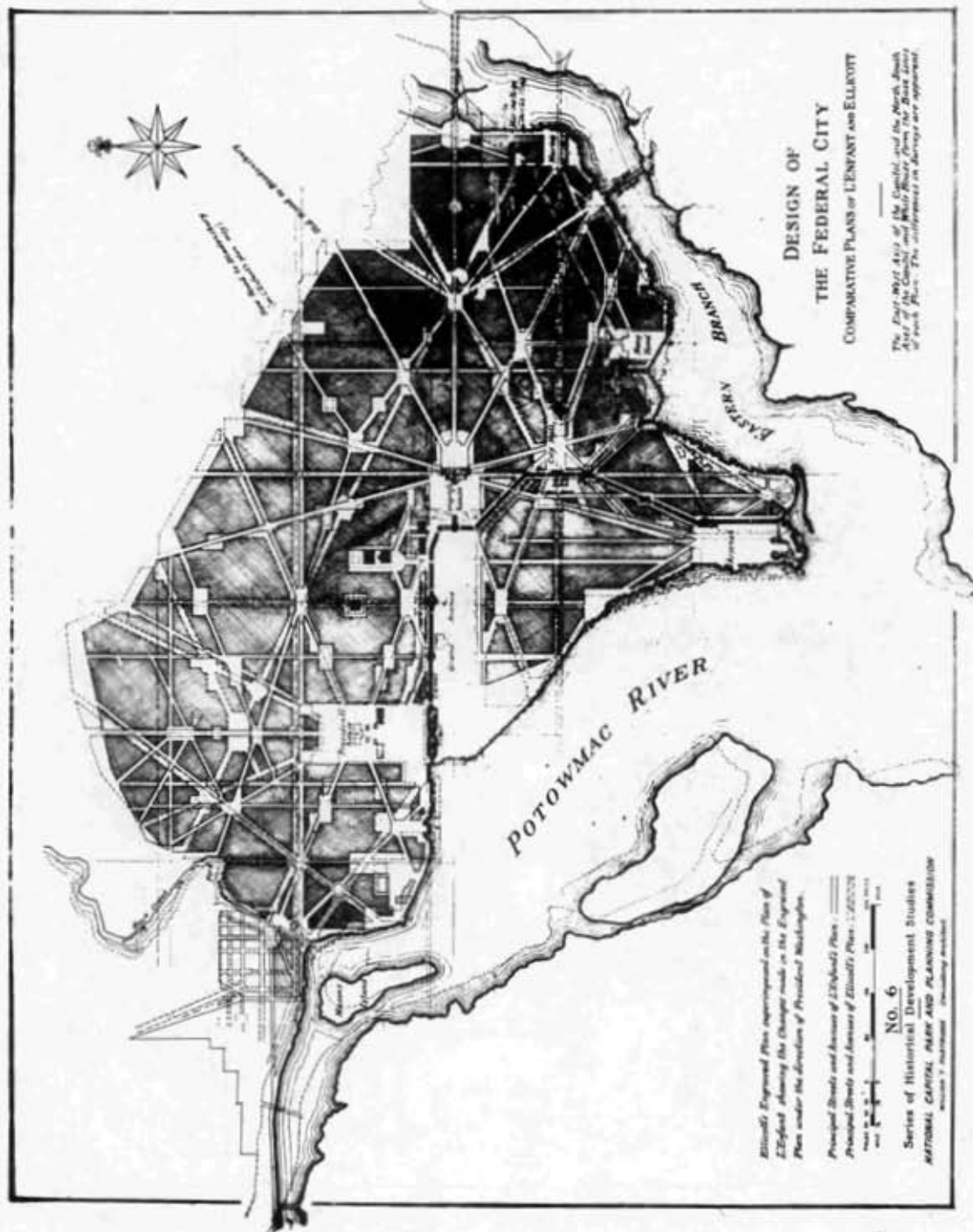


Fig. 6.--Comparative plans of L'Enfant and Elliptic for the Federal City.

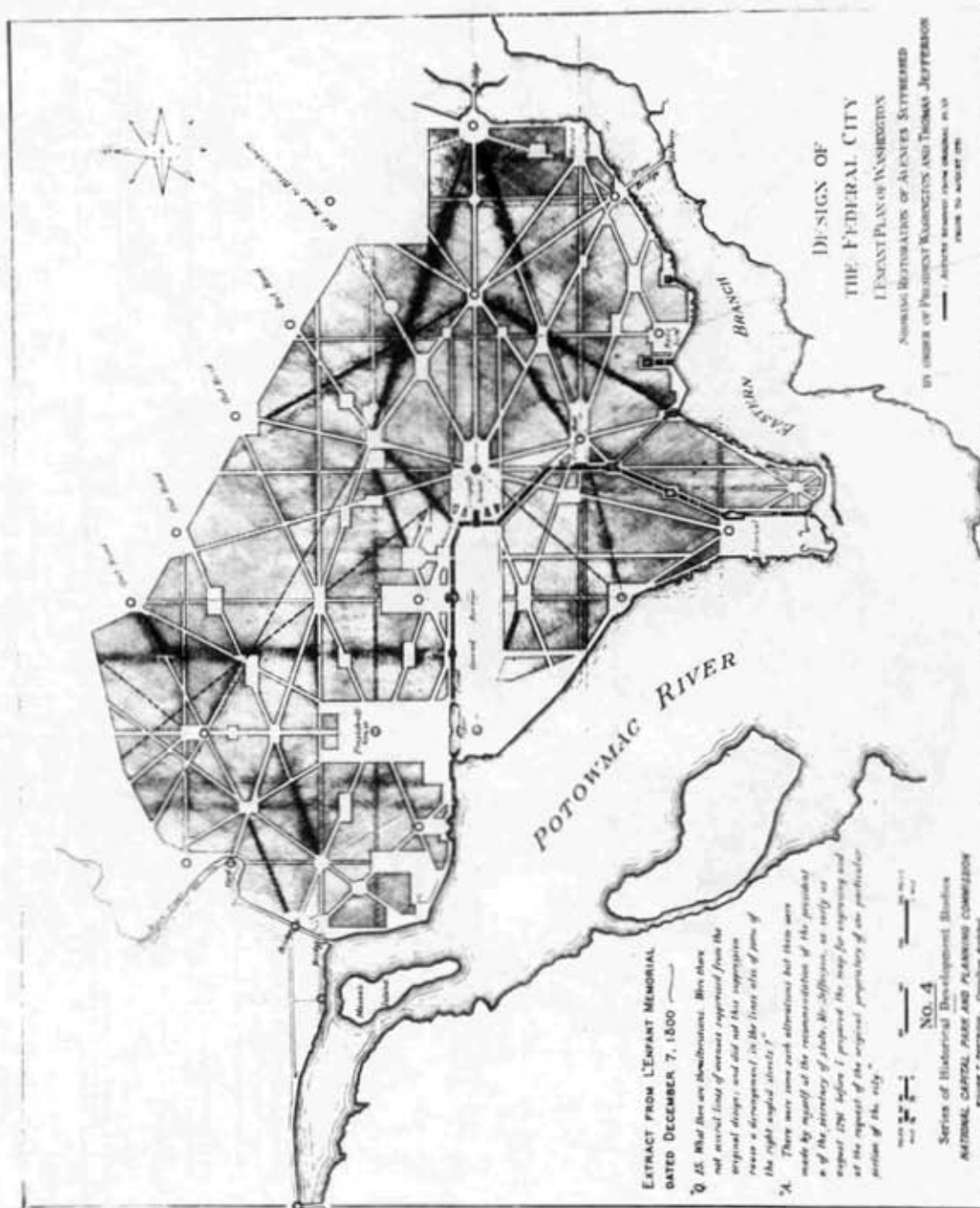


Fig. 7.--L'Enfant plan of Washington showing restoration of avenues after deletion by Washington and Jefferson.

In 1790 George Washington defined the 10 square mile limits of the city in his original plan for the Nation's Capital. While the site for the President's house and grounds was adopted according to the L'Enfant plan of 1791, it was the Ellicott plan of 1792 that was finally adopted by the District Commissioners for the city as a whole. Thus when the capital was established in the city of Washington, the site of Lafayette Park was included in the area known as the President's House and President's Park. This entire area extended from 15th to 17th Streets, Northwest, and from H Street in the north to the Potomac River on the south.⁵ Pennsylvania Avenue was not cut through and Jackson and Madison Places did not exist.⁶ It was under the Jefferson administration that the extent of Lafayette Square was defined and set at its present day limits.⁷ Today the dimensions of Lafayette Park and the immediate surrounding areas are as follows: (1) Lafayette Park, N to S, 420.67'; E to W, 722.7'; (2) width of sidewalks, S. 22', E, 17', N. 18', and W, 17'; (3) width of Madison Place, 40.0'; Jackson Place, 39.4'.⁸

Evolution of term "Lafayette Park".--When Major L'Enfant prepared his plan for the city of Washington, the Lafayette Square area was a neglected common devoid of trees. In 1797 a race course was laid out on the west side of the grounds and extended westward to Twentieth Street. As construction began on the President's House, workingmen's huts occupied the grounds. When these were removed, a market place was established there. This was later removed to Pennsylvania Avenue between 7th and 9th Streets, Northwest, eventually becoming the city's Center Market. During the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the park area was used for a soldier's encampment and a center for military musters. During the Civil War, troops guarding the White House were stationed there.

As noted earlier, little thought was given to the development of the area until its limits were defined by President Jefferson. In 1824, when General Lafayette made his historic visit to the Nation's Capital, the grounds were improved and walks laid out in the square for the first time. The square was known as the "President's Park" until 1834 when the term "Lafayette Square" was used for the first time. This designation lasted for almost 100 years. Since 1933, when control of the National Capital Parks was returned to the Department of the Interior, the term "Lafayette Park" has been preferred and adhered to by the National Park Service.⁹

The A. J. Downing plan.--In 1851, when plans were being made for the erection of a statue to Andrew Jackson in the center of Lafayette Square, the Commissioner of Public Buildings invited one of the most eminent landscape architects of the day, Andrew Jackson Downing, of Newburgh, New York, to come to Washington and to prepare plans for the landscaping of Lafayette Square and other park areas of the Nation's Capital, in addition to plans for the Mall and the Botanic Gardens. Downing's

⁵See Figures 6 and 7.

⁶Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, to E. John Long (Washington, June 1, 1949), in file NCR, 1460/Lafayette Park, #2.

⁷Caemmerer, *op. cit.*, p. 153. Jefferson, in his notes made on October 8, 1792, in which he refers to the limits of the President's Square where "a sale of lots" had taken place, states: "...bounded on the W. by 17th street, N. by H. street, E. by 15th, S. by Dav. Burnes's line (except the two squares 167. & 221. already established and laid off)...." Cited by Saul K. Padover (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson and the National Capital* (Washington, 1946), p. 304.

⁸Raymond L. Freeman, Assistant Regional Director, Resource Planning, NCR, to Dr. Laszle E. Acsay (Washington, October 14, 1963), in file NCR, Lafayette Park, D24, 1/1/63---. See Figure 10.

⁹Root, *op. cit.* In this paper, the terms "Lafayette Square" and "Lafayette Park" are used interchangeably in discussing the history of the area to 1933.

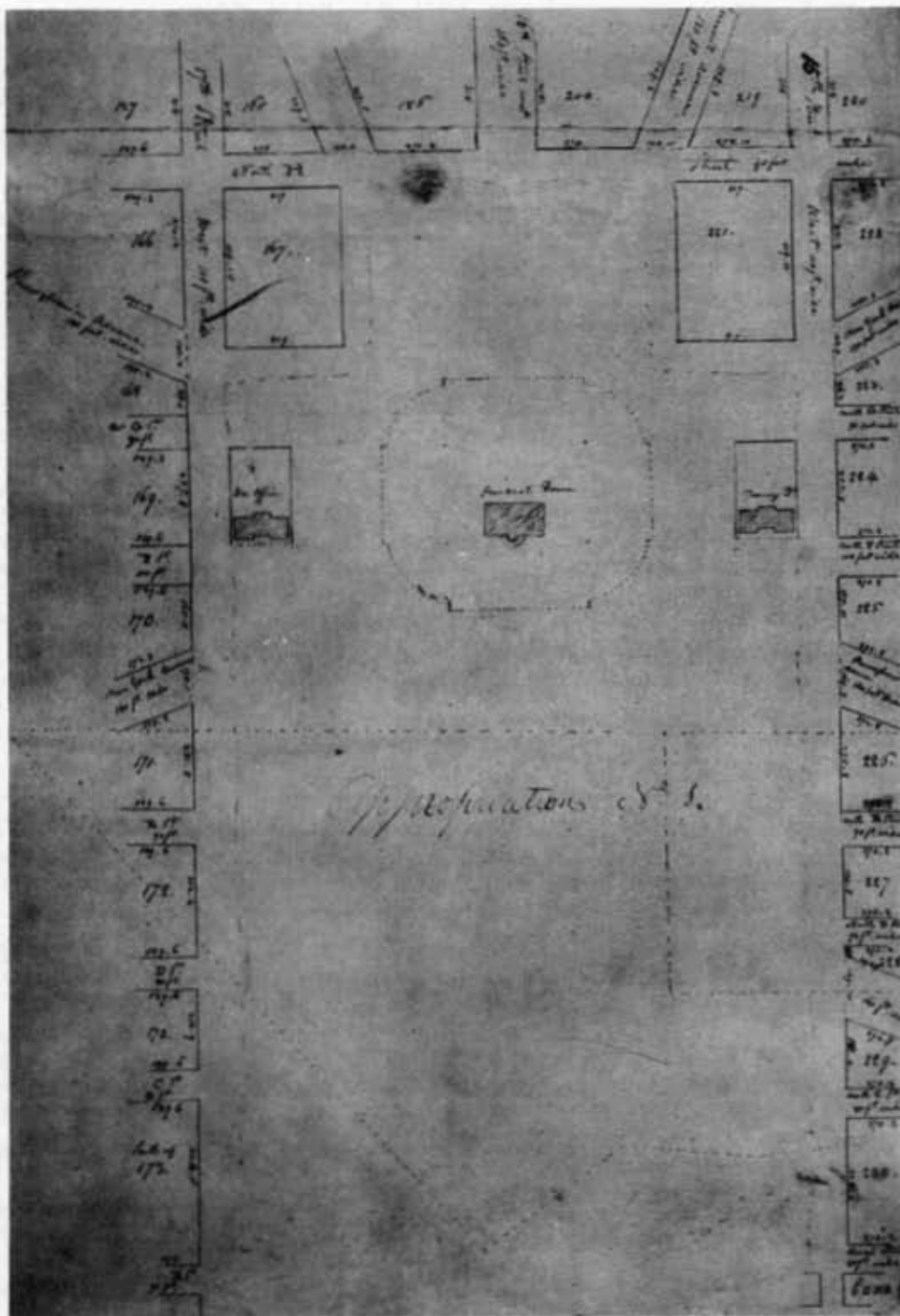


Fig. 8.—Undated manuscript sheet, c. 1800, showing surveyor's notes for laying out streets and blocks around the President's House and Park.

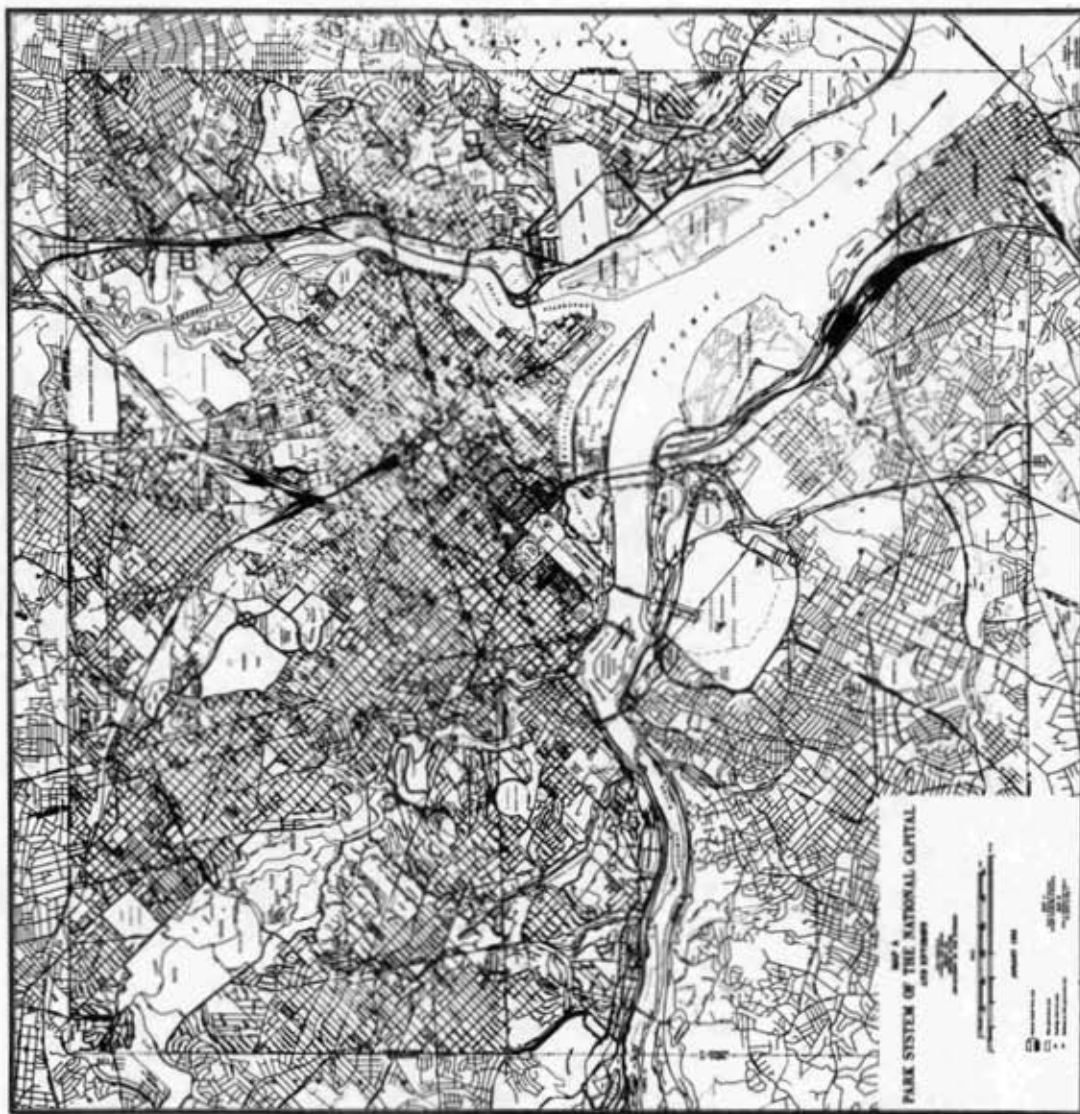
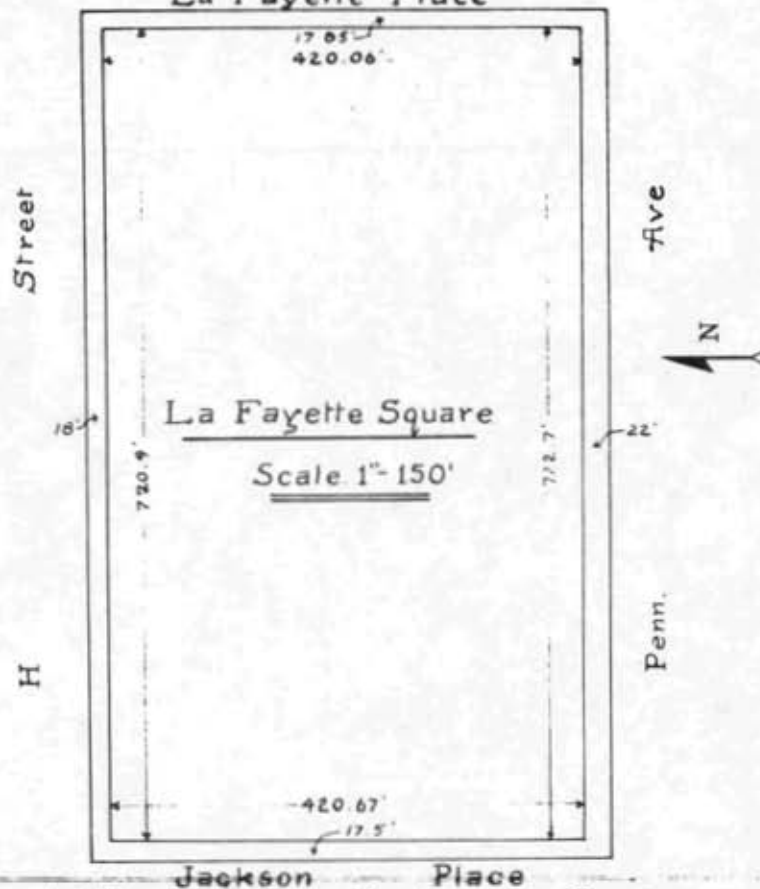


Fig. 9.--Park system of the National Capital under jurisdiction of the National Capital Region.

RES NO. 10 N.W.

SHEET NO. (SHEETS)

La Fayette Place



Legend: Walks, Asphalt Gravel Cement
 Statues Display Fountain Lodge Lamp X
 Drinking Fountain Flower Bed

STREET	PARKING	SIDEWALK	ROADWAY
H		18'	49.4'
La Fayette		17.85'	40'
Penn. Ave.		22'	84.4'
Jackson		17.5'	39.3'

AREA 303450⁰'

WATER SUPPLY

CONDITION *Highly Improved.*

Fig. 10.—Sketch showing dimensions of Lafayette Park and sidewalks.

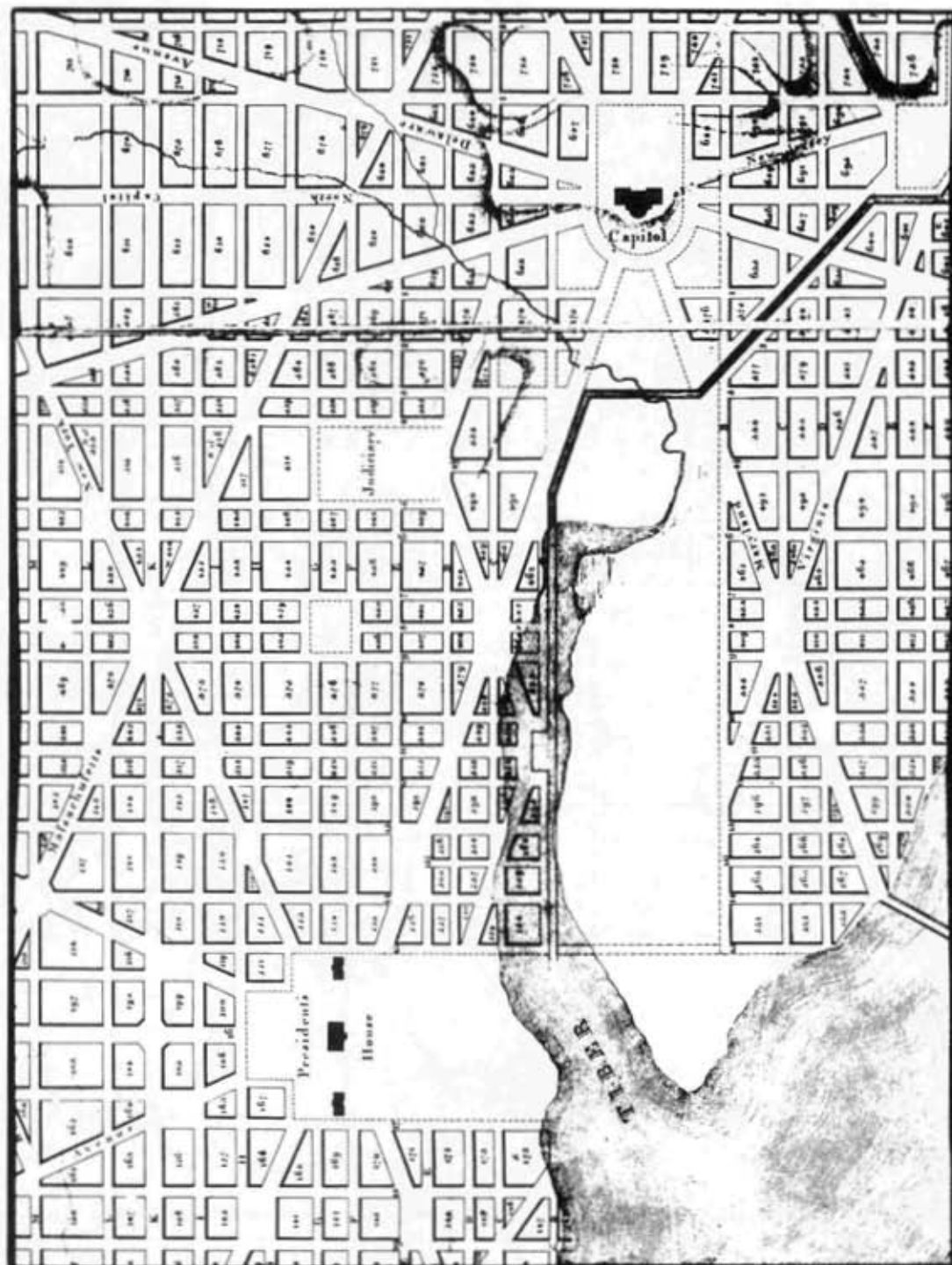


Fig. 11.--Map of Washington, published in 1818, showing survey by R. King, surveyor of the City of Washington.

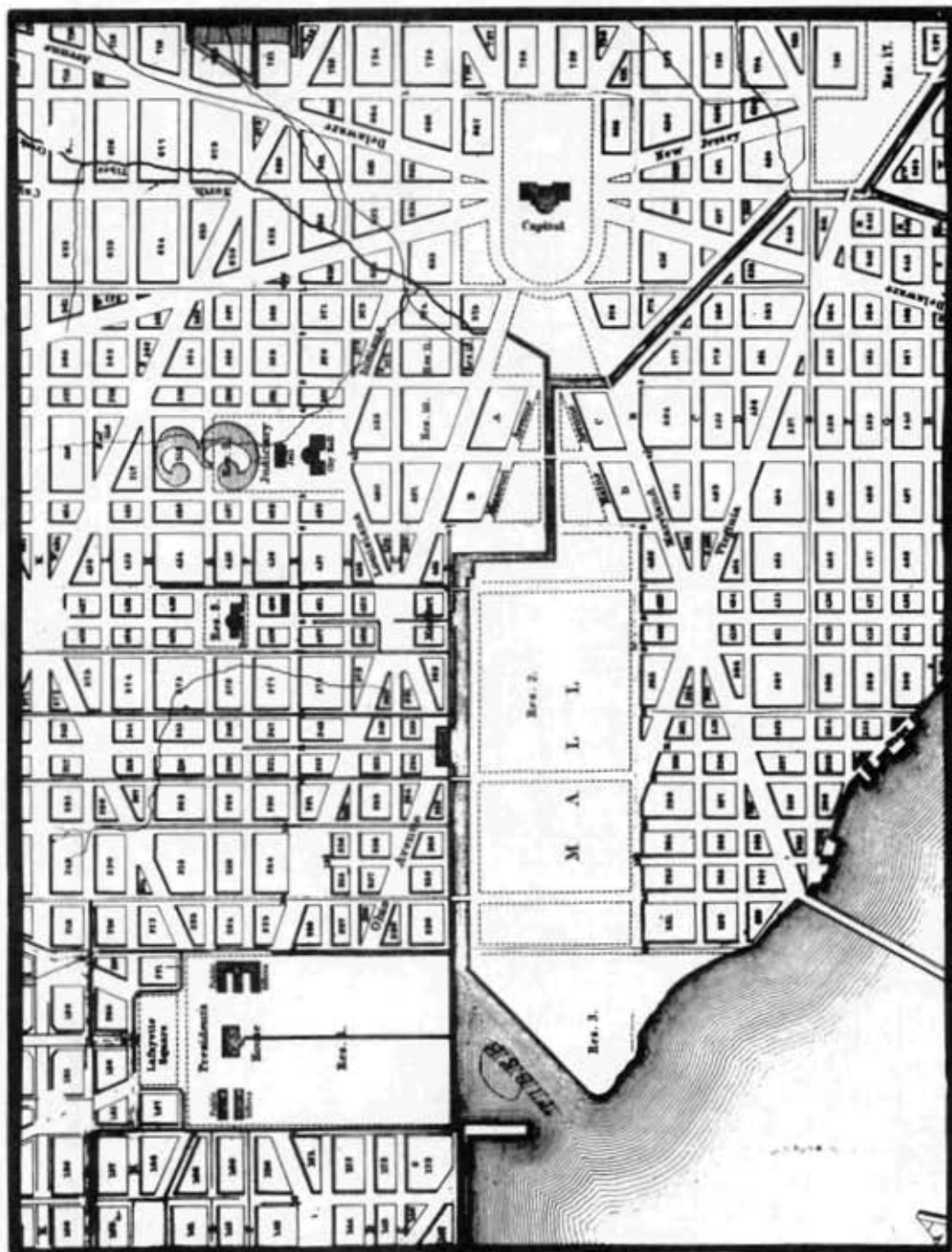


Fig. 12.--Map published c. 1837 showing Pennsylvania Avenue cut through and separating the President's House and Grounds from Lafayette Square.

beautiful Gothic revival cottage and lovely landscaped grounds had become famous as a resort for fashionable families. He had also written several treatises on landscape gardening which had become valued works in their field.

In accepting this appointment, Downing wrote to the Commissioner of Public Buildings:

Dear Sir--I have the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of your favor of the 27th of March, informing me of the adoption of my plan for improving the public grounds and also my appointment by the President to superintend its execution.

I beg you to express my thanks to the President for the Honor of the appointment which I accept. I will report myself at Washington as early as possible--probably by the middle of next week: and am

Dear Sir

With Respect

Yours Sincerely

A. J. Downing

On April 3, 1851, President Millard Fillmore, endorsed Downing's appointment stating that his rate of compensation would be \$1500. per annum.¹⁰

Downing, undoubtedly, arrived in Washington as he anticipated shortly after his appointment, although little documentary material appears to exist on his work in the Nation's capital. In addition to preparing plans subsequently used in landscaping the south grounds of the White House and the Mall, Downing is generally credited with the landscape plan for Lafayette Park shown in Figure 15.¹¹ This plan shows a central theme consisting of wide gravel paths leading to the statue of General Andrew Jackson as smaller meandering walks go past beds of roses and other flowers. In general, the Downing plan was adhered to until the existing landscaping scheme was carried out as a major project by the Works Progress Administration during 1936-37. The details of these changes are fully documented by plans from the files of the National Capital Region, and by photographs taken of the work while in progress.¹²

In his landscaping plan for Lafayette Park, Downing was assisted by W. D. Brackenridge, botanist of the Wilkes Arctic Expedition of 1838 and by John Saul, the celebrated horticulturist of Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, before he could complete his landscaping plans for the city, Downing met a tragic death aboard an excursion boat, the Steamer *HENRY CLAY*, on the Hudson River July 28, 1852.¹³ Nevertheless, even though little work was actually done to carry out the Downing plan for Lafayette Square because of the outbreak of the Civil War, Congress gave new impetus to long-range plans for the beautification of the city by appropriating funds which permitted much of the basic work on the square to begin in 1872.

¹⁰John Claggett Proctor, "The Tragic Death of Andrew Jackson Downing and the Monument to His Memory," in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, XXVII (Washington, 1925), 252.

¹¹See p. 16.

¹²See Figures 31-35.

¹³Proctor, *op. cit.*



Fig. 13.--Andrew Jackson Downing, landscape architect, who designed the basic landscape plan for Lafayette Park.

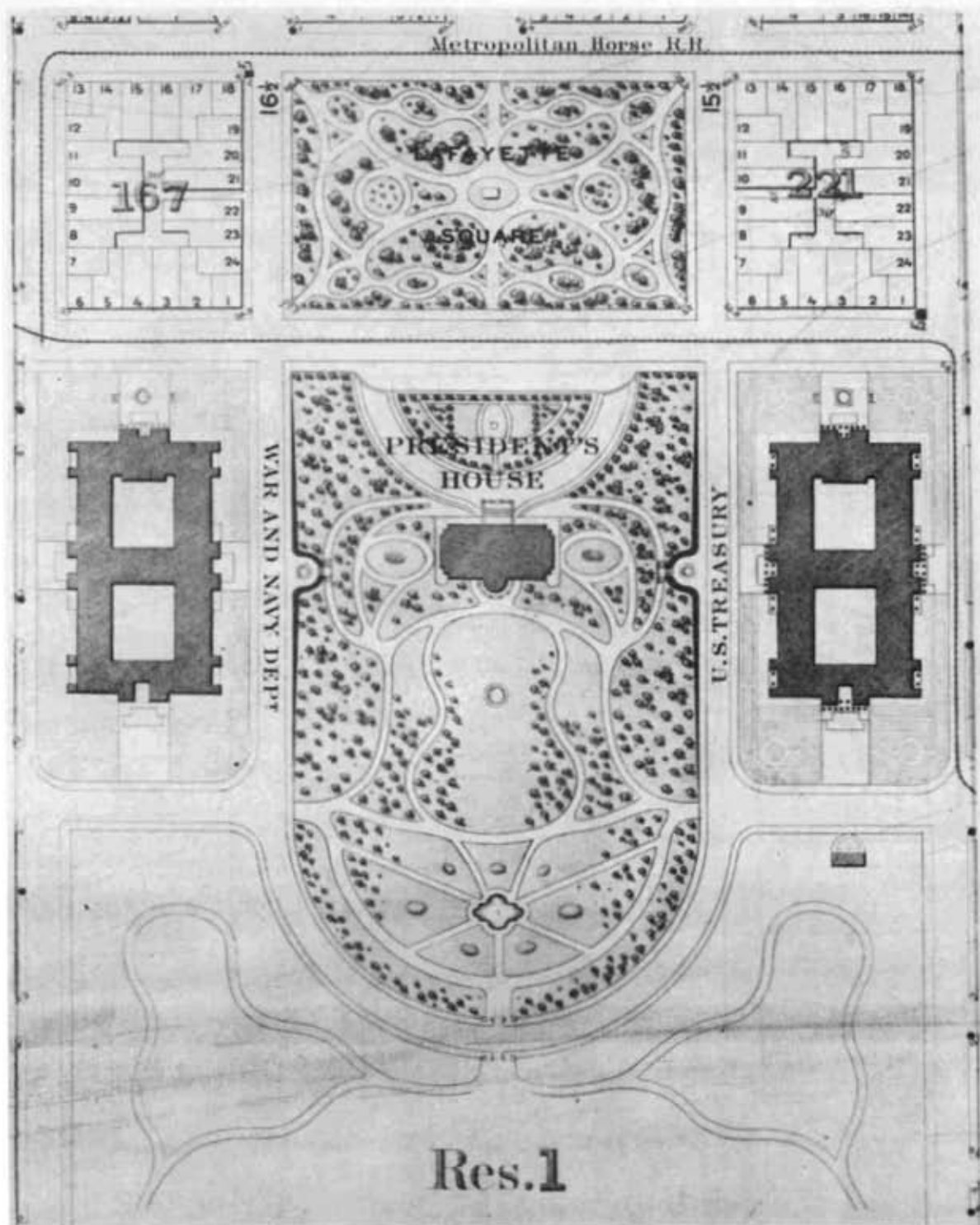


Fig. 14.—Earliest sketch, c. 1857, showing Downing plan for landscaping Lafayette Square.

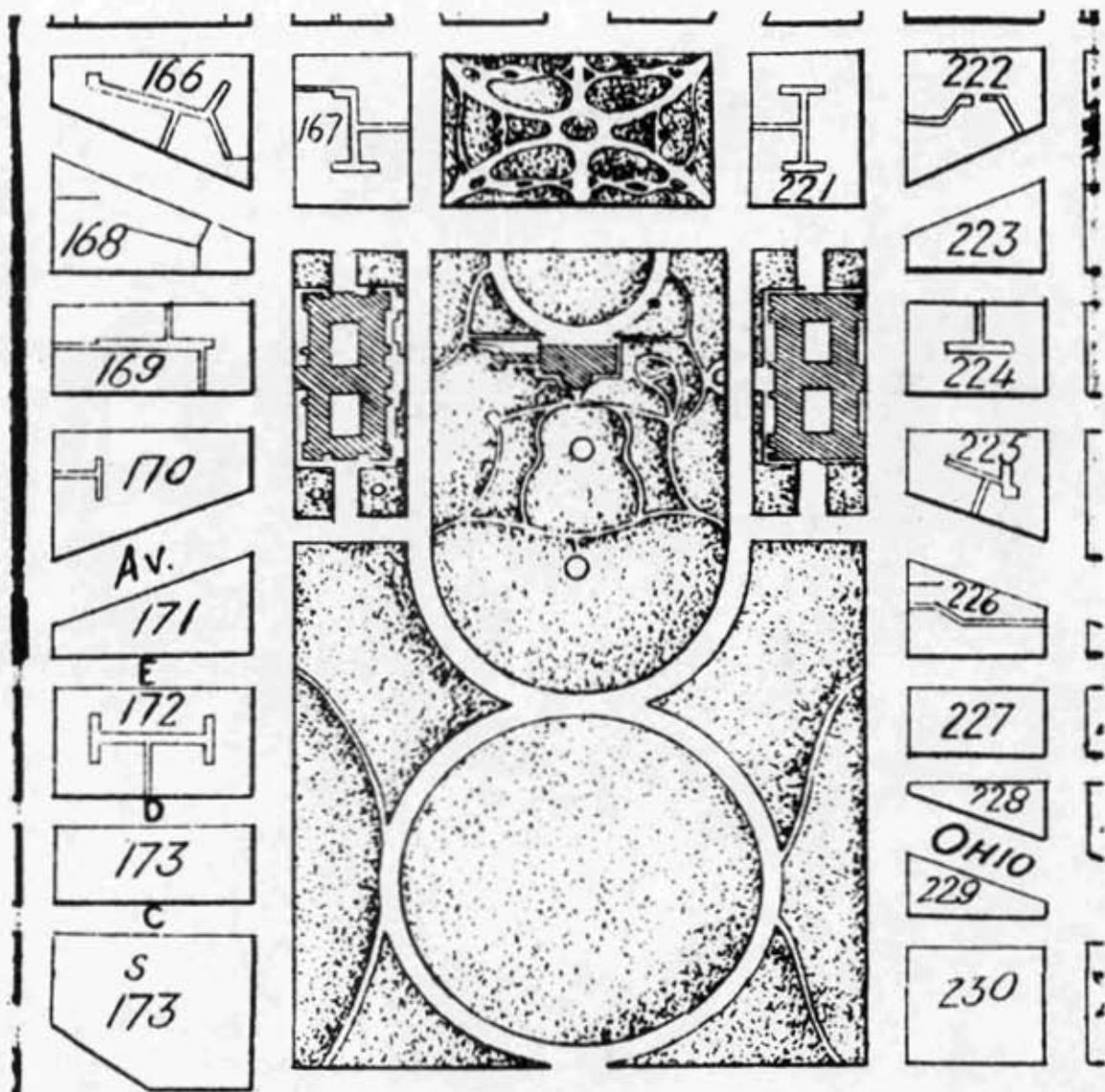


Fig. 15.--Sketch published 1872-1873 showing Downing plan of Lafayette Square.

LANDSCAPING OF LAFAYETTE PARK, 1872-1933

Introduction.--The first major landscaping to be carried out was that commencing in 1872 under the administration of the Officer-in-Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds, Corps of Engineers. The major features of this work is noted in this section to provide basic reference material.

During the intervening years, from 1872-1933, routine maintenance work was carried out with the exception of the following major change in the overall design of Lafayette Park when statues were installed at the four corners of the square. Initially, the base for the statue of General Lafayette was installed in the center of the park on the south side of the square. When it was realized that the nine-foot pedestal cut off the direct view from the White House through the center of the park and the vista up Sixteenth Street, the Secretary of War, in 1890, ordered the erection of the Lafayette statue in its present location and the removal of the obstructing pedestal.¹ This change permitted the carrying out of the present design. In 1891 the statue of General Lafayette was completed; in 1902, one to General de Rochambeau on the southwest corner; and in 1910, the statue to General Thaddeus Kosciuszko and to General von Steuben were erected, the former on the northeast corner and the latter on the northwest corner of the square.

In 1914 a new park lodge was erected, replacing an earlier one. In 1921 the Commission of Fine Arts approved a five-year plan for the removal and transplanting of older trees and the planting of new trees in Lafayette Park.² This preliminary sketch plan, as it was known, was approved by the Engineer Officer-in-Charge on January 27, 1925, barely a month before the transfer of Lafayette Park to the administration of the newly-appointed Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital on February 26, 1925.³

During this same period from 1872 to 1933, inventories were also made of the improvements in the park. In 1886, as shown in Table I, the public gardener, George H. Brown, compiled a list of trees and shrubs;⁴ and in 1929, a complete inventory was made of all features of the square, including contemplated changes in the landscaping of the area, as shown in Figure 14. These latter changes are discussed and documented in the following section.

Value of Lafayette Park.--In passing, it might be of interest to consider the monetary value of Lafayette Park. As the city grew and land values rose accordingly, the monetary value of Lafayette Park increased with the years. The entire area, embracing the square, is approximately seven (7) acres--6.96 to be exact. At the date of the sale of the land by the original owners to the federal government on March 30, 1791, its value was set at £ 25, or \$67.00, per acre,⁵ payment thus being

¹War Department, Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers, 1857-1924 (Washington, 1858-1925). These reports are primary source material for any study of Lafayette Square. Cited hereafter as ARCE.

²See Figure 21.

³See p. 1.

⁴ARCE for 1886, p. 2102.

⁵W. B. Bryan, A History of the National Capital, I (New York, 1914), 124.



Fig. 16.—Bronze urn placed in Lafayette Park in 1872.

about \$469.00 its estimated original cost. As of July 1, 1956, the estimated value of Lafayette Park with its improvements was \$12,381,835.⁶ No further changes have been recorded by the National Capital Region. For purposes of this report, a brief analysis of the basic landscape work completed during the period 1872-1886 by the Engineer Officer-in-Charge is documented herewith.

Animals.--Prior to the establishment of the National Zoological Park in the Nation's Capital, animals of various kinds were donated to the United States by foreign representatives. These were exhibited in various parks of the city where they could be seen by the public. Among those placed in Lafayette Square were a pair of prairie dogs (*Spermophilus ludovicianus*) which had been presented to the office of Public Buildings and Grounds. They were placed in a wire inclosure and did well until removed.⁷

Bronze urns.--In 1872 the two bronze urns which now stand at the eastern and western entrances to Lafayette Park were installed on granite pedestals. They were cast at the brass foundry of the Washington Navy Yard by authority of the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable George M. Robeson. They were about seven (7) feet in height and weigh approximately 1,300 pounds each. They are considered to be extremely good examples of the work of government mechanics and workshops.

In 1879 it was decided that the urns could be made more decorative. Galvanized iron pans, approximately three feet in diameter and two feet in depth, were banded with 2 x 1/2 inch strap iron and fitted to the large antique vases. They were suitably planted with flowering plants and vines.⁸

The two urns remained in their original location until the redesigning of the walks of Lafayette Park was carried out in 1936. They were then removed to their present location, closer to Jackson and Madison Places, when the small crosswalks surrounding the original location of the urns was closed; more effective landscaping was carried out and larger walks were laid down to provide wider thoroughfares through the park for increased visitation.⁹

Curbing.--There was no curbing in Lafayette Park until 1892, when funds were appropriated by Congress for the project. Under contract a curbing of dressed granite was placed around the square. Its total length was 1,899 linear feet of straight curb and 93 feet of circular curb. Sixteen terminal piers were placed at the park entrances with the exception of the southeast corner of the park where two granite-block piers with wing walls were constructed. Ornamental lamp posts and gas lamps were erected on each of these two piers. The work of opening trenches and restoring the ground after the curb was set was performed by workmen from the office of the Chief Engineer.¹⁰

Drainage.--The problem of proper drainage was constant throughout the years, requiring new tile drains and traps to avoid the washing away of the gravel walks during seasonal heavy rains. In 1873, 17 brick traps were constructed and connected with the drains for the purpose of collecting and carrying off surface drainage of the

⁶National Capital Region, Engineering Branch, Land Records, Graphics and Map Files, Reservation List (Washington, 1956), p. 1.

⁷ARCE for 1876, p. 12.

⁸ARCE for 1872, p. 7.

⁹Cf. Figures 28 and 37.

¹⁰ARCE for 1892, p. 3390.

park.¹¹ In 1878, despite the installation of additional tile drains and water catches, gravel still continued to be washed into Pennsylvania Avenue during heavy rain storms.¹² By 1890 tree roots had choked the drains on the south side of Lafayette Square necessitating its replacement. This was done by taking up and replacing the old drains with 337 feet of new 10-inch, 210 feet of 8-inch, and 136 feet of 6-inch terra cotta pipe. Portions of the drain from the watchman's lodge were also taken up and relaid. Three new brick drain traps were constructed and five old ones repaired.¹³

Fencing.--When Lafayette Park was leveled for the first time in 1826, the area was inclosed with a wooden fence.¹⁴ Aside from a small appropriation made by Congress in 1834 for its repair, no changes were made until 1853 prior to the dedication of the statue of Andrew Jackson in the center of the square. By Act of March 3, 1853, Congress appropriated \$5,100 to enclose Lafayette Park with an iron fence, the four entrance gates to be surmounted by eagles. This work was completed in 1854. In 1867, repairs to the gates were made under a Congressional appropriation of \$500 for the project.

During the intervening years, the question of the removal of the iron fence, laying out walks and planting flower beds, so that the area could be opened for public use and enjoyment, became the subject of controversy, both pro and con, by residents in the vicinity of Lafayette Park. By Act of March 3, 1877, Congress had prohibited the removal of such fences. Nevertheless, agitation by the residents of the surrounding area for removal of the iron fence and the opening of the square for public use continued for a decade until action was taken by the Secretary of War. In his budget estimate for fiscal year 1888, Colonel John M. Wilson, Engineer-in-Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds, submitted a request for funds to remove the iron fence "around the larger reservations such as Lafayette Square."¹⁵ Congress finally appropriated the necessary funds and in 1889 the iron fence was removed from Lafayette Park and freer use of the grounds permitted the public. The fence was donated to the Gettysburg Memorial Association and it was installed on Culp's Hill on the Battlefield at Gettysburg.¹⁶

Flower Beds.--Bedding plants of various kinds were the first to be planted in the flower beds and along the borders of the walks. In some cases the edges of the walks were protected by small stakes driven into the ground, projecting a short distance above the grass.¹⁷ By 1879 clumps of English holly in the oval spaces on the lower walks of the square were overgrown. They were removed and planted on the border fronting Pennsylvania Avenue. Exhausted soil was removed and replaced with good surface loam and the ovals were converted into flower beds. Ornamental foliage and flowering plants were also placed in prepared beds and decorative palms were placed in open spaces on the lawns.¹⁸ By 1888, following the removal in the autumn of summer flowering and foliage plants, chrysanthemums were being planted regularly in the principal beds of Lafayette Square. They continued to bloom until killed by frost in November and contributed greatly to the beauty of the park.¹⁹

¹¹ARCE for 1872, p. 6.

¹²ARCE for 1878, p. 1345.

¹³ARCE for 1890, p. 3543.

¹⁴Blair, op. cit., pp. 137-8.

¹⁵ARCE for 1886, p. 2095.

¹⁶ARCE for 1889, p. 2839.

¹⁷ARCE for 1876, p. 12.

¹⁸ARCE for 1879, p. 1881.

¹⁹ARCE for 1888, p. 2774.

Lighting.--Lighting was installed in the square in 1872 when eight lamp posts, two of which were combination lamp posts and drinking fountains, were placed in position with the necessary gas and water connections being made.²⁰ Gas continued to be used for lighting purposes until Congress provided funds for the installation of electric lighting under the Act approved June 11, 1896. Following months of legal negotiations, the Potomac Electric and Power Company installed six electric lamps in the park furnishing the necessary conduits, wires and lamp posts without cost to the government. The two combination lamp posts and drinking fountains were left in use for a number of years. On February 18, 1897, the work was completed. The operational cost of lighting and maintaining each electric light in good order by the government was limited to 28¢ per lamp per night.²¹

The lodge.--In 1872 the first lodge was erected on the north side of the square at Sixteenth Street. It combined a watchman's lodge, toolhouse and rest rooms for the accommodation of nurses and children and gentlemen, thereby supplying an especially long-needed accommodation because of the popularity of Lafayette Square for sunning children. The building was approached by circular walks and screened by thick rows of evergreens in front of which flower beds had been laid out and small shrubs planted.²² From time to time the building was modernized in keeping with advances made in plumbing.

In 1913 Congress appropriated funds for replacing the earlier lodge, allotting \$3,500 for the project. The new lodge was to be erected on the same site. However, when the contractor started work on the lodge, protests were received by the War Department from persons living in the vicinity against erection of the building on the site selected. The War Department ordered work to cease immediately and notice of a public hearing to be held on the matter was published in the Washington newspapers on November 14, 1913. The hearings were to be held in the office of the Assistant Secretary of War on November 18 and all interested parties were invited to attend.

In a letter dated December 4, 1913, the Secretary of War, upon completion of the hearing, communicated his decision to each person from whom a protest had been received. The Secretary explained that after much consideration the War Department was forced to conclude that under the provision of the law making the appropriation, the Department was compelled to proceed with the erection of the building according to prepared plans. Further delay would subject the War Department to claims by the contractor for unwarranted delay of the work and would cause the original appropriation to be exceeded which was contrary to law. Accordingly, on December 12, 1913, the contractor was directed to resume construction of the lodge. Under the terms of the original contract, the contractor was to have completed the new lodge in Lafayette Park by December 11, 1913. Owing to the enforced stoppage of work for almost two months, from mid-October to December 12, for which the contractor was not responsible, he was granted an extension of time for completion of the lodge. The added expense of the delay was paid by the United States through a supplemental contract entered into on February 16, 1914.

The present lodge in Lafayette Park was completed on May 15, 1914. It was a low, inconspicuous building about 12 feet in height and was designed with a decorative

²⁰ARCE for 1872, p. 6.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

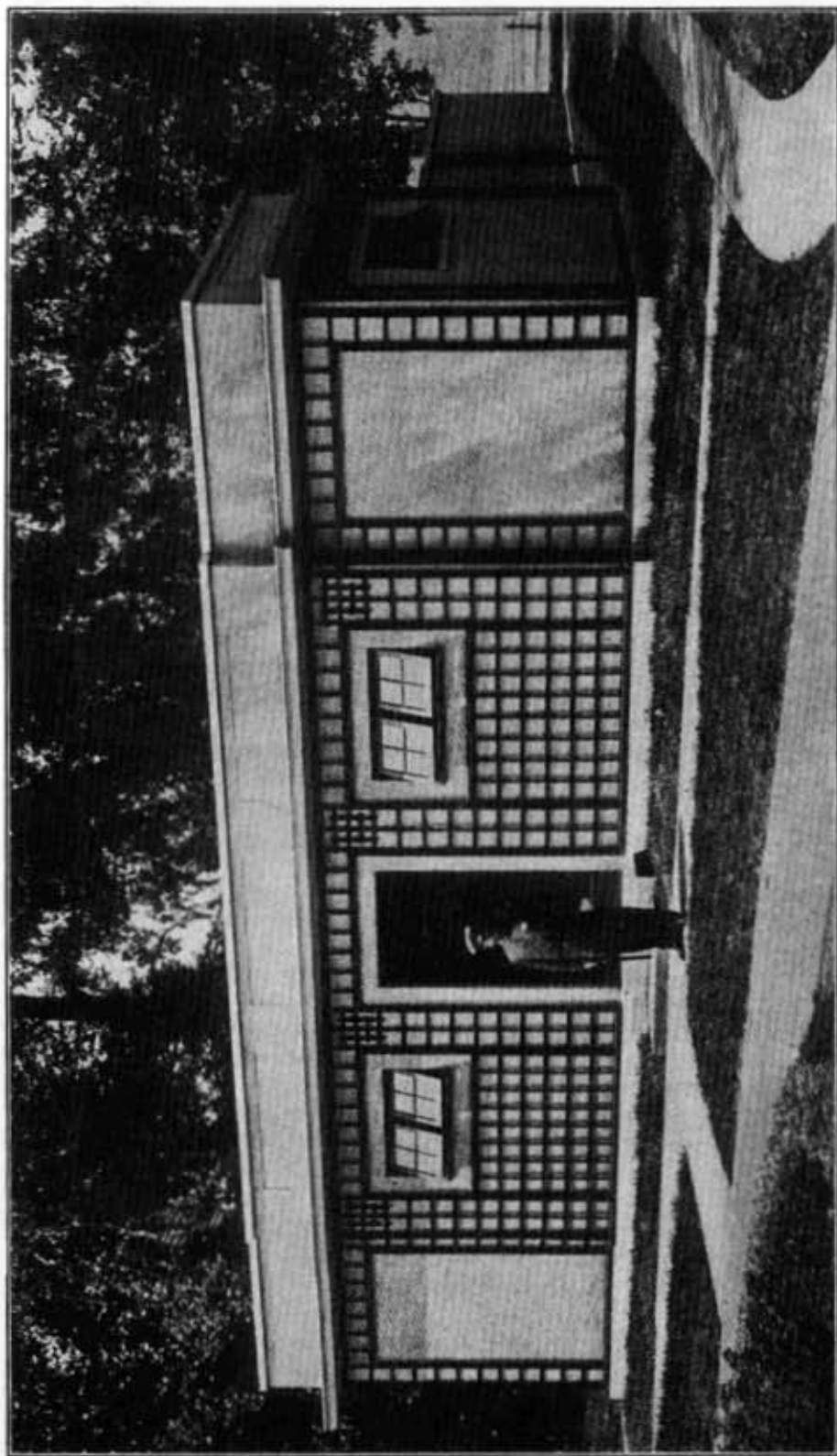


Fig. 17.—Park lodge, erected in Lafayette Park in 1914, to be removed under new development plans of the National Capital Region.

lattice work over which a screen of vines eventually grew. The building contained a storeroom for the use of the park laborers, a locker room for the park watchman, and two rest rooms.²³

Settees.--As Lafayette Park became the scene of increased visitation, settees were placed therein to encourage public use of the park's facilities. The earliest appropriation for the purchase of settees was made by Congress on August 18, 1856, when \$175 was allowed for buying twelve.²⁴ Ten more settees were put in place during FY 1875.²⁵ These were replaced during FY 1876 by 25 settees of uniform pattern and design.²⁶ By the close of FY 1887, there was a total of 172 settees in Lafayette Park.²⁷

Trees.--Originally the trees in Lafayette Square were planted close together with the intention of removing them as they obtained their growth and overshadowed each other. Experience prior to 1872 indicated, however, that they had to be thinned out because of the overcrowding of more valuable specimens. Those removed were planted in the grounds south of the Executive Mansion.²⁸ The severe winter of 1888 materially injured magnolias, English yews and hardy evergreen trees which had withstood the rigors of past winters. The result was that old, decayed and unsightly trees were removed as the occasion demanded.²⁹

Walks.--The first graded walks to be laid in Lafayette Park in 1872 were originally made of very coarse unscreened gravel. They were very unpleasant to walk on, particularly by the nurses and children. Attempts were made by the Corps of Engineers to make the walks hard and smooth by rolling them with a 3,600 pound roller. The attempt was unsuccessful. The walks were thereupon taken up, the gravel thoroughly screened and relaid; coarse gravel was placed on the bottom and a very fine gravel, which possessed a good binding quality, was mixed with the smaller gravel to top the walks. After thorough rerolling, the walks were given a hard, compact surface making a smooth footway.³⁰

Difficulty was experienced in later years, however, as the walks became muddy in the late fall, winter and early spring. Pedestrians then walked on the lawns and destroyed much of the beauty of the park. Walks of old planking were laid down each autumn. These were not only disfiguring to the landscape but proved expensive to purchase, haul and install.³¹ By 1888 some of the gravel walks were replaced by asphalt which also required constant maintenance.³²

When the fencing surrounding the entire park was removed in 1889, new short gravel walks were laid down at the centers of the east and west fronts of Lafayette Park, providing new entrances from Jackson and Madison Places for the convenience of the public. These intersected other walks of the grounds. Repairs were also made to brick gutters which were taken up and relaid as new gutters were constructed

²³ARCE for 1914, Appendix CCC, pp. 3356-57. See Figure 17.

²⁴"Statement of Appropriations and Expenditures from the National Treasury for the District of Columbia from July 16, 1790 to June 30, 1876," file NCR, Lafayette Park.

²⁵ARCE for 1875, p. 11.

²⁶ARCE for 1887, p. 257.

²⁷ARCE for 1876, p. 15.

²⁸ARCE for 1872, p. 7.

²⁹ARCE for 1879, p. 1881.

³⁰ARCE for 1872, p. 6.

³¹ARCE for 1886, p. 2095.

³²ARCE for 1888, p. 2775.



Fig. 18.--A particularly fine specimen of the Soulangiana Magnolia as it appeared in 1891. Age, disease, and the rigors of winter require constant replacement of trees and shrubs.

TABLE 1.--LIST OF TREES AND SHRUBS IN LAFAYETTE PARK IN 1886,¹
Compiled by the Public Gardener, Mr. George H. Brown

Common Name	Scientific Name	Number	Varieties	Common Name	Scientific Name	Number	Varieties
DECIDUOUS TREES				Deutzia-----	Deutzia-----	2	1
Ash-----	Fraxinus-----	7	2	Golden Bell----	Forsythia----	2	1
Birch-----	Betula-----	1	1	Japan Quince----	Cydonia-----	3	1
Beech-----	Fagus-----	4	3	Mock Orange----	Philadelphus--	2	1
Chestnut-----	Castanea-----	1	1	Privet-----	Ligustrum-----	1	1
Cypress-----	Taxodium-----	3	1	Spirea-----	Spirea-----	10	3
Dogwood-----	Cornus-----	2	1	Trumpet Flower--	Bignonia-----	2	1
Elm-----	Ulmus-----	21	3	Weigela-----	Weigela-----	4	2
Empress Tree----	Paulownia----	1	1	Wistaria-----	Wistaria-----	2	1
Fringe Tree----	Chionanthus----	6	2				
Gordonia-----	Franklinia----	1	1	Totals-----		43	21
Horse Chestnut--	Aesculus-----	5	1	EVERGREEN TREES			
Hornbeam-----	Carpinus-----	1	1	Araucaria-----	Araucaria----	1	1
Indian Bean-----	Catalpa-----	2	1	Arbor Vitae----	Thuja-----	16	3
Judas Tree-----	Cercis-----	2	1	Cedar-----	Cedrus-----	4	3
Koelreuteria----	Koelreuteria--	2	1	Holly-----	Ilex-----	22	2
Larch-----	Larix-----	3	1	Juniper-----	Juniperus-----	10	2
Linden-----	Tilia-----	3	1	Japan Cypress--	Retinospora----	2	1
Maple-----	Acer-----	67	4	Magnolia-----	Magnolia-----	15	2
Mimosa-----	Acacia-----	1	1	Pine-----	Pinus-----	8	2
Magnolia-----	Magnolia-----	8	3	Spruce Fir-----	Abies-----	21	3
Oak-----	Quercus-----	6	4	Silver Fir-----	Picea-----	4	2
Poplar-----	Populus-----	3	1	Yew-----	Taxus-----	14	3
Sumach-----	Rhus-----	2	1				
	Totals-----	152	37	Totals-----		117	24
DECIDUOUS SHRUBS				EVERGREEN SHRUBS			
Althea-----	Hibiscus-----	4	2	Ash Berry-----	Mahonia-----	2	1
Arrow-wood-----	Viburnum-----	3	3	Box-----	Buxus-----	32	2
Azalea-----	Azalea-----	2	1				
Burning Bush----	Enonymos-----	2	2	Totals-----		34	3
Bush Honeysuckle	Lonicera-----	4	1				

¹ Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1886, Appendix TT (Washington, 1886), p. 2102.
*Dwarf flowering variety.

on the margins of walks not heretofore provided with them. A new brick pavement was also laid at the 16th and H Street entrance in 1890 as new brick aprons were constructed on each side of the asphalt walk.³³

Water Supply.--Water pipes were led into Lafayette Square in 1872 to provide an adequate water supply for the landscaping of the area. These were attached to four street washers.³⁴ During severe droughts additional pipe was required to be laid to assure proper care of the lawns.³⁵ By 1880 Lafayette Park was receiving an estimated 3,600 gallons of Potomac River water daily from the 12-inch main which had been installed on Pennsylvania Avenue. Three-inch pipe was attached to the 12-inch main supply with branches in the park being supplied through 2-inch pipe.³⁶

³³ARCE for 1890, p. 3542.

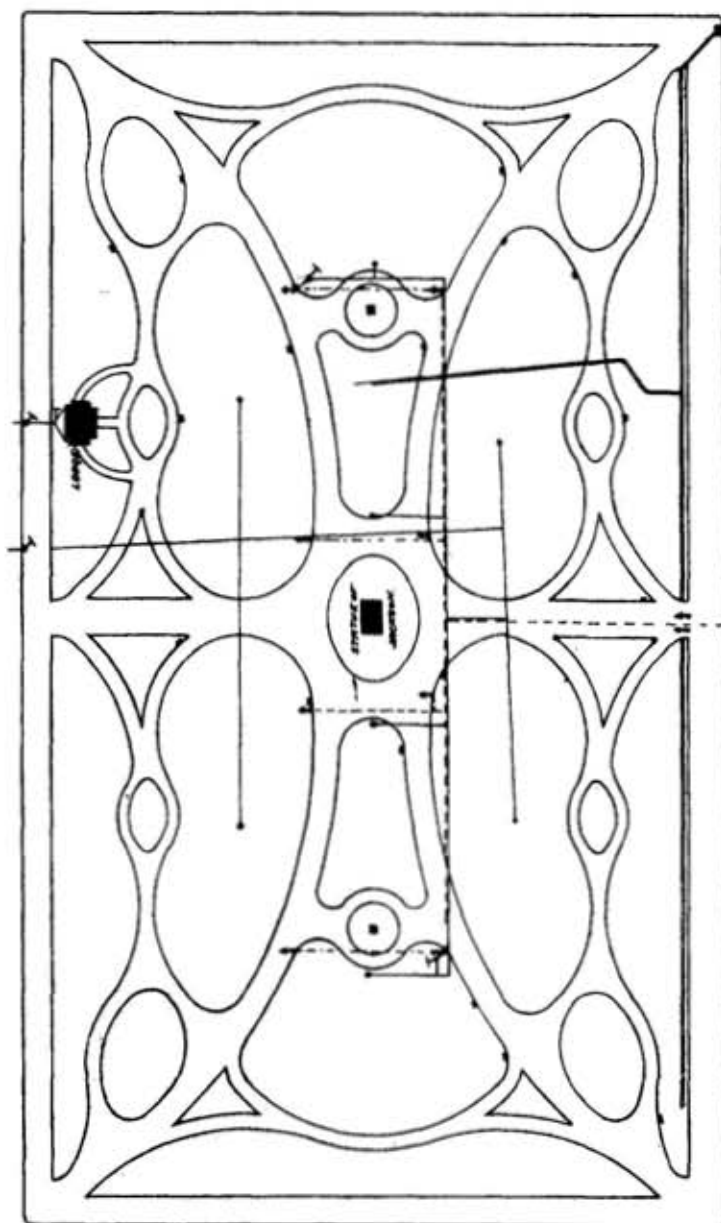
³⁴ARCE for 1872, p. 6.

³⁵ARCE for 1879, p. 1881.

³⁶ARCE for 1880, p. 2355.

LAFAYETTE SQUARE.

H ST N.W.



EXPLANATION

- GAS PIPES
- - - LAMPS
- SOIL DRAIN
- - - - - STOP COCK
- - - - - WATER PIPES & SEWERS
- - - - - SEWER TRUNK

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 FEET
SCALE

PENN. AVE.

*To accompany Annual Report of Officer
in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds
for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1886.*

Fig. 19.--Final design of Lafayette Square after landscaping by Corps of Engineers, 1872-1886.

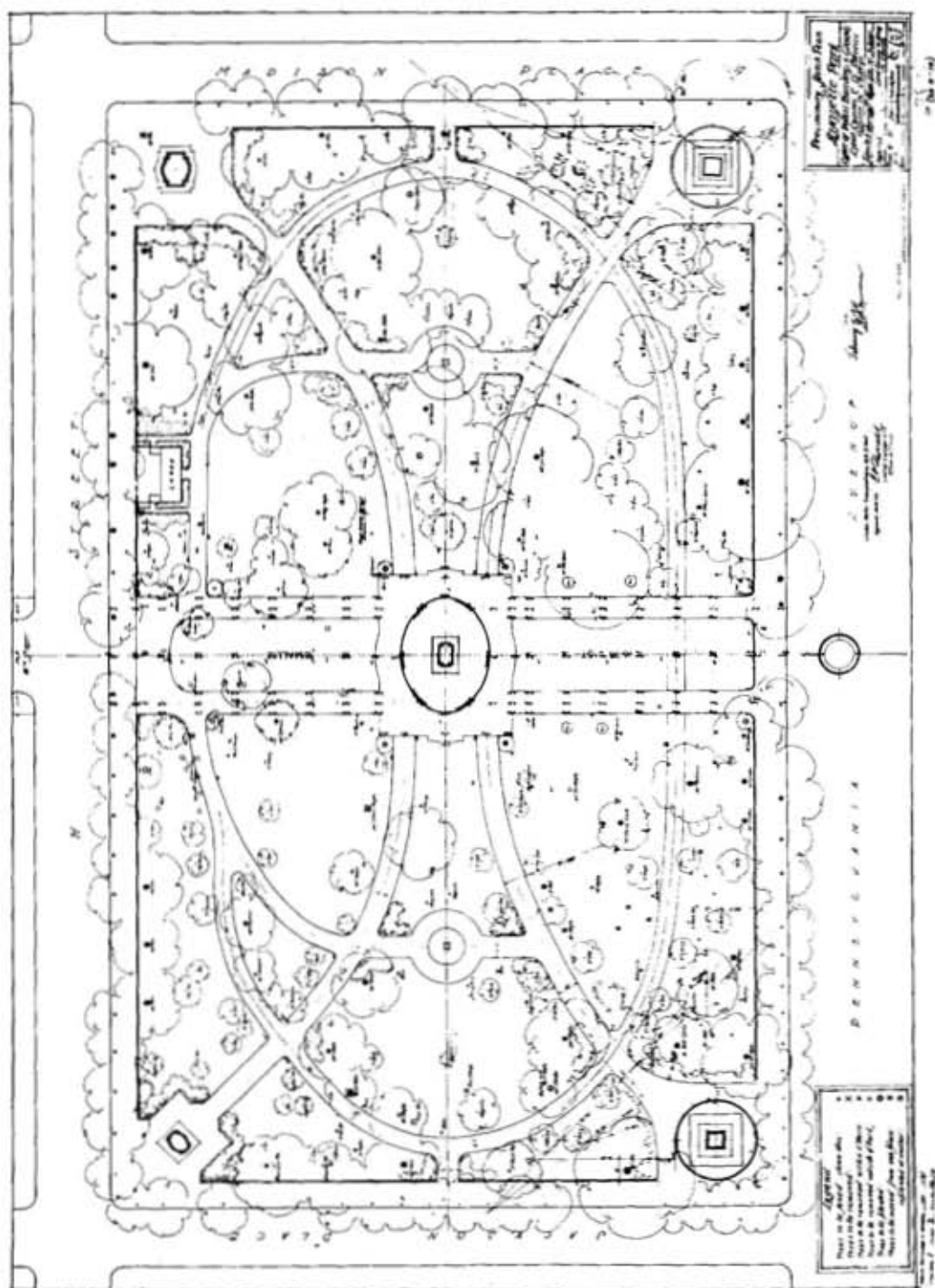


Fig. 21.—Preliminary sketch plan of Lafayette Park approved by Fine Arts Commission, 1921.

MEMORIAL STATUES OF LAFAYETTE PARK

Introduction.--Beginning in 1853 memorial statues were erected in Lafayette Park honoring General Andrew Jackson, hero of the Battle of New Orleans, and to four foreign heroes of the American Revolution: General Lafayette, who carried the torch of the American fight for freedom and independence to France; the Comte de Rochambeau, who led the French Expeditionary Force; General Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the Polish engineer who designed some of the American fortifications of the war, including those of West Point; and Baron von Steuben, the Prussian disciplinarian, who established drill regulations and trained the American army.¹

Memorial services, accompanied by wreath laying, are held annually by the diplomatic representatives of France, Poland and Germany and by many American patriotic groups. Of particular note was the laying of a wreath at the foot of the memorial to General Lafayette and his compatriots by General Charles de Gaulle on April 23, 1960, during the visit of the French President to the United States.

General Andrew Jackson.--The bronze memorial equestrian statue to General Andrew Jackson, hero of the Battle of New Orleans, stands on a fenced-in circular plot of ground in the center of Lafayette Park. It is the work of the American sculptor, Clark Mills, of North Carolina and was cast from cannon captured by Jackson at Pensacola, Florida. It is the first equestrian statue to be cast in Washington and the second in the United States. The memorial faces west.

The statue portrays General Jackson on a rearing charger, the heads of both being turned slightly towards the White House, as Jackson acknowledges a salute with his cocked hat. The sculptor achieved perfect balance in the figures with the center of gravity resting on the horse's hind feet. To prevent damage from high winds or other causes, the feet are securely anchored to the marble pedestal. The word "Jackson" is inscribed at the top of the pedestal beneath which is his memorable quotation:

THE FEDERAL UNION IT MUST BE PRESERVED.

At the four corners of the memorial are bronze cannons captured by Jackson at New Orleans in 1812. The muzzles were sealed in World War I.

The cost of the memorial was \$40,500. Congress appropriated a total of \$28,500. and the balance of \$12,000. was contributed by the Jackson Democratic Association of Washington, D.C. Work on the memorial was begun in 1848 and it was dedicated on January 8, 1853, the 38th anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans. Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois delivered the oration.

Andrew Jackson was born on March 15, 1767, at Waxham, South Carolina. During the War of 1812, he was commissioned a Major General in the American

¹Documentary material on Lafayette Park and its memorials will be found at the National Archives in Record Groups 42 and 66.



Fig. 22.--Rare photo of memorial to General Andrew Jackson showing the iron gates which formerly enclosed Lafayette Park.

Army. By his victory at New Orleans, Jackson emerged as the major hero of the war and a national figure of the first magnitude. He was elected seventh President of the United States and served two terms (1829-1837). Jackson was the first presidential candidate of the newly-formed Democratic Party. He retired from public life to his home, the "Hermitage," near Nashville, Tennessee, where he died on June 8, 1845. General Andrew Jackson remains throughout the years as one of the most glamorous heroes of American history.

General Lafayette.--The heroic bronze statue to General Lafayette stands at the southeast corner of Lafayette Park. It is the work of the noted French sculptors, Alexandre Falguiere and Antoine Mercie, and was designed by the French architect Paul Pujol. The bronze figures of the memorial were cast at the foundry of Maurice Denonvillius in Paris in 1890. The statue of Lafayette faces south.

The statue and marble pedestal are 45 feet in height. The figure of Lafayette with outstretched right arm is depicted pleading before the French National Assembly for France to aid the American cause for freedom and independence. Seated at the base of the south side of the memorial is the figure of a woman, symbolizing America, holding aloft a sword. Above this is the inscription "To General Lafayette and his compatriots, 1777-1783." An anchor and two bronze figures of Lafayette's naval aides, the Comte d'Estaing and Comte de Grasse, are on the east side of the pedestal. A mortar and two bronze figures of his military aides, the Comte de Rochambeau and the Chevalier du Portail, are on the west face of the memorial. On the north face of the pedestal are two cherubs holding the dedicatory inscription:

BY THE CONGRESS IN COMMEMORATION OF THE SERVICES RENDERED
BY GENERAL LAFAYETTE AND HIS COMPATRIOTS DURING THE
STRUGGLE FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF AMERICA

Inscriptions honoring the work of the architect, sculptors and founder are at the base of the memorial. It was completed in 1891.

Lafayette was born on September 6, 1757, at Auvergne, France. Following his military training and service in the French army, news of the American fight for independence inspired him to come to America. He arrived at Philadelphia in 1777 and agreed to serve the American colonies without compensation and as a volunteer. Congress accepted his services and he was appointed a Major General upon Washington's recommendation.

Lafayette served with distinction upon Washington's staff as a liaison officer between the American and French forces. With Rochambeau as commander-in-chief of the French forces and de Grasse commanding the French fleet, Lafayette, upon orders from Washington, held the southern flank of the Franco-American forces and prevented the escape of Cornwallis.² Lafayette returned to France following the victory at Yorktown and became one of the most popular figures of the day.

In August, 1784, Lafayette returned to America and for six months was affectionately welcomed by his old colleagues in arms and the American people. He was made a member of the Society of the Cincinnati. During the American Revolution he had refused to accept the emoluments for his rank. It has been estimated that he spent

²Lt. Col. Joseph B. Mitchell, Decisive Battles of the American Revolution (New York, 1962), pp. 198-206.

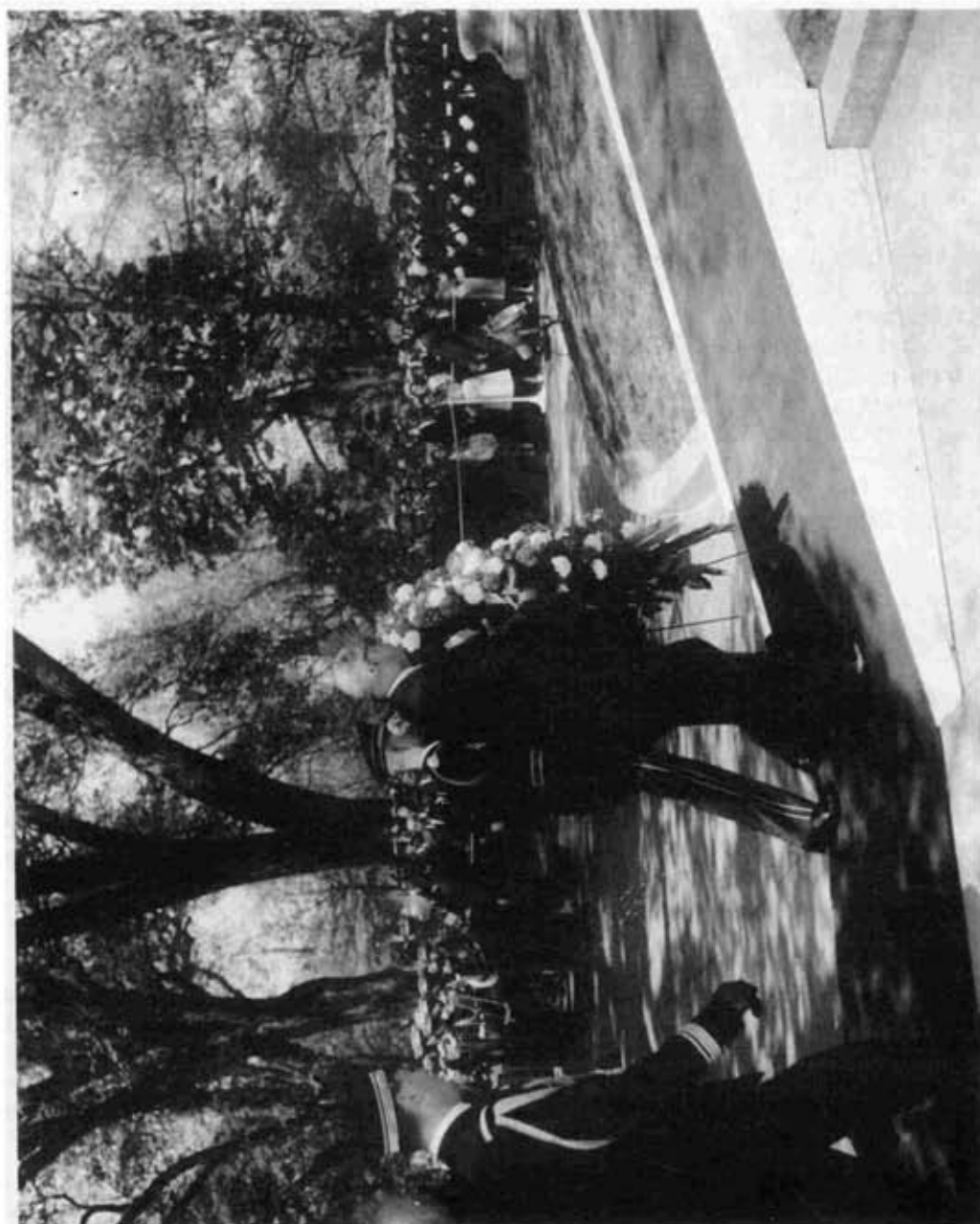


Fig. 23.--General Charles de Gaulle, accompanied by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, carrying the memorial wreath to be laid at the foot of the statue to General Lafayette on behalf of the French nation on April 23, 1960, during the historic visit of the French President to the White House.



Fig. 24.--Statue to General Lafayette and his compatriots in Lafayette Park, showing memorial wreath laid by General de Gaulle on April 23, 1960.



Fig. 25.--Memorial statue to General Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Polish hero of the Revolutionary War.

more than \$200,000. of his private funds to aid the American colonies. In 1794, Congress voted Lafayette \$24,424. for his services, and in 1803, a grant of land of 11,520 acres which, eventually, was located in Louisiana. In 1824, when President James Monroe invited Lafayette to the United States, he made an epochal tour of the United States and evoked "demonstrations of frenzied enthusiasm without precedent or parallel in American history."³ Lafayette died on May 20, 1834, his grave being covered with earth from Bunker Hill.

General Thaddeus Kosciuszko.--The bronze memorial statue to General Thaddeus Kosciuszko stands in the northeast corner of Lafayette Park. It is the work of the Polish-American sculptor, Antoni Popiel. Kosciuszko is depicted in the uniform of a General of the Continental Army and holds in his left hand the plan of fortifications designed by him for Saratoga in 1777. The statue faces north.

On the north side of the pedestal of Vermont granite is inscribed the name "Kosciuszko" and "Saratoga," beneath which is an eagle perched on a globe of the world with a sword and battle flag. The bronze figures of a wounded soldier supported by an older officer in Polish uniform is at the east base. On the west are the bronze figures of a young officer supported by an older officer pointing north. On the south side of the pedestal is another eagle perched atop a globe of the world, holding a snake in its talons. Beneath it is the word "Raclawice," and the quotation, "And Freedom Shrieked as Kosciuszko Fell."

The memorial was erected by the Polish-American Congress as a gift of the Polish-American people to the United States. The statue was unveiled on May 11, 1910, amid appropriate dedicatory ceremonies presided over by Jacob M. Dickinson, Secretary of War.

Kosciuszko, Polish revolutionary and soldier, was born on February 12, 1746, in the Duchy of Lithuania, Polish Commonwealth. He received his military training in engineering and artillery at military schools in Warsaw, Poland, and in Paris. News of the American revolution brought him to America in 1776, where he offered his services to Congress. He successfully fortified the Delaware River and was commissioned a Colonel of Engineers in the Continental Army.

His role in erecting the fortifications at Saratoga, which contributed greatly to the American victory, resulted in his being placed in charge of constructing the fortifications at West Point from 1778-1780. He participated in the Battle at Charleston, South Carolina, and other engagements during the Revolutionary War. In 1783, he was one of the founders of the Society of the Cincinnati at Newburgh, New York. On October 13, 1783, Congress, in appreciation of his services to the American fight for independence, commissioned him a Brigadier-General.

In 1784, he returned to Poland where he led several successful engagements against the Russians who, under Catherine II, were partitioning Poland with the connivance of Prussia and Austria. He was imprisoned in 1794 and in 1796 released by Tsar Paul I.

He returned to America in 1797 and Congress voted him \$15,000. due him for his military services. He was also granted 500 acres of land in Ohio. In 1798 he left America, and returned to France. As Poland's misfortunes mounted, he continued

³Dictionary of American Biography, X (New York, 1933), 539.



Fig. 26.--Memorial statue to the Comte de Rochambeau, leader of the French Expeditionary Force during the Revolutionary War.

his brave but fruitless efforts on behalf of Polish independence until his death in Switzerland in 1817. The funds which arose from the sale of his lands in Ohio were used to found the Colored School at Newark, New Jersey, one of the first educational institutions for negroes in America.

Comte de Rochambeau. --The heroic bronze statue of General Rochambeau stands at the southwest corner of Lafayette Park. It is the work of the French sculptor, F. Hamar, of Paris. Rochambeau is depicted in the uniform of a Major General of the Continental Army. He is pointing with his right hand as if directing a battle the plans for which are draped over his left hand. The statue faces south.

On the east and west faces of the granite pedestal are the coat of arms of France and of the family of Rochambeau. On the south is the bronze figure of a woman, depicting "Liberty," holding two flags in her left hand to indicate the union of America and France, and a drawn sword in her right hand. At her feet is an eagle with outstretched wings and talons. A shield with 13 stars, symbolizing the original 13 colonies of America, and a palm branch is at the base of the pedestal. On the north face is the dedicatory inscription:

"We have been contemporaries and fellow-laborers in the cause of liberty and we have lived together as brothers should do in harmonious friendship."

--Washington to Rochambeau, February 1, 1784.

Congress appropriated \$22,500. for the statue and pedestal and for transporting the families of Lafayette and Rochambeau to Washington for the dedicatory ceremonies which were held on May 24, 1902. President Theodore Roosevelt delivered the dedicatory address.

Rochambeau was born July 1, 1725, at Vendome, France. Following a military career in the French army, Rochambeau, under the influence of General Lafayette, organized a French Expeditionary Force of 6,000 men, including his son, the Vicomte de Rochambeau, which arrived in America in 1780. With Washington and Lafayette, Rochambeau and his troops took an active part in the siege of Yorktown, resulting in the surrender of Cornwallis on October 19, 1781. Rochambeau returned to France and was imprisoned during the Reign of Terror. In 1791, he was made a Marshal of France. He died on May 10, 1807, at Thoré, France. During his lifetime, Rochambeau was an active member of the Society of the Cincinnati.

General von Steuben. --The bronze memorial statue to Baron von Steuben stands at the northwest corner of Lafayette Park. It is the work of the German sculptor, Albert Jaeger, who has depicted von Steuben in the uniform of a Major General of the American Continental army. He is wearing a heavy cloak and cocked hat as he appears to be looking over a battlefield.

On the southwest face of the pedestal is the figure of a woman and a kneeling youth holding bandages and laurels signifying "Commemoration." Tablets in relief on the southeast face depict von Steuben's aides, Colonel William North and Major Benjamin Walker. A bronze figure of Mars and a youth holding a sword is on the northeast side of the memorial to depict "Military Instruction." Beneath a spreading eagle on the northwest face of the pedestal is the dedicatory inscription:

ERECTED BY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES TO FREDERICK
WILLIAM AUGUSTUS HENRY FERDINAND BARON VON STEUBEN IN
GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF HIS SERVICES TO THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY



Fig. 27.--Memorial statue to Baron von Steuben, Prussian disciplinarian and Inspector General of the Continental Army.

The balance of the inscription indicates von Steuben's services to the United States. Congress appropriated \$50,000. for the memorial which was dedicated by President Howard Taft on December 7, 1910.

Baron von Steuben was born in Prussia, November 15, 1730. He served as aide-de-camp to Frederick the Great. Coming to America in 1778, he offered his services to the American Congress, was accepted, commissioned a Major General, and ordered to instruct and drill the raw recruits of the Continental Army. During the darkest days at Valley Forge he drilled and molded the American troops into a well-trained and disciplined force which achieved final victory at Yorktown in which von Steuben took an active role. Upon the cessation of hostilities, he became an American citizen in 1783. In 1786, the State of New York granted him 16,000 acres of land near Remsen, north of Utica. In 1790, instead of granting him a lump sum payment for his services during the Revolutionary War, Congress granted him a yearly pension of \$2,500, in addition to a gold-hilted sword. Von Steuben took an active part in forming the Society of the Cincinnati and became President of the New York Branch. He retired to Steuben township, New York, where he died on November 28, 1794.

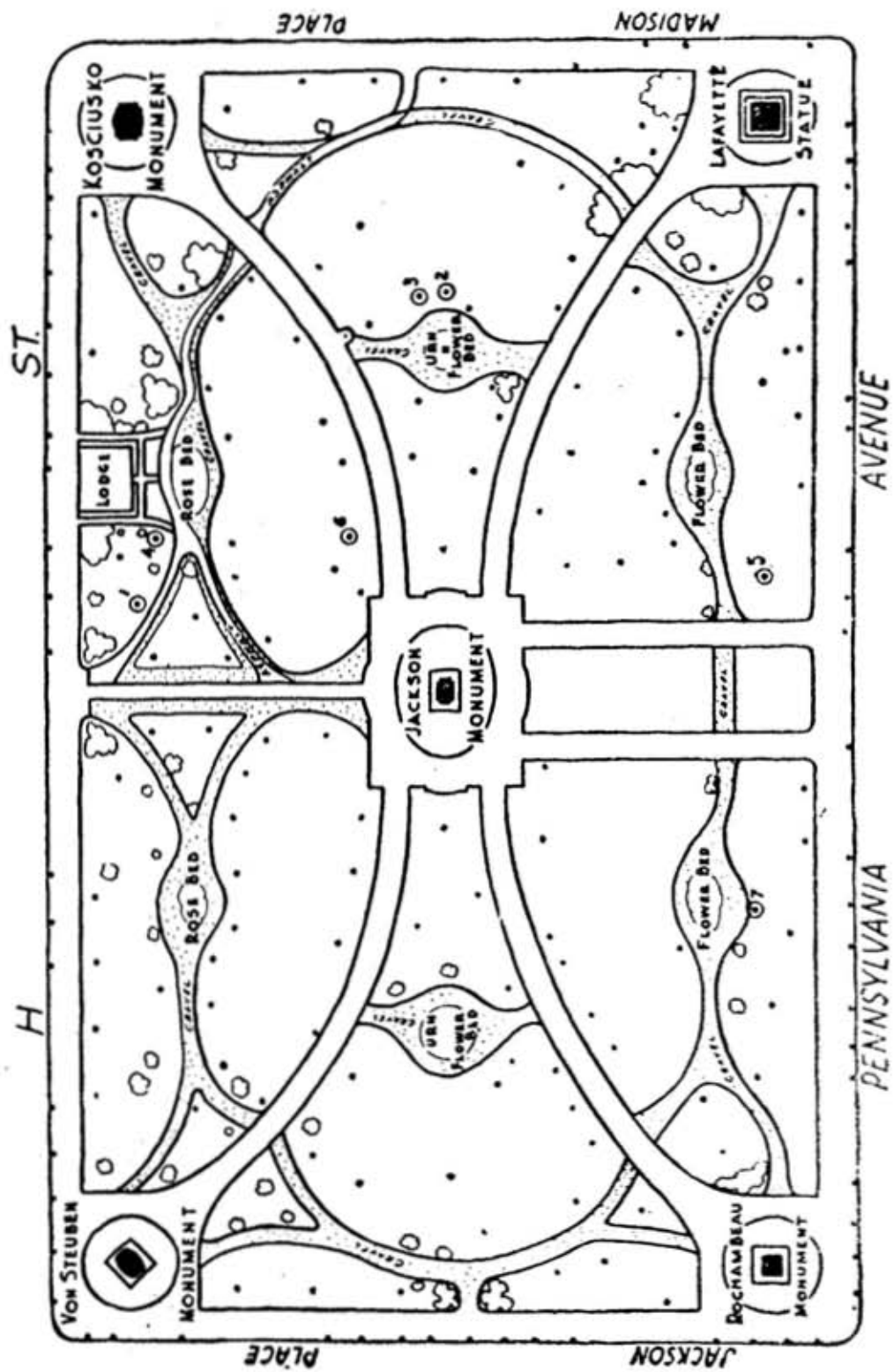


Fig. 28.--Diagram of Lafayette Park prior to reconditioning of 1936-1937.

LANDSCAPING BY NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS, 1936-1937

Major changes of 1936-1937.--The second major change to take place in the landscaping of Lafayette Park was undertaken by National Capital Parks in 1936 and 1937. It will be recalled that when the Roosevelt administration entered office in 1933, it provided funds to relieve unemployment through the inauguration of broad public works programs. The overall program was administered by the Works Progress Administration through projects allotted, in many cases, to private contractors.

The major changes completed in the landscaping of Lafayette Park at this time are documented herein by photographs showing the work accomplished by private contract with Corson and Company, paving contractors of Washington, D.C. This was carried out under Federal Public Works Project No. 641. An analysis of the drawings shown in Figures 28 and 31 indicate the overall changes made in the removal of the bronze urns to their present-day locations, the redesigning and widening of the walks, the relocation of trees and shrubbery, the closing of the small gravel paths and the relocation of flower beds. The overall effect enhanced the beauty of the original Downing plan and made the park more accessible to visitors and Washington residents. The general changes made in the landscaping design at that time remain, in essence, the same today as routine administration and maintenance work continues to be carried out by the Landscape Division, National Capital Region.¹

Of historical interest is the drawing shown in Figure 29 which, according to Caemmerer, was a suggested treatment of Lafayette Park by the Commission of Fine Arts in 1933. Fortunately, the plan was not carried out, the historical surroundings being preserved until architectural and historical prudence could overcome contemporary passions for change. Figures 47-50, included in the present study as appendices, provide the latest reference material from Land Records, Graphics and Map files of the National Capital Region. These include the existing planting plan of August 1958; the tree replacement plan of November 1958; planting details of December 1958; and the topography of Lafayette Park as of March 1964.²

The 1962 Plan.--When the Kennedy administration took office in 1961, renewed interest was given to the preservation of the historical and architectural aspects of Lafayette Park and Square. After much investigation and planning, the so-called Warnecke plan of the National Capital Region was approved by President Kennedy in 1962. As shown in Figure 38, the final development plan of Lafayette Square will retain the basic aspects of the Downing plan as modified by the landscaping changes of 1936-1937.³ The publication by the U.S. Government Printing Office in May 1964 of the study entitled Pennsylvania Avenue confirms the fact that the Downing plan will be adhered to, in general, in current overall plans for the development of Lafayette Square.⁴

¹ See p. 5.

² See pp. 60-63.

³ Washington Post, December 1, 1963.

⁴ Final Report of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue (Washington, 1964), *passim*.

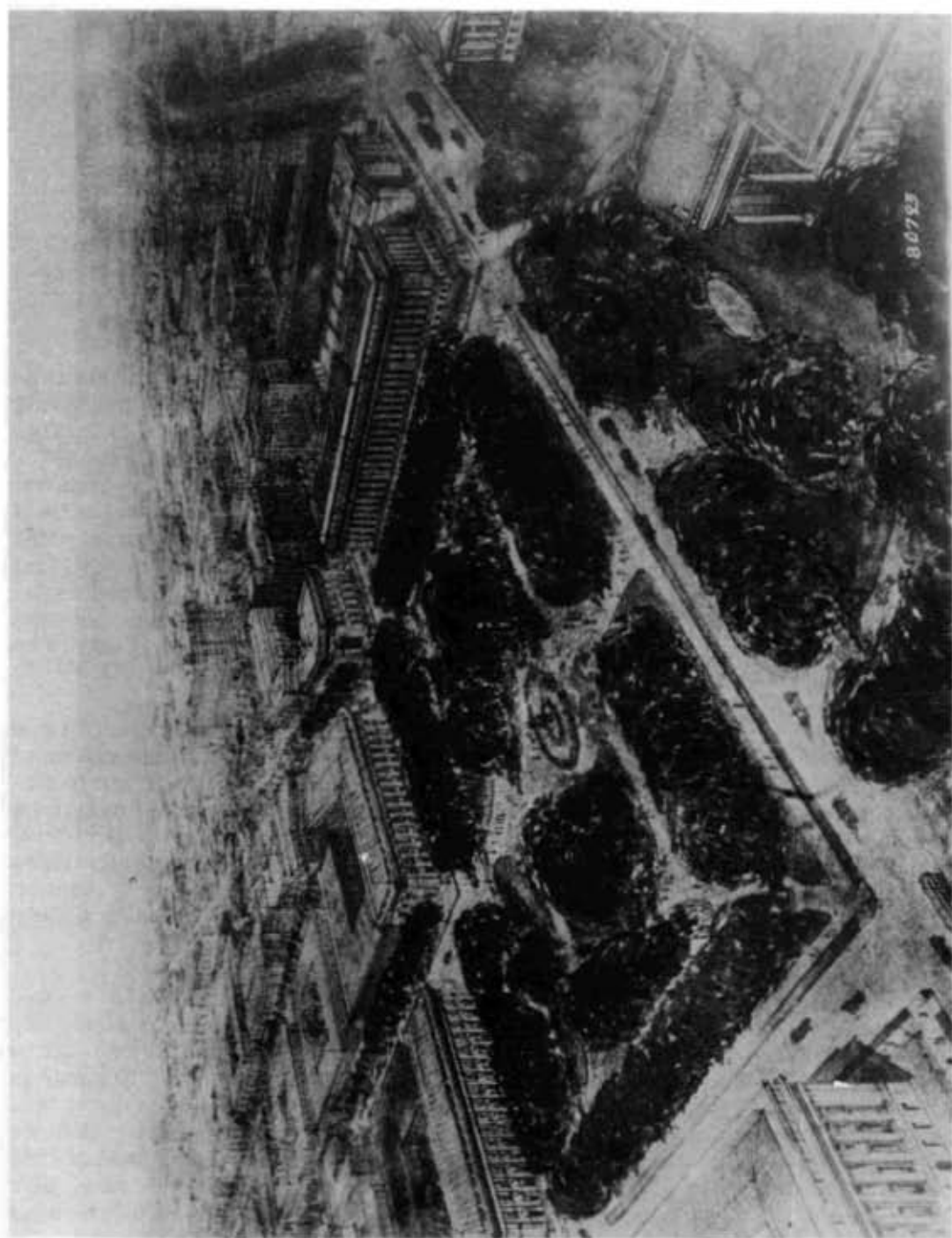


Fig. 29. —Rare sketch of suggested treatment of Lafayette Park by Commission of Fine Arts, c. 1933, according to Caemmerer.

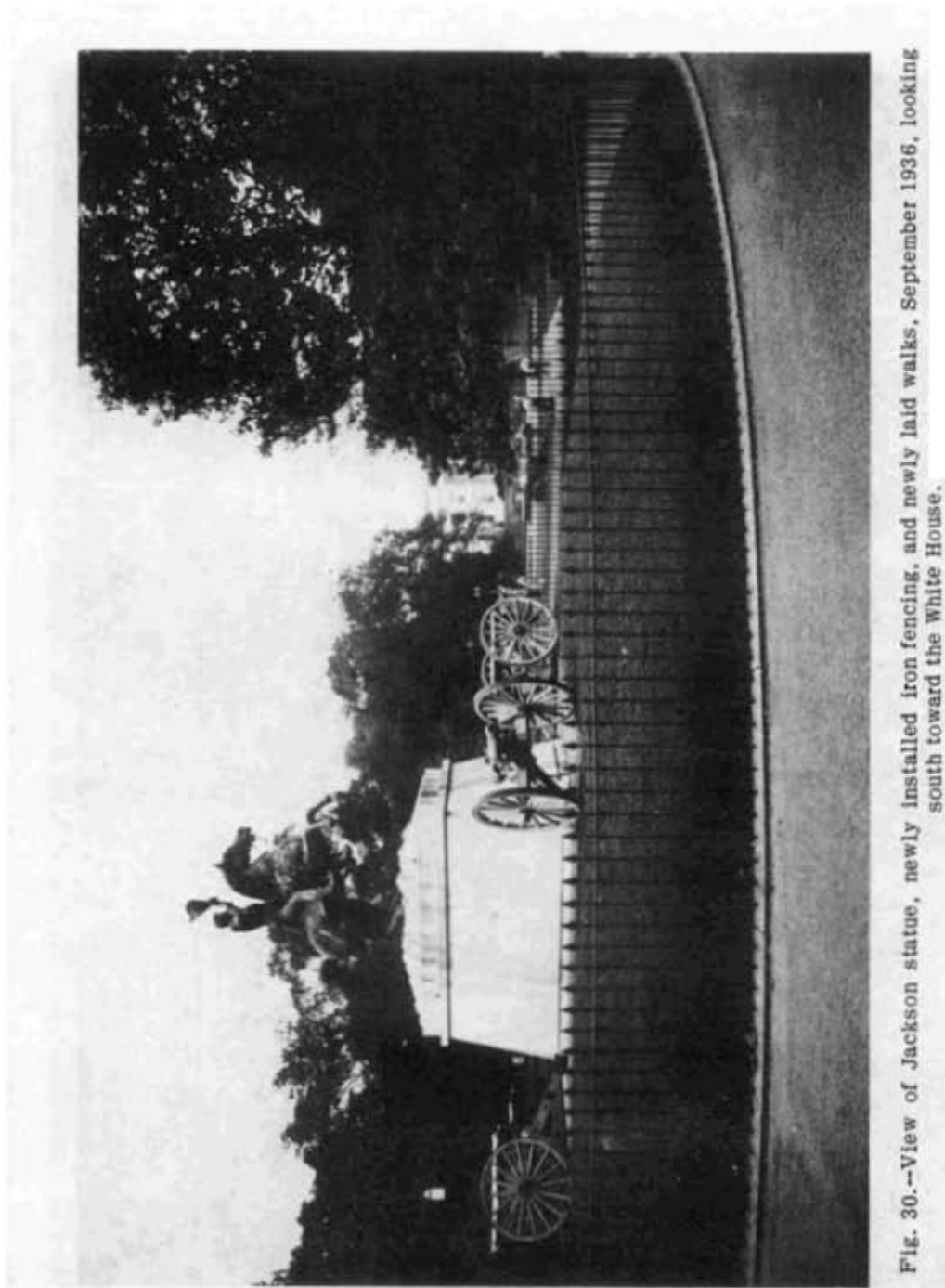


Fig. 30.--View of Jackson statue, newly installed iron fencing, and newly laid walks, September 1936, looking south toward the White House.

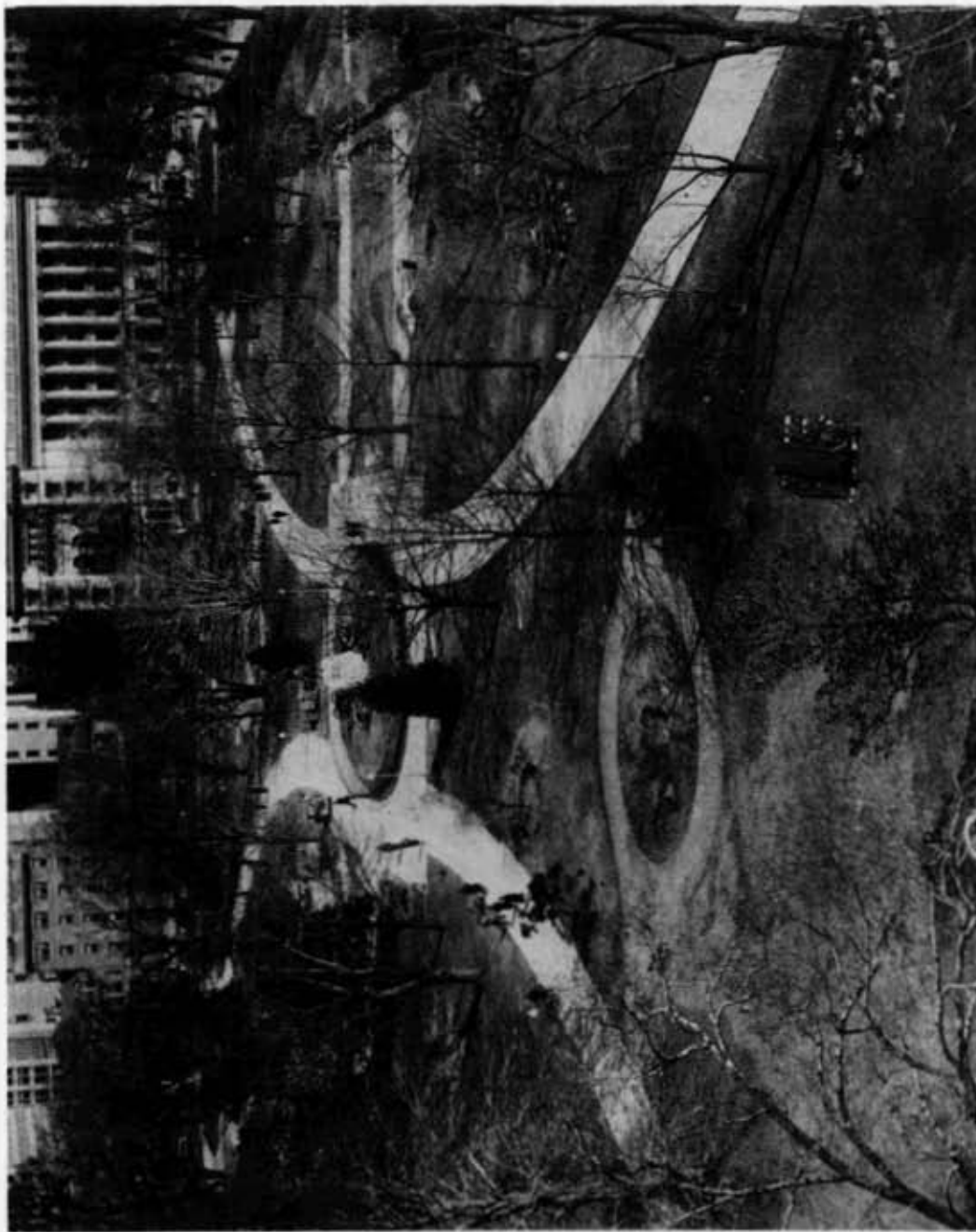


Fig. 31.--Lafayette Park, looking east toward Madison Place, showing landscape changes, March 1936, and relocation of urns from A to B.



Fig. 32.--View looking toward St. John's Church (the "Church of the Presidents") and Sixteenth Street, showing relocated urn and workmen enlarging walks at east or Madison Place entrance to Lafayette Park, March 1936.



Fig. 33.--View looking northeast from Lafayette Park toward the Dolly Madison house, showing landscaping changes, March 1936.



Fig. 34.--View looking toward Sixteenth Street, showing workmen enlarging and regrading walks and grounds of Lafayette Park, May 1936.



Fig. 35.--Workmen removing topsoil from around trees in Lafayette Park, July 1937.

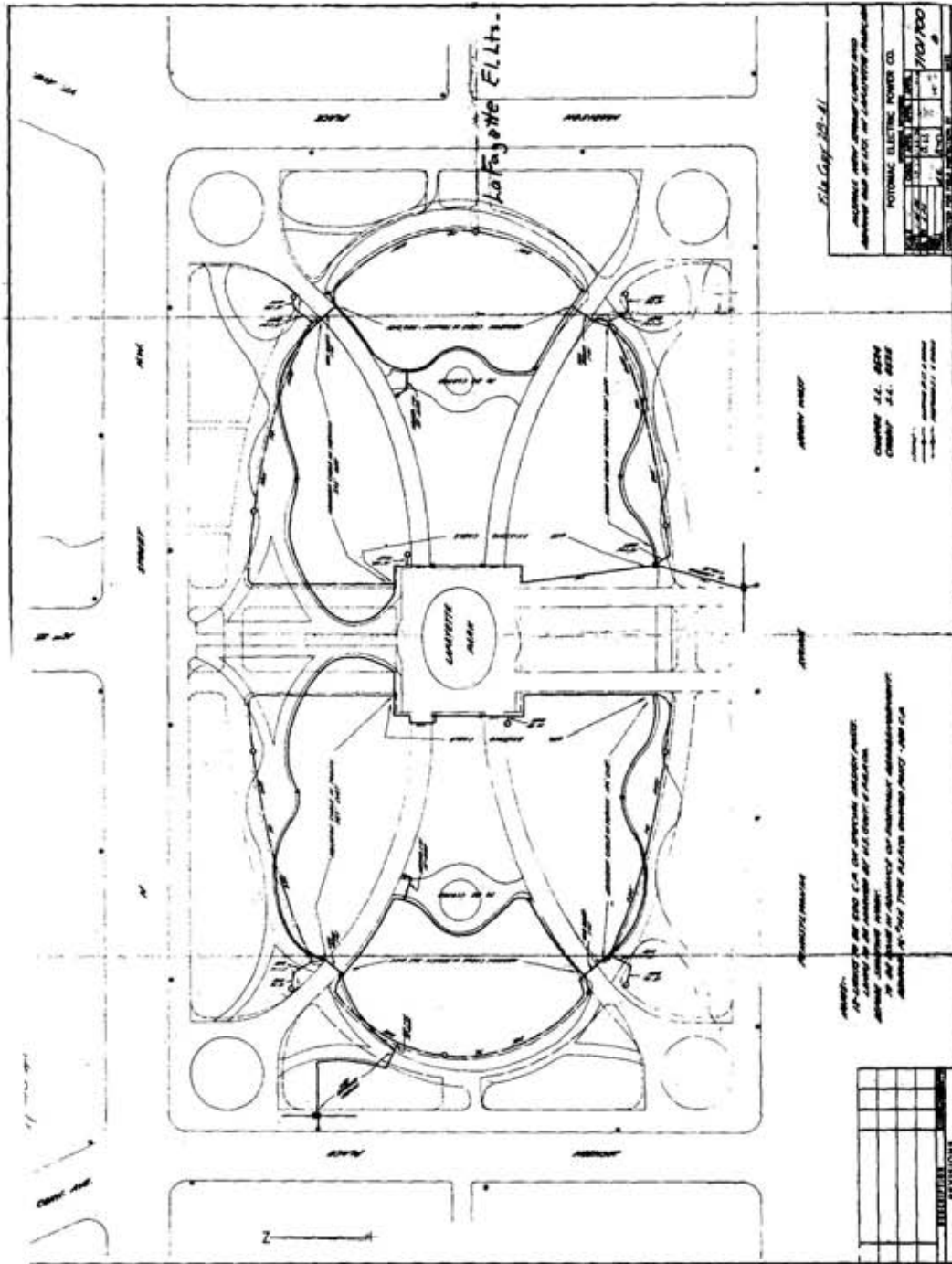


Fig. 36.--Diagram of new lighting plan for Lafayette Park, January 29, 1936, showing closing of walks at former location of bronze urns.

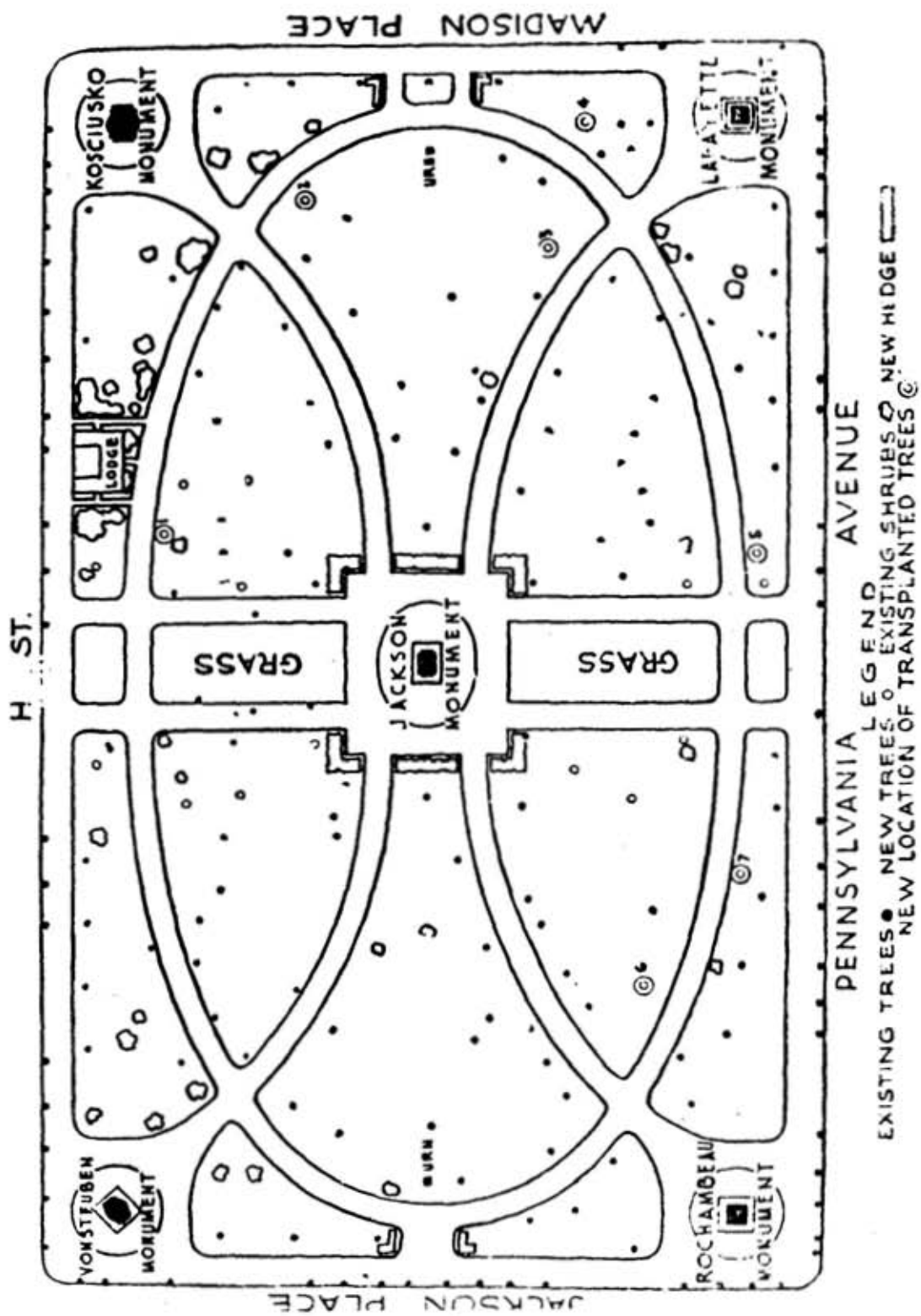


Fig. 37.--Diagram of Lafayette Park after reconditioning of 1936-1937.

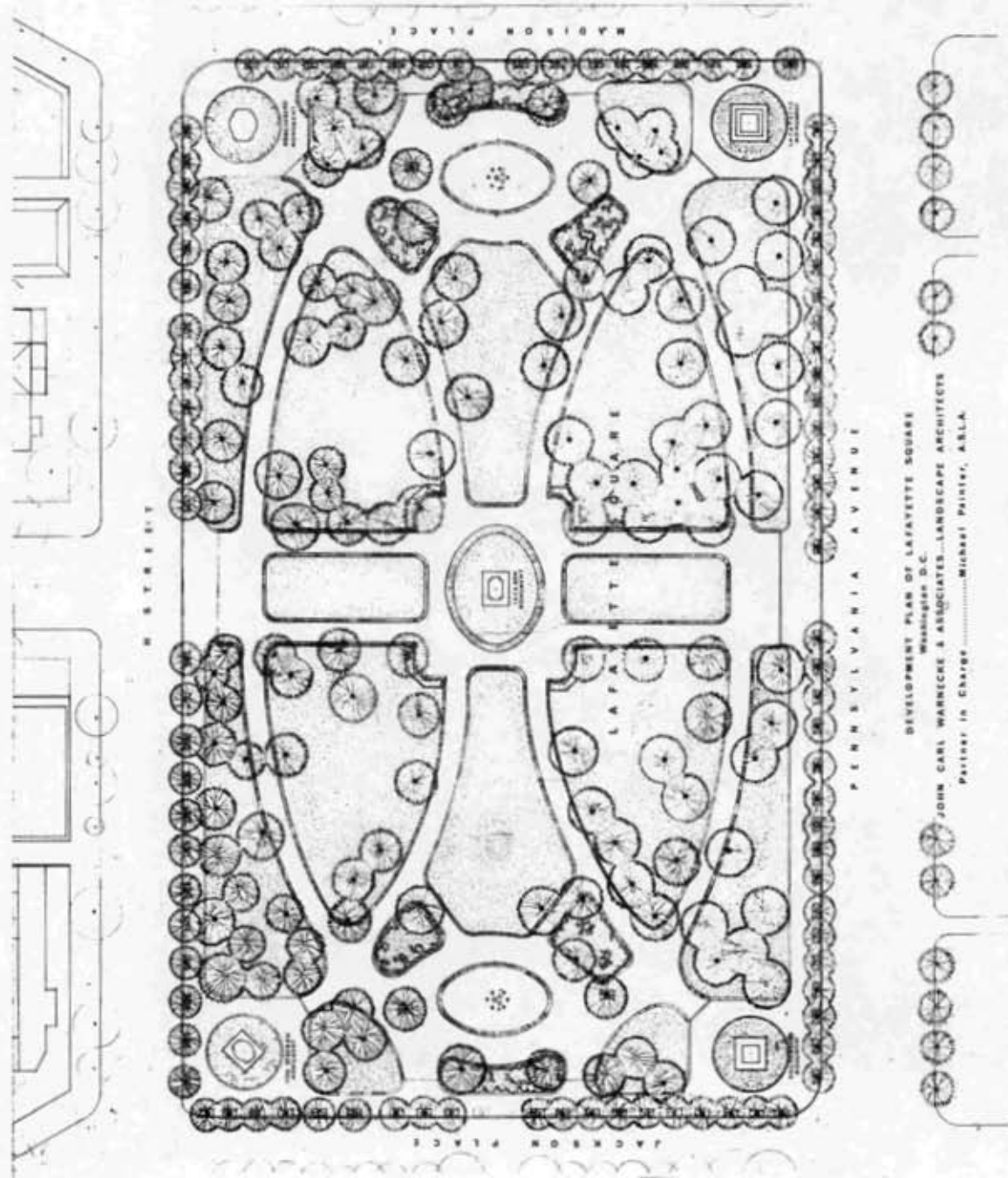


Fig. 38.--Development plan of the National Capital Region for Lafayette Park. The original sketch was approved by the late President, John F. Kennedy, in 1962



Fig. 39.--Park historian interpreting the significance of the memorial to General Andrew Jackson, Hero of the Battle of New Orleans, during a walking tour of the White House Neighborhood.

LAFAYETTE PARK AND THE COMMUNITY

Introduction.--Lafayette Park, throughout the years, has become the center of the community life of not only Washington but also of the Nation. In addition to the yearly wreath laying ceremonies, various patriotic groups are granted special permission by the National Park Service to hold meetings of a civic and patriotic nature, to plant memorial trees and to engage in other civic activities stressing the role of the "White House Neighborhood" in the life of the community. Known as "Special Events," the National Capital Region issues special authority for the holding of these affairs. Historians and park naturalists are also especially trained in the history of the area and its flora and fauna and conduct walking groups on tours.

Walking Tours of the "White House Neighborhood".--To familiarize visitors with the significance of the White House Neighborhood, specially trained park historians of the National Capital Region conduct regular free walking tours through Lafayette Park and the surrounding area. The historians inform the visitors of the background and history of Lafayette Park, the role of the individuals memorialized by statues in the history of the United States, biographical details of the famous residents of the historic houses of Lafayette Square and point out the flora and fauna of the Park. In the spring of 1964, the National Capital Region began to extend personal invitations to visitors to the White House, to go on this personally conducted walking tour after their visit to the Executive Mansion. The invitations are handed out by a Park Historian to the visitor as they leave the White House grounds. A copy of this invitation is shown below. VIPS and other special groups are conducted through the area at their pleasure and convenience.¹



THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE INVITES YOU
TO PARTICIPATE IN A FREE (45 MINUTE)
WALKING TOUR

"THE WHITE HOUSE NEIGHBORHOOD"

FOLLOWING YOUR VISIT TO THE EXECUTIVE
MANSION TODAY, MEET A PARK HISTORIAN
IN LAFAYETTE PARK ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE

9, 10, 11 a.m. and 1, 2, 3 p.m.

Memorial Tree Plantings.--Throughout the years memorial trees have been planted in commemorative ceremonies in Lafayette Park honoring various individuals.

¹George A. Hall, Assistant Chief, National Memorials Branch, NCR, to Olszewski, September 15, 1964. Much favorable reaction has been recorded of the special efforts of the National Capital Region to make the walking tour of Lafayette Park historically interesting. Alexis Droutzkoy, Toni Kraatz, and George S. Taylor to Olszewski, Lafayette Park, October 25, 1964.



Fig. 40.--Park historian interpreting the significance of the memorial to the Comte de Rochambeau during a walking tour in Lafayette Park.



Fig. 41.--Blair House, scene of the attempted assassination of President Harry S. Truman, on November 1, 1950, being interpreted by a park historian for a walking group.



Fig. 42.--Mrs. Frederic A. Groves, President-General of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, planting a memorial white oak in Lafayette Park, March 17, 1959, as Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Roger C. Ernst, looks on.



Fig. 43.--Dedication of the "Bernard Baruch Bench of Inspiration" by the Boy Scouts of America.

Among some of the still existing memorial trees is an American elm (*Ulmus americana*), planted by the American Peace Society on May 2, 1934; a Cambridge Elm (*Ulmus campestris*) planted by the American Institute of Park Executives on November 16, 1932; and a White Oak (*Quercus alba*) and an American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) planted by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution on March 17, 1959.² All memorial trees are tagged to indicate their memorialization.³ Unfortunately, in many cases, memorial trees have been supplanted, having fallen prey to age, disease and the weather.⁴

Special Events.--Lafayette Park is also the scene of special ceremonies, generally classified as "Special Events", requiring advance preparation by the National Capital Region. Yearly memorial ceremonies by distinguished visitors to the area and the laying of memorial wreaths by members of the diplomatic corps and patriotic groups are among the most outstanding events which stress the role of the parks of the Nation's Capital in the life of its residents. Of significance also was the dedication of the "Bernard Baruch Bench of Inspirations" by the Boy Scouts of America on August 15, 1960; the planting of memorial trees as already noted; and the holding of community art fairs. This latter event is now held annually on the Ellipse, south of the White House, by the Recreation Department, Government of the District of Columbia.

Unscheduled Events.--Of recent years, unscheduled events which occur in the White House and in the White House Neighborhood bring large crowds to the vicinity of Lafayette Park, the majority of which require advance preparation. Among some of these may be mentioned the visits of Heads of State, which received a great impetus during the Kennedy administration; inaugural parades; parades of patriotic and nationwide groups; the Civil Rights march of 1962 which saw the greatest mass of visitors descend upon Washington for one occasion; and the most tragic event of recent American history, the assassination of the late President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. In effect, Lafayette Park has become for all practical purposes the gathering place of the community during events which affect the life and history of the Nation.

Conclusions.--When the city of Washington was established by the Founding Fathers as the site of the Nation's capital, their foresight provided, in both the L'Enfant and the Ellicott plans, for park areas which, in the future, would be used not only to beautify the seat of the Republic but also as areas of recreation and rest for the city's residents. Although the site of Lafayette Square was first included as part of the grounds of the President's House, later becoming known as the President's Park, Thomas Jefferson determined that it should be separated from the White House grounds to be made into a separate recreational area for the people of the Nation.

In homage to the great service rendered by the French nation, during America's fight for freedom and independence from England, the area was named Lafayette Square in honor of General Lafayette during the second visit of the French hero to the United States in 1824. Although comparatively little work was done to beautify and

¹ See NCP Drawing, "Tree Replacement Plan," No. 28-59-1 (rev. December 15, 1959), Figure 48.

² Often, many of the memorial tags fall prey to unobserved souvenir hunters.

³ Robert E. Kloske, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Operations and Maintenance, NCR, to Olszewski, September 15, 1964.



Fig. 44. -Community Art Fair held in Lafayette Park in 1941. View from Madison Place showing Lafayette statue at left.

to landscape Lafayette Square prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, due to the exigencies of growing America, the famous equestrian statue to General Andrew Jackson, was the first to be erected in 1853 as the central theme of the park. That same year, President Millard Fillmore authorized the appointment of Andrew Jackson Downing one of the most prominent American landscape architects of the day, to carry out his plans for the landscaping and beautification of Lafayette Park.

Downing's plan was not initially executed because the Nation was rent asunder by the furious anathema between North and South which culminated in the outbreak of the Civil War. Once peace returned to the country, and the Nation's debt was lessened, Congress appropriated funds which permitted the first major landscaping scheme to be carried out in Lafayette Square based on Downing's plan. This initial work was executed mainly during the years 1872 to 1910, when the last of the four statues erected in the square was dedicated. The outbreak of World War I curtailed further work until the postwar years and the outbreak of the Great Depression.

Under the Works Progress Administration of the Roosevelt administration, when Congress voted enormous sums for the relief of unemployment which had swept the country and the inauguration of a nationwide public works program, Lafayette Square underwent a second major landscaping development. This increased the area for public use and resulted in changes of a permanent nature which, in general, without radically changing the original Downing plan, exist to this day.

Following the Second World War and the Korean conflict, when interest was aroused in the restoration of the entire area, including the possibility of restoring the homes of former famous residents, many of whom were prominent in the history of the United States, various plans evolved. The majority of these proved unsatisfactory not only from an esthetic viewpoint but also architecturally and historically.

Impetus to the project was given with the inauguration of the late President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in 1961. Within a year, a definite plan for the preservation of the architectural beauty and historical role of Lafayette Park was developed by the National Capital Region. In 1962 this plan was approved by President Kennedy with congressional authorization for the commencement of the work being provided shortly thereafter. In the approved plan, the general outlines of the Downing plan, as modified by the landscaping changes of 1936-37, are being adhered to. With the publication of the final report of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue, Lafayette Park is destined to remain the Nation's number one park area for the enjoyment of the thousands of residents and visitors who, yearly, pay homage to America's heritage in the Nation's capital.



Fig. 45.--Artist demonstrating her technique during Community Art Fair, June 1942.



Fig. 46.--Exhibit of the work of Naval Personnel at the Art Fair in Lafayette Park, June 1942.

APPENDIX

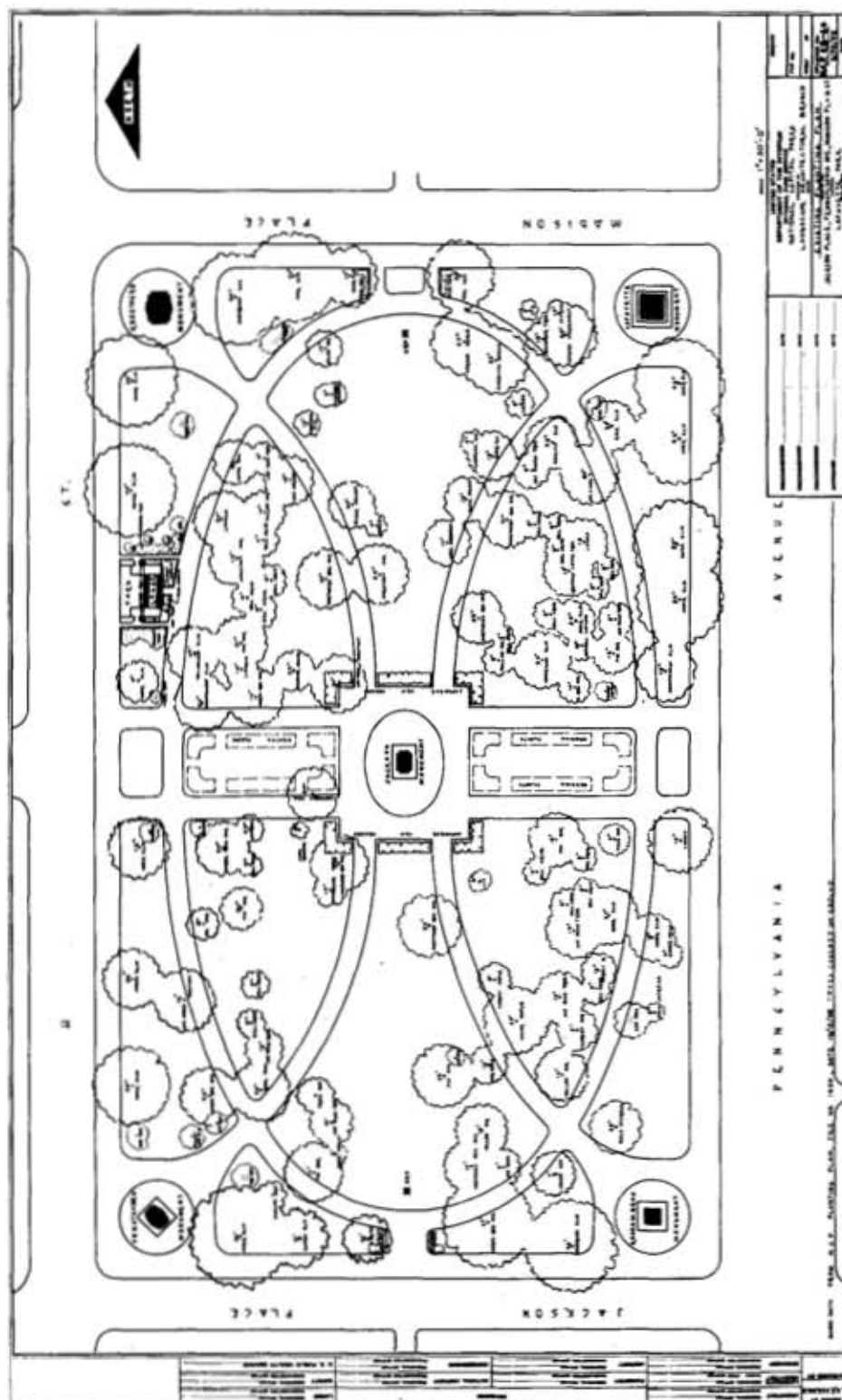


Fig. 47.--Planting plan of Lafayette Park, August 23, 1958.

Fig. 49.--Planting details of Lafayette Park, December 30, 1958.

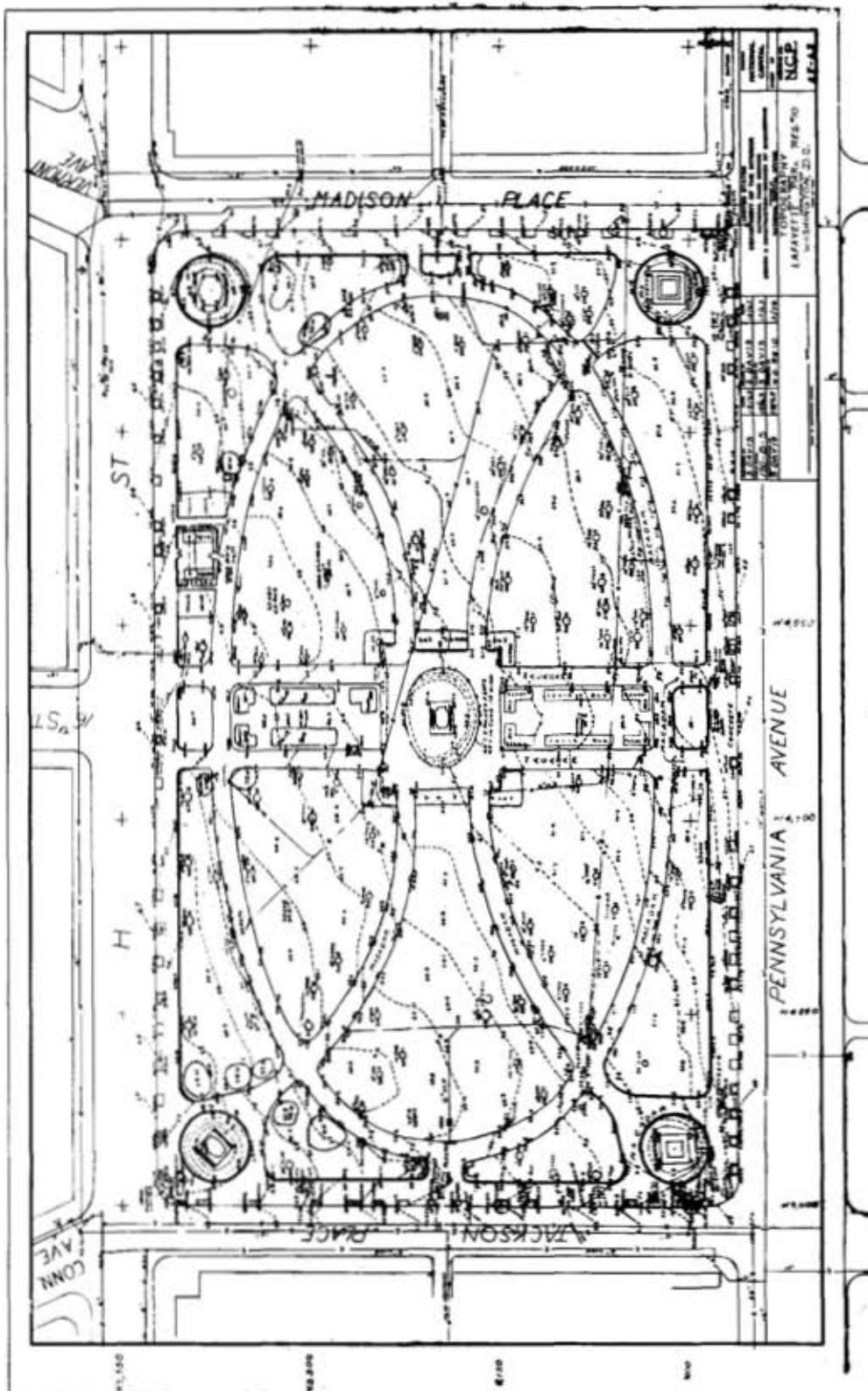


Fig. 50.--Topography of Lafayette Park, March 1964.

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