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II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This Historic Context Statement for Fort Dupont Park, completed by Robinson & Associates, Inc., was commissioned by the National Park Service. The NPS specifically charged the firm with the analysis of certain aspects of the park's history and use – the Civil War earthworks, the creation of Fort Dupont Park, the planning of the Fort Drive and the construction of Fort Davis Drive, the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the golf course, and the social importance of Fort Dupont Park to its users. Many of these topics have not previously been documented in relation to Fort Dupont Park.

The text includes a "Summary of Significance" and a "Historic Context Statement." The context statement contains twelve chapters: Pre-Civil War History; 1861-65: The Civil War and Construction of Fort Dupont; Post-Civil War Changes to Washington and its Forts; The Planning and Construction of the Fort Drive; Creation of Fort Dupont Park; 1933-42: The Civilian Conservation Corps Camp at Fort Dupont Park; 1942-45: Antiaircraft Artillery Command Positioned in Fort Dupont Park; History of the Golf Course; 1938 through the 1970s: Continued Development of Fort Dupont Park; Recreational, Cultural, and African-American Family Use of Fort Dupont Park; and Proposals for the Fort Circle Parks. The research and formation of the report focused on the tasks defined in the scope of work.

Historical research methods used in the preparation of this Historic Resources Study included the examination of both primary and secondary sources. Important primary sources included extensive Civil War-era documents from the War Department, the Senate Park Commission (McMillan Commission) Plan of 1902, the United States Congressional resolutions creating Fort Dupont Park in 1912, National Capital Planning Commission documents on the formation of the Fort Drive, and Office of Public Buildings and Grounds and National Park Service documents on the creation of Fort Dupont Park. Historical maps, such as the 1856-59 Boschke map and the 1892-94 United States Coast and Geodetic Survey map (both located in the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress), proved to be particularly helpful in assessing the historic character of the site and its resources in the nineteenth century.

The principal research for the analysis and evaluation of Fort Dupont Park included the following repositories: Cultural Resource Files at the National Capital Parks-East headquarters; National Capital Region – Lands, Resources, and Planning (Reports, Reservation Files, Land Records, and Plans and Drawings Collection); the Washingtoniana Collection at the Martin Luther King Memorial Library (clipping files, photograph collection, and *Washington Star* newspaper collection); and the National Park Service files archived at the Federal Records Center in Suitland, Maryland. In addition, extensive drawings and plans for Fort Dupont Park were located at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Research also included collections at the Library of Congress (general collection, periodicals, Prints and Photographs Collection, and Geography and Map Division), the D.C. Recorder of Deeds Building, and the National Archives (records of the War Department and Office of Public Buildings and Grounds). The Historical Society of Washington's Research and Collections Library included several photographs of Fort Dupont Park.

III. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

Fort Dupont Park, located in the southeast quadrangle of Washington, D.C., is bounded by Ely Place and Ridge Road on the north, Massachusetts Avenue on the south, and Minnesota Avenue on the west. (figures 1, 2) It is accessed by a hiker-biker trail, service roads, and three main roads: Fort Davis Drive, Fort Dupont Drive, and Randall Drive. The park contains many recreational, cultural, and environmental amenities, including picnic areas, an activity center, community gardens, a nature discovery room, an amphitheater, playing fields, an ice rink, an interpretive trail, and the hiker-biker trail. The landscape is primarily composed of forests, a stream valley, and open fields and lawns. The 376-acre Fort Dupont Park is one of Washington's largest parks, second in size only to Rock Creek Park. The park contains an important military site, the earthworks of Fort Dupont, which is part of a ring of fortifications constructed during the Civil War to protect the capital city. It also contains a portion of Fort Davis Drive, which is the only portion of the Senate Park (McMillan) Commission's proposed Fort Drive that was actually constructed.¹

This Historic Resources Study covers the history of Fort Dupont Park and is presented in several chapters based on the park's development phases. Resources remaining from the early years of the park (as described further in this report) are: the Civil War earthworks, Fort Davis Drive, Fort Dupont Drive, the Ridge Picnic Area, the Fort Dupont Golf Course clubhouse, the maintenance headquarters, and Randle Circle. The following important features from the park's history are no longer extant in the park: the Lanham House, the Civilian Conservation Corps camp, the Antiaircraft Artillery base, the Fort Dupont Golf Course, the Watergate barge amphitheater, the bridge paths, and the Pine Woods Picnic Area. Amenities and features constructed in the park in the last few decades include: the Summer Theater, the Ice Rink, athletic fields, comfort stations at the Ridge and earthworks picnic areas, the stables, community gardens, and the hiker-biker trail.

Existing Local and Federal Designations

Fort Dupont Park, part of the National Capital Parks-East unit of the National Park Service, is not currently listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Places or the National Register of Historic Places.² The Fort Dupont earthworks, however, were included in the nomination for the Civil War Fort Sites and Fort Circle Park System, which was listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites on November 8, 1964. The system of forts was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 15, 1974. It was recognized for its "local" (rather than "national") significance. The National Register boundary for the system of forts was expanded on September 13, 1978, to

¹ A portion of Fort Davis Drive extends beyond the boundaries of the park from Massachusetts Avenue to Pennsylvania Avenue.

² Currently, the National Park Service is divided into seven regions for administrative and management purposes. The National Capital Region, which is the smallest region geographically and contains the greatest concentration of historic resources of the seven regions, includes parks in Washington, D.C., and portions of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Within this region, the National Capital Parks-East Office (headquartered in Anacostia Park in southeast Washington, D.C., manages Fort Dupont Park.



Figure 1. Fort Dupont Park (outlined and shaded) is located in the southeast quadrant of Washington, D.C. (<http://citizenatlas.dc.gov/atlasapps/custommap>).

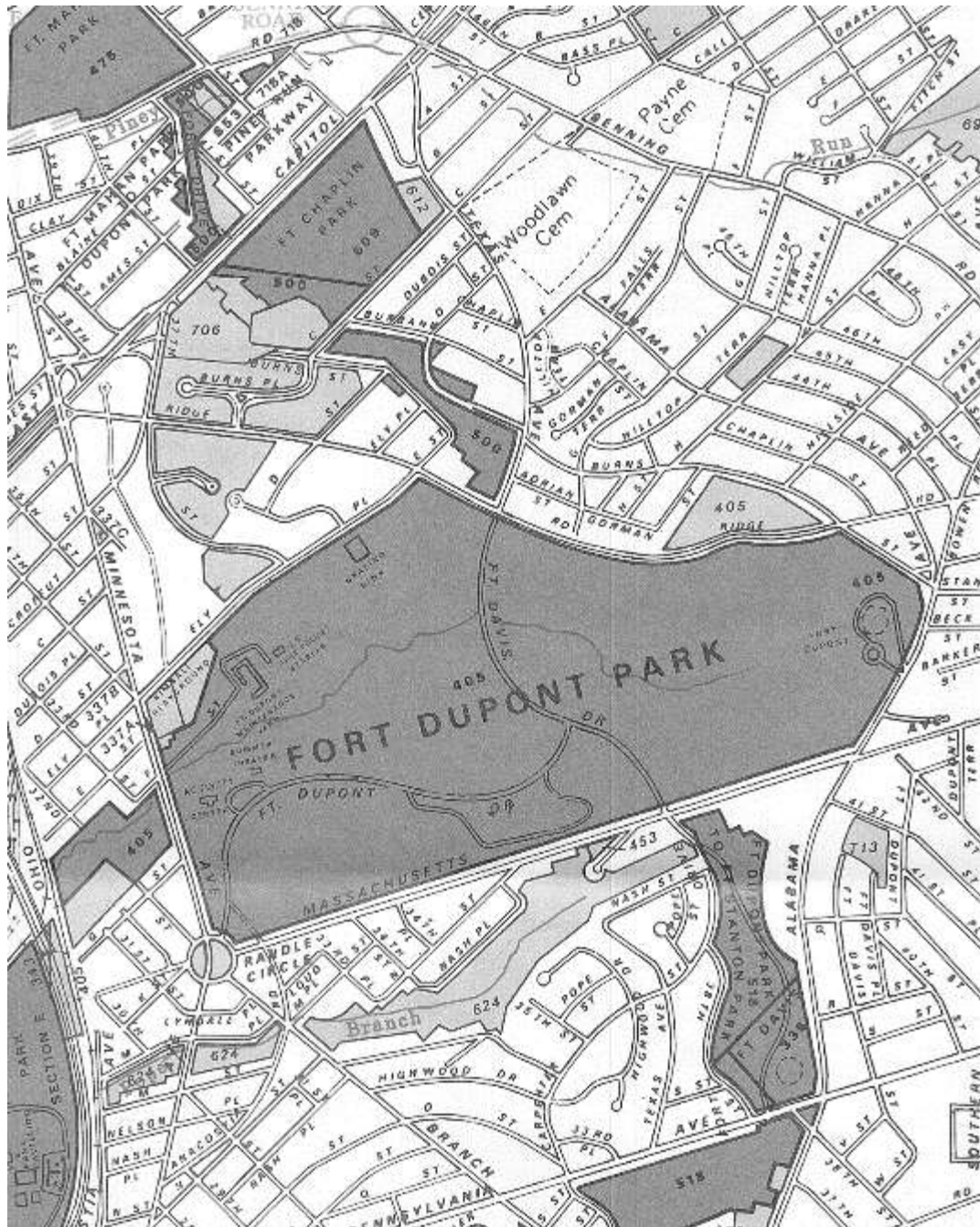


Figure 2. Fort Dupont Park in its current urban context (Detail, *Park System of the Nation's Capital and Environs*, Map A, National Park Service, National Capital Area, Washington, D.C., August 1995).

include several more sites. The designation clearly delineates the boundary of each fort included. At Fort Dupont, as stated in the nomination form, only the earthworks were listed in the National

Register; the rest of Fort Dupont Park and Fort Davis Drive were not evaluated for their significance.

Fort Dupont was not involved in any action during the Civil War, but did play an important role as part of the ring of forts which protected the city during the war. The 1978 boundary expansion nomination form describes Fort Dupont as follows:

. . . located just north of Alabama Avenue southeast, between Massachusetts Avenue and Ridge Road. This is an instance of a very large park containing a comparatively small historic resource, although it is the one after which the entire park is named. Specifically, the site of the earthwork remains of Fort Dupont are located at the most extreme eastern end of the park just north of Alabama Avenue, three blocks west of the point where Alabama Avenue meets Ridge Road. The area of historic remains covers approximately two acres, and a historic zone may reasonably be ordained which includes only the historic resource. If the center of the fort is taken as a starting point and a straight line of twenty-five yards is drawn from that point and then used as the radius of a circle, we derive a boundary which includes all the remains of the structure and no other structures than the earthworks and its marker.³

As a result of its historic designation as part of the system of forts, the Fort Dupont earthwork construction is the only currently identified historic resource in Fort Dupont Park.

Analysis of Significance

A specific task assigned to the Fort Dupont Park Historic Resources Study by the National Park Service was the creation of an understanding of Fort Dupont that would contribute to future formal evaluation of the National Register potential for the park as a whole. The goal of this documentation was to produce a preliminary assessment of historic significance, as provided below. This summary of the analysis and evaluation of Fort Dupont Park is based on the documentation of the historic landscape features, a review of archival material, published sources, and drawings, and application of the National Register criteria.

Military Evaluation of Fort Dupont Park

The earthworks of Fort Dupont played a role in the protection of Washington during the Civil War. It was not a major fort and did not see action during the war, but it did play an auxiliary role as part of the entire fort system which protected the city. The design of the fort, completed in the spring of 1862, was based on the treatises of Denis Hart Mahan, a professor of civil and military engineering at West Point. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in its construction of

³ James Dillon, National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, "Defenses of Washington (Civil War)" (U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., July 30, 1976), n.p. This form expanded the boundaries of the site as determined on July 15, 1974.

Washington's forts, followed Mahan's text, which included a set of principles to direct the type and size of fort to construct – depending upon the location and the terrain. Fort Dupont was one of eleven forts located along the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River) and the ridge east and south of the river; these forts were in place to protect the Navy Yard and eastern approaches to the city, such as the Navy Yard Bridge and Benning's Bridge. The Fort Dupont earthworks continue to display the historic characteristics that led to its inclusion as a contributing resource in the Civil War Fort Sites and Fort Circle Park System, as listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. It retains recognizable features, as described in the historic documentation for the listing, although it continues in a deteriorated condition. Deterioration of the Civil War features of Fort Dupont was first recorded in an 1892-94 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Map (see also Chapter Three) and continues to the present (see Chapter Twelve). Extant features include some semblance of structures within the earthworks, and the indentation of the moat surrounding the earthworks is still present. However, these features suffer from erosion and lack of maintenance, and are overgrown with trees and vegetation.

Chapter Seven of this Historic Resources Study documents the park's involvement from 1942-45 in the nation's defense during World War II, when an Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) Command was located within park boundaries. No current physical evidence of this program has been found in the park, since the CCC buildings, which were used by the military, have all been demolished; however, this historic use could be examined in greater detail if the park's significance is reevaluated.

Fort Davis Drive

Fort Davis Drive, the only portion of the important Fort Drive system to be completed, is a significant feature which lies partially within the park boundaries. (See information on the DCHPO's National Register determination of eligibility, below.) The Drive connects Fort Davis and Fort Dupont, and thus extends south beyond the boundaries of Fort Dupont Park to Pennsylvania Avenue. Originally proposed in the Senate Park Commission (McMillan) Plan of 1901-02, the Fort Drive was part of a long and arduous planning process which involved the Commission and the National Capital Park Commission. The plan advocated the preservation of the forts and envisioned future park use at the fort sites, including Fort Dupont. In the first half of the twentieth century, the National Capital Park Commission was successful in acquiring land connecting a vast majority of the forts. The Commission acquired Fort Dupont and the land between Fort Dupont and Fort Davis as part of this endeavor. Although planned for decades and graded in portions, the drive never reached completion, and the forts and parcels of land purchased for the drive were divided among the three units of the National Park Service – Rock Creek Park, National Capital Parks-East, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway – to manage. The importance of the historic earthworks and the greenbelt of parks along the ridge surrounding the city make this a significant open-space element in the nation's capital, as recognized in National Capital Planning Commission's *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*.

In 2002, the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer determined the greenbelt corridor connecting seventeen fort sites as eligible for the National Register in its own right for its role in

twentieth-century urban planning. The DCHPO noted that the greenbelt was being treated as if it were listed until a National Register nomination form could be written. In *Fort Circle Parks: Draft Management Plan, Environmental Assessment*, completed in 2002, the National Park Service recommended that a cultural landscape report be written for the Fort Drive system to “clarify questions about the context and history of the connecting greenbelt corridor and the evolution of Washington’s Civil War defenses during the twentieth century.”⁴ The National Park Service also would like to see a National Register form completed for the Fort Drive in the future.

Conservation: The Civilian Conservation Corps’ Role in Fort Dupont Park

The work of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Fort Dupont Park is a significant aspect of its history and warrants further study and evaluation. However, its potential significance must be evaluated in a broader context to be properly understood, as described below. The CCC camp, located in Fort Dupont Park from 1933 to 1942, completed important projects in the Washington region and made extensive contributions towards the development of Fort Dupont Park during its early years. In 1934-35, for example, CCC personnel graded Fort Drive and the Anacostia connecting road. The workers spent several years building sixty picnic tables and stone hearths designed in a rustic style. The CCC also improved the woods and wide sloping ravine immediately behind the nursery and fort, and graded the future site of the Fort Dupont Park Golf Course.

In its work in Fort Dupont Park, the CCC adhered to the ideas of landscape and architectural design as formulated by the National Park Service during the years immediately following its creation in 1916. As the purpose of the National Park Service was to preserve wilderness areas for the enjoyment of both the present and succeeding generations, the goal of design in the national parks was for built structures to “blend unobtrusively into the natural setting.”⁵ A number of guidelines were developed to accomplish that goal, such as the preservation of existing landscape features, the use of natural materials in construction, replanting native species, and the avoidance of right angles and straight lines.⁶ At Fort Dupont Park, these principles are evident in the curving roadways, rustic picnic area, and in the extensive replantings of native species.

As stated above, the presence of a CCC camp in Fort Dupont Park and its work completing Fort Davis and Fort Dupont Drives and various landscaping and facilities in the park are important parts of the park’s developmental history but should be judged in a broader context. The Historic American Building Survey is currently developing a National Register context for CCC work completed in the National Capital Region. A draft has not yet been completed.

Analysis of the Fort Dupont Park Landscape

⁴ National Park Service, *Fort Circle Parks: Draft Management Plan, Environmental Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, May 2002), 61.

⁵ Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

The landscape in the immediate vicinity of the fort has undergone considerable change.⁷ In 1861, Ridge Road (Marlboro Road) followed the path of today's Alabama Avenue, southeast of the fort. To the south and east of this road was forest, much of which the military felled during the war to open the range of the guns at Fort Dupont. The hills surrounding Fort Dupont and Fort Davis were shorn of their timber and undergrowth.⁸ During the Civil War, a deep ravine lay immediately southwest of the fort. Grading carried out since the war has obscured the ravine.⁹ The CCC, for example, improved this wide-sloping ravine. The work, completed in 1938, left the wooded area in a natural state but the improvements to the slope of the valley "[seemed] to present a pleasing transition between the upper park like area and the lower dense forest area."¹⁰ Road construction has also altered the land, as has the construction of a dwelling house, stables, other structures, and the use of the land as a tree nursery. In 1892, Fort Dupont "had a full view of Washington and the valleys of the upper Potomac," which could indicate that portions of the landscape were not densely wooded (as they are today). There might have been agricultural use of some of the land.¹¹

Less is known about the history of the park's remaining landscape, outside of the immediate vicinity of the fort. Various nineteenth-century estates and early twentieth-century houses were purchased to form the park. A portion of the park's acreage was farmed – and logically contained a few residences prior to and immediately following the Civil War. The land also included some residential development, which had begun in the late nineteenth century to some degree, but continued more substantially in the early to mid-twentieth century. In 1929, landscape architect C. L. Wirth described the land which comprised the park at that time and the necessary purchases to form the 367-acre park:

It is at the head of a small stream and valley that extends west to the Anacostia River. The Park, which includes the fort, takes in this entire valley and its drainage area, most of which is well wooded and covered with a fine undergrowth of mountain laurel. . . . The hills bordering the stream are quite steep and high, some extending one hundred feet above the stream on a slope that rises at the rate of three and four on one. Although there are many high hills within this park, it is almost impossible to see for any great distance due to the heavy growth of trees. You can, however, obtain a fine panoramic view of the District from the hill-top in the northeast corner of the property at the junction of Ely Place and Ridge Road. This view has been made possible by the fact that the foreground has been cleared of trees. This area

⁷ Charles H. McCormick, *Fort Dupont, D.C.: Historic Structures Report, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, May 1967), 11.

⁸ "The Defenses of Washington during the War," *Evening Star* (October 9, 1902): n.p.

⁹ McCormick, May 1967, 11.

¹⁰ William F. Heiber, memorandum to C. Marshall Finnan, May 17, 1938, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 50. Planting & Landscaping.

¹¹ Frank L. Averill, "The Present Condition of the Defenses of Washington, Built During the Civil War, 1861-65," in *Guide to the National Capital and Maps of Vicinity Including the Fortifications* (Washington, D.C.: The Engineering Platoon of the Engineer Corps, D.C.N.G., 1892), 23.

was used as a farm at one time. It is very important to preserve this view and, therefore, a golf course has been planned for the area once used as a farm.¹²

Wirth, in his role as landscape architect for the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, emphasized that the plan for Fort Dupont Park should be naturalistic and should take great care to ensure that the recreational facilities and necessary amenities not interfere with its natural beauty. The majority of the park was wilderness during its development years, and wilderness with foot and bridle paths when it opened in 1937. From 1935 to 1942, CCC workers carried out grading and landscape improvement projects throughout the park. The workers planted rhododendrons, ivy, and mountain laurels in the Ridge Picnic Area and along portions of Fort Davis Drive. They built a dam on a portion of the stream and formed the landscape of the golf course. The golf course, completed in 1948, is no longer in place, yet evidence of the fairways is still visible. The Play Meadow at the intersection of Fort Davis and Fort Dupont drives, which appeared on many early plans for the park, is now the site of three community gardens. Overall, the park still retains the large wilderness area and stream valley and many of the landscape features planted by CCC workers, yet many of the features designed for the park during its development are no longer extant (see Chapter Twelve).

Social History of Fort Dupont Park

Fort Dupont Park has played an important role in its community by bringing cultural and recreational activities to Anacostia. Programs such as the Summer in the Parks and the activities of the ice rink (which houses the only all-African-American ice hockey team in the country) are noteworthy contributions to the park's social history. Both of these programs, however, have been in operation for less than fifty years, and thus should be reevaluated in the future for their potential to meet National Register Criterion A. These activities are not yet significant enough to warrant consideration under Criteria Consideration G, for properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years.

Preliminary Determination of Significance

Fort Dupont Park has been evaluated according to criteria established by the National Register of Historic Places. The relevant criteria, as listed in the *National Register Bulletin 16* (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division), read as follows:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

¹² C. L. Wirth for the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Fort Dupont Park" (July 26-27, 1929), 1.

- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic value, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

This Historic Resources Study has judged the National Register eligibility of Fort Dupont Park under National Register Criteria A, B, and C, and preliminary findings are that the property falls short of meeting those criteria. Each of the criteria is examined below, as applied to the history and integrity of the park. Archeological significance under National Register Criterion D was not evaluated as part of this Historic Resources Study. Evaluations took into account the fact that Fort Dupont itself was already listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register as part of the Civil War Fort Sites and Fort Circle Park System.

The cultural landscape of Fort Dupont Park was first judged against National Register Criterion A, association with important events, and it has been determined that the park does not appear to meet this criterion. (Important events linked to the fort itself, e.g., the involvement of Fort Dupont in the Civil War, are already recognized in the existing designation of the Civil War Fort Sites and Fort Circle Park System.) The following events have taken place at Fort Dupont Park: the Congressional creation of Fort Dupont Park in 1912, the work of the park's CCC camp from 1933-42, the military's use of the park to house its Antiaircraft Artillery base from 1942-45, the park's opening in 1937, the construction of Fort Davis Drive, the completion of the Fort Dupont Golf Course, and the creation of cultural and recreational programs (such as the Summer in the Parks program and the community's hockey team).

Due to the park's lack of integrity in comparison to its appearance in 1937 when it opened to the public, few of the facilities or programs created by the above events are still in existence. The CCC camp, AAA base, and golf course are no longer present. Still extant CCC work at Fort Dupont Park does not appear to have a critical mass that is important enough to judge on its own merit. (As stated above, the work of the CCC at Fort Dupont Park, construction of the Fort Davis and Fort Dupont drives and Ridge Picnic Area, may be further evaluated in the future as part of CCC work in the National Capital Region.) The Ridge Picnic area still retains several original elements, such as the wood rail posts and stone gutters lining the road, the picnic tables, stone hearths, and plantings. Its integrity, however, is comprised by the presence of the 1970s comfort station, which replaced an earlier CCC building. Fort Davis Drive, while significant as the only portion of the Fort Drive to be completed, does not possess individual significance since its importance comes from its association with the Fort Drive and associated greenway. The park was created in 1912 to serve the local community. The 1929 plan and 1934 and 1944 development plans for the park played an important role in shaping the physical characteristics of the park, yet the park no longer closely resembles any of the plans, in part since none of the plans were wholly implemented and also since many alterations have changed the character of the park. Finally, the Summer in the Parks program and the unique hockey program operated at the ice rink

are important to the community, but they do not meet the necessary exceptional significance required by the National Register for properties less than fifty years of age.

The park was evaluated against Criterion B, association with significant persons, and Criterion C, association with distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, and was not found to meet the requirements of either criterion. No significant people are directly associated with Fort Dupont Park. Distinctive aspects of the Fort Dupont earthworks construction are already recognized in the existing designation of the Civil War Fort Sites and Fort Circle Park System.

It is important to note that Fort Davis Drive, which lies partially in the bounds of Fort Dupont Park, should be considered as part of an official National Register nomination for the larger Fort Circle Drive system in the future; this would clarify and validate the D.C. Historic Preservation Officer's determination of eligibility for the greenbelt corridor connecting the fort sites (see "Fort Davis Drive," above). [Note: This will be clarified in future drafts.] Fort Davis Drive clearly is a contributing element in such a future National Register nomination. Similarly, the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps at Fort Dupont should be considered as part of a future nomination for CCC work in the National Capital Region; this process is underway (see "Conservation: The Civilian Conservation Corps' Role in Fort Dupont," above). The existing designation of Fort Dupont itself as a contributing element in the Civil War Fort Sites and Fort Circle Park System (listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites and National Register) continues to be accurate and appropriate.

Commemorative plaques are typically not eligible for the National Register, unless they meet Criterion Consideration F, as a property primarily commemorative in intent. Neither the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America plaque at the earthworks nor the Robert Fechner memorial plaque at the entrance to the maintenance headquarters meets Criterion Consideration F.

Timeline for Fort Dupont Park

- 1912 Congress authorized the creation of Fort Dupont Park.
- 1913 The District Appropriations Act for the fiscal year permitted the D.C. Commissioners to purchase land along Alabama Avenue to preserve Fort Dupont and Fort Davis as parkland.
- 1916 The D.C. Commissioners acquired the original 16.55 acres of what would become Fort Dupont Park and transferred it to the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds under the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers.
- 1917 The Fort Dupont site acquired the administrative title of Reservation 337.
- 1918 Upon request of the D.C. Commissioners, during an influenza outbreak, the Chief of Engineers gave the D.C. Street Trees and Parking Department permission to use portions of the Fort Dupont reservation as a nursery for the propagation of trees for street planting. The nursery was sited to the rear of the fort on land containing a house and stables.
- 1925 Fort Dupont, among other forts and parks managed by the War Department, was transferred to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks.
- 1926 The Chief of Engineers granted the D.C. Commissioners temporary use of an additional 82.94 acres for the nursery.
- The National Capital Park and Planning Commission completed a study for a proposed connection between the future Fort Dupont Park and Anacostia Park. This parkway was discussed and studied for many years, but never implemented.
- 1927 Charles Carroll Glover and his wife made a generous donation of 39.29 acres towards the future Fort Dupont Park.
- 1929 Conrad L. Wirth, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission's landscape architect, authored a comprehensive plan for the design of Fort Dupont Park.
- 1933 All government-owned forts in the National Capital Region were placed under National Park Service administration.
- A CCC camp opened in Fort Dupont Park.
- 1934 A Development Plan for the park was approved.
- 1934-35 CCC personnel graded Fort Drive and the Anacostia connecting road.
1934-36 CCC workers completed buildings for the CCC camp.

1937	Fort Dupont Park opened to the public in the spring.
1940	A building was erected to serve as the Maintenance Headquarters for the park.
1942	The CCC camp closed. The Department of Interior granted permission to the Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) Command of the Military District of Washington, under the Baltimore District of the War Department, to occupy a fifty-one-acre tract of land in Fort Dupont Park. The land included the former site of the park's CCC camp on E Street between 35 th and 36 th streets.
1944	The NPS completed a <i>Development Plan</i> on October 1, 1944, which updated the development of the park. The text described various projects within the park, including the progress on constructing the golf course
1945	The AAA Command in Fort Dupont Park closed.
1948	The Fort Dupont Park Golf Course opened to the public in the spring.
By 1950	The NPS reacquired nursery land and completed a drive and picnic area near the earthworks.
1952	The NPS opened a stable near Ely Place. (It was replaced in 1979-80.)
After 1968	The National Park Service created the Summer in the Parks program; the Fort Dupont Park amphitheater was one of the venues.
1972	The golf course closed. The NPS proposed the construction of a 5,000-seat amphitheater, a skating rink, fishing lakes, a mini-train and a small zoo in a 122-acre portion of the park to replace the golf course. This plan was not implemented.
1974	The NPS created the "Summer in the Parks" program, and Fort Dupont Park served as a venue.
Mid-1970s	The activity and interpretive center opened in the former golf course clubhouse.
1976	The indoor ice skating rink opened in 1976 on Ely Place.
Early 1980s	A new wood-frame stage constructed near the activity center on land formerly occupied by the golf course.
1980s	A hiker-biker trail completed from Fort Mahan to Fort Stanton, based on a proposal in the 1968 master plan for the park.

List of Fort Dupont Park Features

The following list summarizes features within the Fort Dupont Park boundaries and their date of construction. (figure 3) Only the earthworks are marked as a contributing resource since they are already included in the nomination for the Civil War Fort Sites and Fort Circle Park System, which is listed in both the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. The results of this Historic Resources Study do not indicate that a larger historic district nomination is justified.

<u>Feature</u>	<u>Date</u>
Earthworks*	1862
Commemorative Plaque (at Earthworks)	unknown
Comfort Station (at Earthworks)	early 1950s
Fort Dupont Drive	ca. 1930s
Fort Davis Drive	ca. 1930s
Gravel road (at Ridge Picnic Area)	ca. 1930s
Hiker-Biker Trail	1980s
Nature Trail	1973
Comfort Station (at Randle Circle)	early 1970s
Activity Center	1948
Log House	unknown
Summer Theater	early 1980s
Commemorative Plaque (at maintenance yard)	1940
Maintenance Headquarters	ca. 1940
Park Police Stable	1979-80
Storage structure	unknown
Fort Dupont Park Ice Rink	1976
Alabama Avenue Bridge	late 1940s
Minnesota Avenue Bridges (2)	late 1940s
Ridge Picnic Area (picnic tables, stone hearths stone gutters, landscaping, log posts, gravel road)	ca. 1930s
Comfort Station (at Ridge Picnic Area)	early 1970s
Community Gardens A, B, C, D	1970s

* Contributing Resource

Insert Figure 3. Location of Fort Dupont Park resources.

IV. HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Chapter One Pre-Civil War History of the Land

President George Washington announced on January 24, 1791, that the permanent capital of the United States would be built on land at the confluence of the Potomac River and the Eastern Branch, or Anacostia River. Native Americans had hunted, fished, and farmed the area for 500 years until English settlers arrived in the late seventeenth century.¹³ English settlers inhabited the landscape for a century before Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed the monumental city plan. Three distinct topographical features characterized the landscape. First, the land between the rivers and above Tiber [Goose] Creek lay in their flood plains, which established Washington's reputation as an area of marshes and swamps. Secondly, a terrace, known as the Wicomico, ran roughly northwest to southeast above the flood plain. Jenkins Hill, where the Capitol was located, and the rise of land where the White House was sited, were part of this geological structure. North of the river terrace was the steeper Wicomico Sunderland escarpment beyond what is now Florida Avenue. To the east, across the Anacostia River, stood a large ridge; in fact, the entire city was surrounded by a formidable ring of ridges.

When Captain John Smith explored the Potomac River in 1608, he was the first European man to reach the river's navigable head.¹⁴ While exploring the area, Smith encountered the Nacotchtank Indians, the tribe for whom Anacostia was named. The local Algonquin peoples, the Anacostans, called the large river Petomek. Before the arrival of the English, the Anacostans grew corn, squash, beans, and potatoes on small cleared areas, hunted turkey, quail, geese, ducks, deer, and bear among the sweet gum, hickory, maple, tulip poplar, and oak trees, and caught fish and shellfish in the tidal streams and rivers. No other visitors came to the region until 1622 when a foraging party from Jamestown crossed from Potomac Run, Virginia, to the Maryland side of the river and raided the Indian town of Nacotchtant, in the area that is now Anacostia. The fertile soil, wildlife, and convenient waterways prompted English trader Henry Fleete, who had traveled up the Potomac in 1621 in search of corn, to return to the area in 1632 to set up trade with the Anacostans and other tribes.¹⁵ In 1634, Fleete visited the Nacotchtank village, on the site of what is now Anacostia. European settlement of the area had followed the same pattern found elsewhere in Maryland and Virginia. First, a trade in furs took place between the Europeans and the natives; then the English crown made grants of large tracts of land to English citizens. Division of properties, sales, re-sales, and re-grants occurred prior to the first settlements, followed by the gradual disappearance of native tribes and the arrival of planter families. The lands between the Potomac and Anacostia rivers were patented between 1663 and 1686, and

¹³ Portions of this text comes from Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site" (draft), National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (February 27, 2003).

¹⁴ Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration. *Washington City and Capital*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937, 35.

¹⁵ NHL Boundary Review Project, "Georgetown Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (February 1980): n.p.

frontiersmen had moved into the area around Rock Creek by 1700.¹⁶ The Indians living along the Eastern Branch were driven from the area by 1668.

Fort Dupont Park is located on a ridge separating the Anacostia River Valley from the valley of Oxon Run. Prior to its incorporation into the future site of the capital in 1790, this area was part of Prince George's County, Maryland, established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1695. Englishman George Calvert came to Virginia in 1629, but was not welcome after he refused to convert to Protestantism. As a result, King Charles I of England formed the colony of Maryland in 1632, named after Queen Henrietta Maria, when he granted land to George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore. The colony became known as a territory welcoming those of the Roman Catholic faith. This new territory was between the fortieth degree of north latitude and the Potomac River extending west from the Atlantic Ocean to the longitude of the first source of the river, in the province of Maryland. In 1632, George Calvert was succeeded by his son, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, who governed the new colony from England. He served as the first designer and Lord Proprietor of the Maryland colony from 1632 to 1675. Settlement started in the City of St. Mary, the first capital of Maryland, and proceeded along the Potomac.¹⁷ Calvert offered land grants to newcomers for an annual fee, the prospect of growing tobacco, and attracted many newcomers to the undeveloped land. The area that is now Anacostia was part of Prince George's County, and was first surveyed in the 1660s.

By this time, much of the area across the Eastern Branch had been divided by land grants to wealthy gentleman planters. For example, Lord Baltimore awarded the Chicester tract, located in the northern section of the land across the Eastern Branch (and immediately south of the current Fort Dupont Park) to Dr. John Meekes, an English surgeon, in 1663; Thomas Addison purchased the Chichester Tract from Meekes' descendants in 1700.

The site of Fort Dupont Park was located either in portions of or in all of the Arran, Greens Purchase, and Batchelors Hope tracts. The Arran tract was granted to John Addison on March 17, 1687; Joseph Harrison received Greens Purchase on February 1, 1671; and Batchelors Hope was granted to Nicholas Proddy in June 21, 1673. Grantees did not always farm the land, and many left the farming to tenants. A 1706 census revealed that there were 406 households in the county but only thirty-seven men who owned more than 1,000 acres of land.¹⁸ Because there were few large plantations, there were few African slaves.¹⁹ Indentured servants, men and women from Great Britain – who surrendered their freedom for a few years in return for passage to the New World – satisfied most of the need for additional labor.

When French engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed the city of Washington in 1791, Uniontown was a small village. The area which would later include Fort Dupont Park was primarily countryside in the late-eighteenth century, prior to the formation of the District of

¹⁶ National Capital Planning Commission, *Downtown Urban Renewal Area Landmarks* (Washington, D.C.: NCPD and District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency, 1970): 19-20.

¹⁷ Federal Writers' Project, 37.

¹⁸ Alan Virta, "Prince George's County is Settled" (Prince George's County Tricentennial Celebration, 1996), <http://www.pghistory.org/PG/PG300/settled.html>.

¹⁹ Slaves were not brought to Prince George's County in large numbers until the eighteenth century.

Columbia, with large parcels of land held by few landowners.²⁰ In 1790, the Residence Bill authorized the selection of a ten-mile-square site, somewhere along the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia, for the government's permanent seat. Major Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker surveyed the ten-mile-square tract and set the boundary stones. L'Enfant's plan for the Federal City established a street pattern and series of open spaces only for the portion called Washington City, located north of the Potomac River and west of the Eastern Branch. Then Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, advised Congress to pass a supplementary act extending the federal jurisdiction to include the region across the Eastern Branch, citing that the Anacostia region would be needed for purposes of military defense.²¹ On March 3, 1791, Congress passed the act to include land south and east of the Eastern Branch on the Maryland side and south to Hunting Creek on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. Maryland and Virginia relinquished their jurisdiction of the designated sites to Congress and to donate funds for use in constructing public buildings for the new capital.²²

The land on which the city of Washington was built lay in Prince George's County, Maryland. President Washington worked out an agreement with area landowners on March 30, 1791, on the method by which properties would be conveyed to the federal government and the owners compensated. Fifteen men signed deeds transferring portions of their land to the government on June 28 and 29, 1791, and the signers became known as the original proprietors of the city of Washington. The deeds were recorded at the General Court of Maryland on December 16 and 22, 1791, and in the newly created Register of Deeds in the District of Columbia on January 5, 1792.²³ At this time, the ten-mile-square was surrounded by large country estates, many of which overlooked the swampy valley. Tobacco growers and merchants, drawn to the area because of its advantages for shipping in the eighteenth century, had carved out large estates within the bounds of Maryland's Prince George's County.²⁴ Tobacco had made the Virginia and Maryland farmers very wealthy, and the presence of slaves on the estates furthered their crop output. There also were small planters who grew crops themselves, and some estate owners hired tenant farmers to work the land.²⁵

During the period 1830 to 1860, farmers worked the land on the east side of the river, and many used slaves.²⁶ Settlers formed a community, known as Uniontown, in 1854.²⁷ The complete history of the land surrounding Fort Dupont has not been established. The first use of the land was most likely for a plantation or country estate in the early eighteenth century. In the

²⁰ Brett Williams, PhD, *Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Park Uses and Neighbors, Civil War Defenses of Washington and Anacostia Park, District of Columbia, for Park Management Plans: Executive Summary* (Washington, D.C.: December 30, 1997), 119.

²¹ Louise Daniel Hutchinson, *The Anacostia Story: 1608-1930* (Washington, D.C.: Anacostia Neighborhood Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), xxi.

²² *Ibid.*, 17.

²³ For more information on these landowners, please see Louise Joyner Hienton, *Prince George's Heritage* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1972).

²⁴ Kathryn Schneider Smith, ed., *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1988), 98.

²⁵ Federal Writers' Project, 38-39.

²⁶ Hutchinson, 61.

²⁷ Schneider Smith, 97.

nineteenth century, prior to the Civil War, the land was part of the Dundas estate.²⁸ In the years immediately prior to the Civil War, Michael Caton owned the future site of Fort Dupont. The name “Caton” is clearly visible on the tract in the 1856-59 Boschke map.²⁹ (figure 4) During and following the war, Michael Caton retained ownership of the land.³⁰ (See Chapter Two, “1861-65: The Civil War and Construction of Fort Dupont for additional information on Michael Caton.)

²⁸ Mildred J. Ericson, Memorandum to File about Historical Information on Fort Dupont Park, November 13, 1945, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 1460. Fort Dupont.

²⁹ Extensive research at the D.C. Recorder of Deeds Building indicated that Michael Caton had many land holdings, but no specific information about when he purchased and sold his land on the future site of Fort Dupont is known.

³⁰ The Brown family owned the land after Michael Caton. Mildred J. Ericson, Memorandum to File about Historical Information on Fort Dupont Park, November 13, 1945, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 1460. Fort Dupont.



Figure 4. Detail of the 1856-59 Boschke Topographical Map of the District of Columbia, with Caton's two properties circled on the right side of the map (NARA, Office of Chief of Engineers Headquarters Map File, Map 69).

Chapter Two

1861-65: The Civil War and Construction of Fort Dupont

At the start of the Civil War on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces opened fire upon Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, the City of Washington was vulnerable – protected by only one fort, Fort Washington. Located twelve miles away from Washington on the shores of the Potomac in Maryland, this stone and brick fort was constructed between 1812 and 1824 (this construction took place following the War of 1812, during which the first Fort Washington was destroyed by its own garrison). The city lay alarmingly open to attack by rebellious states, such as the Commonwealth of Virginia, which seceded from the Union on April 17, 1861. In addition, the slave state of Maryland, to the north of Washington, had many southern sympathizers. In spite of hostile acts from many Maryland residents when President Lincoln called for volunteer soldiers, enough regiments arrived in the capital to seize and fortify footholds across the river in Virginia, occupying points from below Alexandria to hills above Chain Bridge.³¹

Brigadier General John Gross Barnard, Chief Engineer of the Defenses of Washington, emphasized the importance of Washington's security as an integral Union cause:

It is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the necessity, in the civil war . . . of holding and defending Washington. In a war of the nation – united and patriotic – with a foreign power, conquest by the enemy of the seat of the government, though it might be a disaster and even disgrace, would have little influence on the issues of the contest. In the recent civil war, on the contrary, the rebel flag flying from the dome of the Capitol would have been the signal of “recognition” by those foreign powers whose open influence and active agency would be too willingly thrown, with whatever plausible pretext, into the scale of dismemberment to become almost decisive. . . . That the preservation of the national cause should have been thus identified with the continuous tenure of a city situated as is Washington, upon the very boundary of the most powerful and energetic of the rebellious States, and surrounded by the territory of another State only restrained from open rebellion by the pressure of armed force, was one of the chief embarrassments of the Government in the prosecution of the War.³²

After the rout of Union forces on July 21, 1861, by Confederate General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and his troops at the Battle of Manassas – only twenty-five miles southwest of the capital city – Major General George B. McClellan decided to reorganize the Army of the Potomac.³³ He

³¹ National Park Service, “The Civil War Defenses of Washington, D.C.,” <http://www.nps.gov/cwdw/>, March 10, 1998.

³² Charles H. McCormick, *General Background: Forts Mahan, Chaplin, Dupont, Davis* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, July 15, 1967), 3.

³³ The March 8, 1862, naval defeat of two federal warships, the USS Congress and the USS Cumberland by the CSS Virginia (formerly USS Merrimac) at Hampton Roads, Virginia, followed by the stalemate

appointed Major (later Brevet Major General) John G. Barnard of the Corps of Engineers to build new forts around the city. General Barnard formed a commission of the best engineers in the Army, Generals Totten, Meigs, Barry and Cullum, to consider the necessity of completing an initial set of four forts (Forts Corcoran, Albany, Runyon, and Ellsworth) and then establishing a general system of defense. Their work resulted in plans for an entire cordon of forts and rifle pits which stretched like links in a chain for a distance of thirty-seven miles.³⁴ A total of 106 forts and batteries were proposed. Barnard's engineers selected sites at high points around the city, with vantages over major turnpikes and shipping lanes. The War Department "seized the plates for Boschke's new District map, leaving only a few proof impressions in private hands."³⁵ The topographical map, completed by Boschke between 1856 and 1859, illustrated contours of the ridges surrounding the city and aided the engineers in determining the future locations of the fortifications. Contraband laborers and soldiers were put at work on thirty-five miles of rifle pit construction. The earthworks were hurriedly erected to form a thirty-four-mile defense system of forts, lunettes, redoubts, and batteries in a circle around the city.

When the plan was finally completed – which was barely before General Early attacked Fort Stevens in 1864 – Washington rested secure in a district guarded against attack from any quarter. The defense system totaled 68 forts and 93 batteries in Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Maryland, with a total of 807 field and siege guns and 98 mortars in place.³⁶ Twenty miles of rifle trenches flanked the forts, while more than 30 miles of military roads allowed companies of soldiers and guns to move easily between the strongholds. With its earthwork lines comparable in magnitude and importance to those constructed at Torres Vedras (Portugal) in 1809-10 and around Sevastapol (Ukraine) in 1855,³⁷ the defenseless city of 1861 had become the most heavily fortified city in the world.³⁸

Construction of Fortifications Around Washington

The fortifications were generally placed one-half mile apart following the designs of well-known treatises on fortifications, although no two forts were exactly alike. The primary source for the design of the forts came from the 1836 textbook, *A Treatise on Field Fortifications*, by Denis Hart Mahan, a professor of civil and military engineering at West Point. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, under Barnard, followed Mahan's text, which included a set of principles of what type and size of fort to construct depending upon the location and the terrain. Some of Mahan's construction techniques stated that "parapets [should be] a standard exterior slope of 45 degrees, [be] 8 to 12 feet thick, and [be] revetted with plank at a 3:1 breast high slope."³⁹ The first areas to

between the CSS Virginia and the Union's prize ship, the USS Monitor on March 9, 1862, left Washington further worried about its protection, especially of its waters.

³⁴ "The Defenses of Washington During the War," *Evening Star* (October 9, 1902): n.p.

³⁵ Iris Miller, *Washington in Maps: 1600-2000* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2002), 87.

³⁶ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁸ National Park Service, "The Civil War Defenses of Washington, D.C.," <http://www.nps.gov/cwdw/>, March 10, 1998.

³⁹ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 37.

be safeguarded were the heights in Arlington, bridges, and ridges around the Navy Yard and Capitol.

Eleven of the forts were to be located along the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River) and the ridge east and south of the river to protect the Navy Yard and eastern approaches to the city, such as the Navy Yard Bridge and Benning's Bridge.⁴⁰ (figure 5) The ridge, "extremely narrow and contorted at some points, leveled off gradually into a plateau on the south ending in the deep valley of Oxon (Oxen) Run."⁴¹

William C. Gunnell, who had served as a civil engineer on the Washington Aqueduct, was the engineer for the construction of forts north of the Potomac. Gunnell was responsible for supervising the construction of the forts in accordance with the plans executed in Barnard's office of the chief engineer. Construction plans followed Mahan's standard treatise on field fortifications, though no two forts constructed around Washington were exactly alike. Gunnell relied mostly upon hired laborers in the construction of the forts. Initially, companies of soldiers served as the labor force for the defenses; later when they were called to drill and prepare for battle, the Army hired other laborers – carpenters, teamsters, blacksmiths, and others – to make up the work crews. During the war, the city became a safe haven for former slaves, or "contrabands," many of whom had escaped from their masters. The District attracted these former slaves since the President Lincoln banned slavery in the nation's capital on April 16, 1862.⁴² Of the thousands of contrabands that took refuge in the city, hundreds labored on fortifications and served the garrisons.⁴³

Construction started in August 1861 on Fort Stanton, the first fort east of the river. It had a panoramic view of Alexandria to the south and Bladensburg to the northeast. Yet this structure did not adequately protect the above resources, so several other forts were erected.⁴⁴ In late September of 1861, work commenced upon Forts Greble, Carroll, and Mahan, and later in the year, work began on Forts Meigs, Dupont, Davis, Baker, Good Hope (renamed Wagner), Snyder, and Battery Rickets. Fort Mahan, located on an isolated hill northwest of the ridge, was completed by the fall of 1861. Forts Stanton and Greble were completed by December 10, 1861, with most others following shortly thereafter.

The Army sited Fort Dupont on land, at an elevation of 303 feet, belonging to Washington resident Michael Caton.⁴⁵ Charles H. McCormick referred to the land as Caton's "farm," which implies that Caton operated the land as a farm or rented the land out to tenant farmers.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Hutchinson, 66.

⁴¹ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 25.

⁴² Miller, 88.

⁴³ National Park Service, "The Civil War Defenses of Washington, D.C.," <http://www.nps.gov/cwdw/>, March 10, 1998.

⁴⁴ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁶ McCormick, May 1967, 5.



Figure 5. Detail of Fort Dupont and other earthworks east of the Anacostia River, taken from Military Map of N.E. Virginia, Engineer Bureau of War Dept., 1865 (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division).

In 1860, Caton valued his real estate, most likely including the acreage east of the Anacostia River, at \$5,000.⁴⁷ Caton's land was obtained by the military, and he received no compensation until war's end. In 1871, Barnard described the process by which land was acquired:

The sites of the several works being determined upon, possession was at once taken, with little or no reference to the rights of the owners or the occupants of the lands – the stern law of “military necessity” and the magnitude of the public interests involved in the security of the nation's capital being paramount to every other consideration.⁴⁸

Caton lived at 399 5th Street, NW with his wife, Sarah, five children between the ages of 18 and 30, and one servant, aged 16.⁴⁹ Hutchinson's 1862 *Washington, D.C., Directory*, listed Caton as a cashier for the *Globe* newspaper. Later, it appears that Caton also operated a printing business out of a new residence at 361 5th Street, NW, since he was listed as “printer” at his home address in the 1863 city directory as well as “cashier” for the *Globe*. Caton still resided at 361 5th Street at the end of the war when, in 1865, he received his farm back from the military (although a Mrs. Sarah Caton was listed at 500 Massachusetts Avenue). After the war, the Michael Caton referred to as a printer and cashier might have been Michael and Sarah's son, also named Michael, who was born circa 1834. In the *1880 United States Census*, Michael Caton is listed as a widower and “retired capitalist.” Michael Caton, Sr., died in 1884.

Construction of the fort on Caton's land began between October and December of 1861, but the work was not completed until the spring of 1862.⁵⁰ An 1862 map of the Civil War defenses by E. G. Arnold labels the current Fort Dupont “Fort Caton” and labels the site of present-day Fort Meigs “Fort Dupont.” (figure 6) This either was a mistake or implies that Fort Dupont might have originally been named after Caton and then renamed Fort Dupont at a later date when the earlier “Fort Dupont” was renamed Fort Meigs. In a December 10, 1861, document, however, Barnard mentioned both Forts Meigs and Dupont; therefore, it is also possible that Arnold surveyed his map prior to the publication date of 1862. By December 24, 1862, the fort on Caton's land was called Fort Dupont and Fort Meigs was named.

Fort Dupont was apparently named after Rear Admiral Samuel Francis Du Pont, a commander of the South Atlantic Blockade Squadron who won a naval victory at Port Royal, South Carolina, in November 1861. When named, the fort was occasionally called “Fort Du Pont,” but by the mid to late 1860s, the fort was fairly consistently written as “Fort Dupont.” Fort Dupont served as a supporting fort, protecting the right flank and rear of the larger Fort Meigs, which occupied an

⁴⁷ CEHP, Incorporated, *A Historic Resources Study: The Civil War Defenses of Washington, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, 2003), 5.

⁴⁸ John G. Barnard, *A Report on the Defenses of Washington, to the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Corps of Engineers Professional Paper No. 20* (Washington, D.C.: The Government Printing Office, 1871), 85. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 2003, Ch. 1, 10.

⁴⁹ CEHP, Inc., 2003, 5.

⁵⁰ J. Glenn Little, III, *Archaeological Research on Fort Earthworks: Fort Davis, Fort Mahan, Fort DuPont* (National Park Service, 1968), 13.

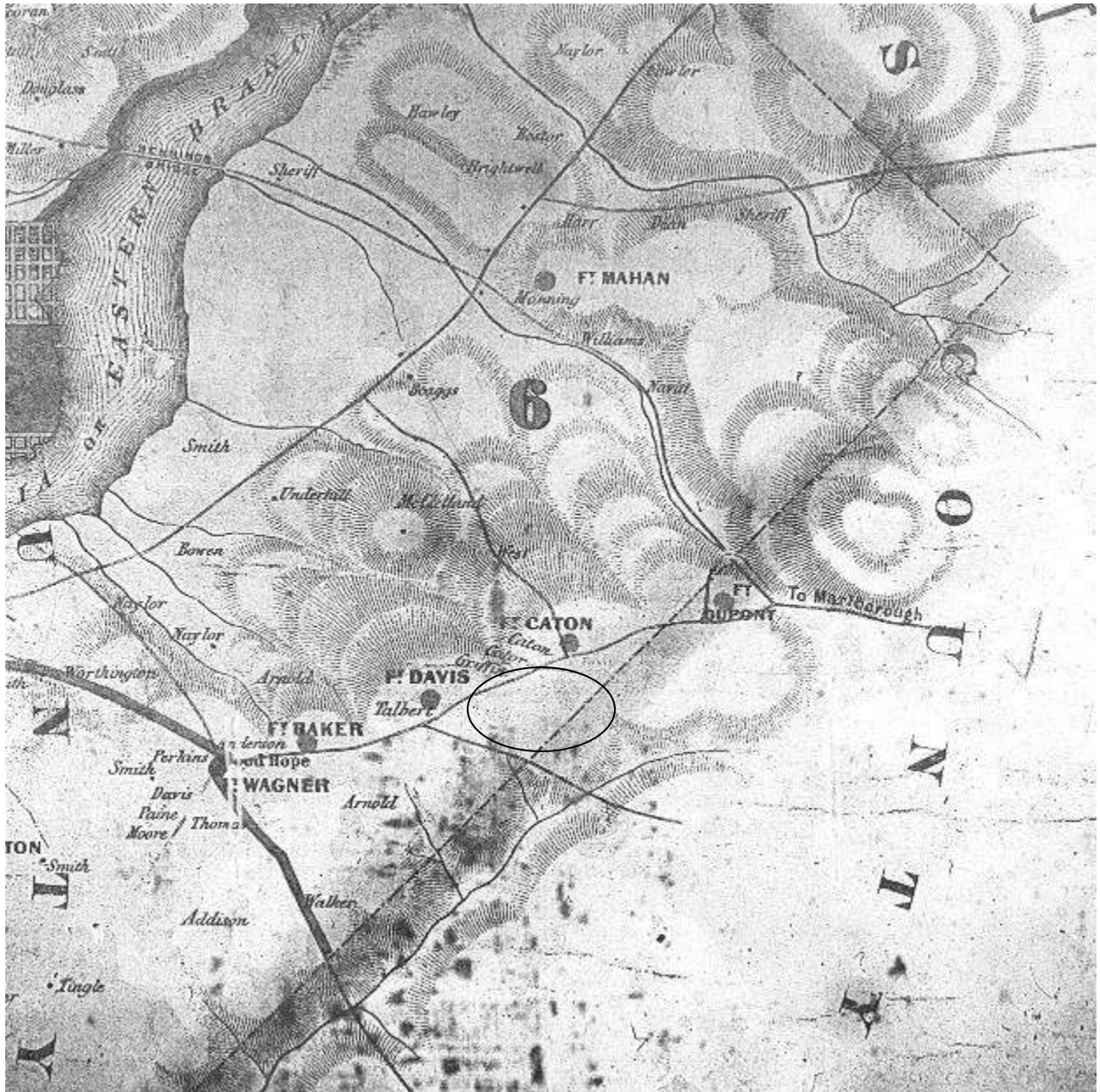


Figure 6. Detail of "Fort Caton" (which would later be called "Fort Dupont") from E. G. Arnold's Topographical map of the Original District of Columbia, 1862 (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division).

advanced position.⁵¹ Fort Davis was also completed in the spring of 1862. It was constructed to serve as the outwork for Fort Baker – it protected the larger fort's left flank and had a clear view of the approaches to either side of the river not visible from Fort Baker.⁵²

The extent of protection along the Eastern Ridge seemed impressive, but many of the forts were not strong due to their hurried construction and were threatened by erosion.⁵³ Also, dense forest filled in the gaps between various Eastern Ridge forts, such as between Forts Dupont and Davis, creating prime locations from which hidden enemies could attack. Additional forts were needed or the trees needed to be abatised (felled and barricaded).⁵⁴ In a letter dated December 10, 1861, Barnard suggested, among many other items, that work of some magnitude was needed between Fort Dupont and Fort Davis, but this was never undertaken.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Barnard recommended that a better approach to protecting the city from the Eastern Ridge would have been to construct fewer forts of larger dimensions, more formidable design, and better flanked so as to be self-sustaining. He pointed out, however, that the terrain of the ridge did not lend itself to large works and that numerous ravines also proved problematic since they concealed the approach to many of the works.

Since Forts Dupont, Davis, Meigs, and Baker were not completed until January 13, 1862, they were among the last forts to be garrisoned.⁵⁶ Guards of hired civilians protected the forts until they were garrisoned, but the delay in bringing men to all the forts protecting the city raised concern. Barnard worried that the unmanned forts were vulnerable to attack and in danger of deterioration due to lack of maintenance.⁵⁷ After Stonewall Jackson's victory over Major General Nathaniel Banks and his troops in the Shenandoah Valley in May of 1862, President Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton recalled General McDowell – who had been scheduled to assist McClellan in his advance upon Richmond – back to Washington to provide protection for the capital city. Additional fear about the inadequate operation of the capital's forts was voiced after Lee's successful outmaneuvering and victory at the Second Battle of Manassas. On August 19, 1862, General Barnard had been placed in temporary command of Washington's defenses; McClellan replaced him on September 2, 1862. McClellan, now fully aware of the need to man every fort, garrisoned and improved the neglected forts in the fall of 1862. Fort Dupont received some structural improvements and was finally garrisoned as part of this campaign.

As documented by Charles McCormick, Fort Dupont was garrisoned as follows:

<u>Regiment</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Dates</u>
88 th Pennsylvania Vol. Infantry	-	– April 15, 1862
99 th Pennsylvania Vol. Infantry	-	April 15 – June 28, 1862
9 th Rhode Island Vol. Infantry	G	June 28 – August 25, 1862
17 th Maine Vol. Infantry	G	August 24 – October 7, 1862
19 th Maine Vol. Infantry	K	August 30 – Sept. 27, 1862

⁵¹ McCormick, May 1967, 6.

⁵² Little, 14.

⁵³ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Barnard to General J. G. Totten, December 10, 1861. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 2003, E-4.

⁵⁶ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 15.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 15.

10 th New York Heavy Artillery	D	September 27, 1862 – March 24, 1864
9 th New York Heavy Artillery	F (1/3 co.)	March 26 – May 10, 1864
3 rd Massachusetts Heavy Artillery	-	May 1864 – June 1865
1 st Maine Heavy Artillery	F	June – August 1865 ⁵⁸

On August 24, 1862, the 17th Maine Infantry Regiment was assigned to ten forts along the ridge line east of the Anacostia River. Company G was garrisoned at Fort Dupont.⁵⁹ In early March 1864, General Grant took the veteran garrisons away from their posts and replaced artillerymen with infantrymen to help in his offensive to topple Lee and capture Richmond. To many, this left Washington wholly susceptible to attack, worsened by the poor state of many of the forts.⁶⁰ In May 17, 1864, A. P. Howe described the garrison at Fort Dupont as containing “one-half company Ninth Unattached Company Massachusetts Artillery – one commissioned officer, one ordnance sergeant, and 29 men.”⁶¹

Fort Dupont: Description and Construction

Like the other Civil War defenses encircling Washington, the earthworks at Fort Dupont were constructed in accordance with Mahan’s treatises. Fort Dupont was hexagonal in plan with a perimeter of 200 yards; each side was 100 feet long.⁶² (figure 7) The fort was constructed of packed earth revetted with wooden planks and poles. This construction, using timber to reinforce the earthen walls, suffered greatly from deterioration due to the weather and presence of troops.⁶³ A fort of this type was typically constructed by “piling up earthworks, with one- to one-and-a-half-foot-thick parapets that provided a thick defense against possible enemy attack.”⁶⁴ The thirteen-foot-thick earthen walls were piled so that the parapets faced the exposed fronts. The fort was designed with fourteen gun emplacements, eleven of which were embrasures. The fort supported 300 infantry and 117 artillerymen.⁶⁵ Field and siege guns were mounted on platforms within the forts to give the soldiers a wide range of fire.

Within the fort stood a 124-foot-deep well, a flagstaff, as well as a bombproof magazine.⁶⁶ (figure 8) Constructed half-sunk below the level of the *terreplein*,⁶⁷ the magazine was built by piling earth on log shoring to sufficient thickness to protect the inner rooms from artillery fire.

⁵⁸ McCormick, May 1967, 56.

⁵⁹ William B. Jordan, Jr., *Red Diamond Regiment: The 17th Maine Infantry, 1862-65* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Co., 1996), 15.

⁶⁰ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 20.

⁶¹ Letter from A. P. Howe to Major-General Halleck, May 17, 1864. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 2003, E-26.

⁶² B. F. Cooling and Walter Owen, *Mr. Lincoln’s Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, 1988), 196.

⁶³ Richard M. Lee, *Mr. Lincoln’s City: An Illustrated Guide to the Civil War Sites of Washington* (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, Inc., 1981), 168.

⁶⁴ Russell D. Butcher, *Exploring our National Historic Parks and Sites* (Boulder, CO: Robert Rinehart Publishers in cooperation with the National Park Service and the Conservation Association, 1995), 227.

⁶⁵ Cooling and Owen, 196.

⁶⁶ McCormick, May 1967, 6.

⁶⁷ A “Terreplein” is a platform behind the parapet where guns are mounted.

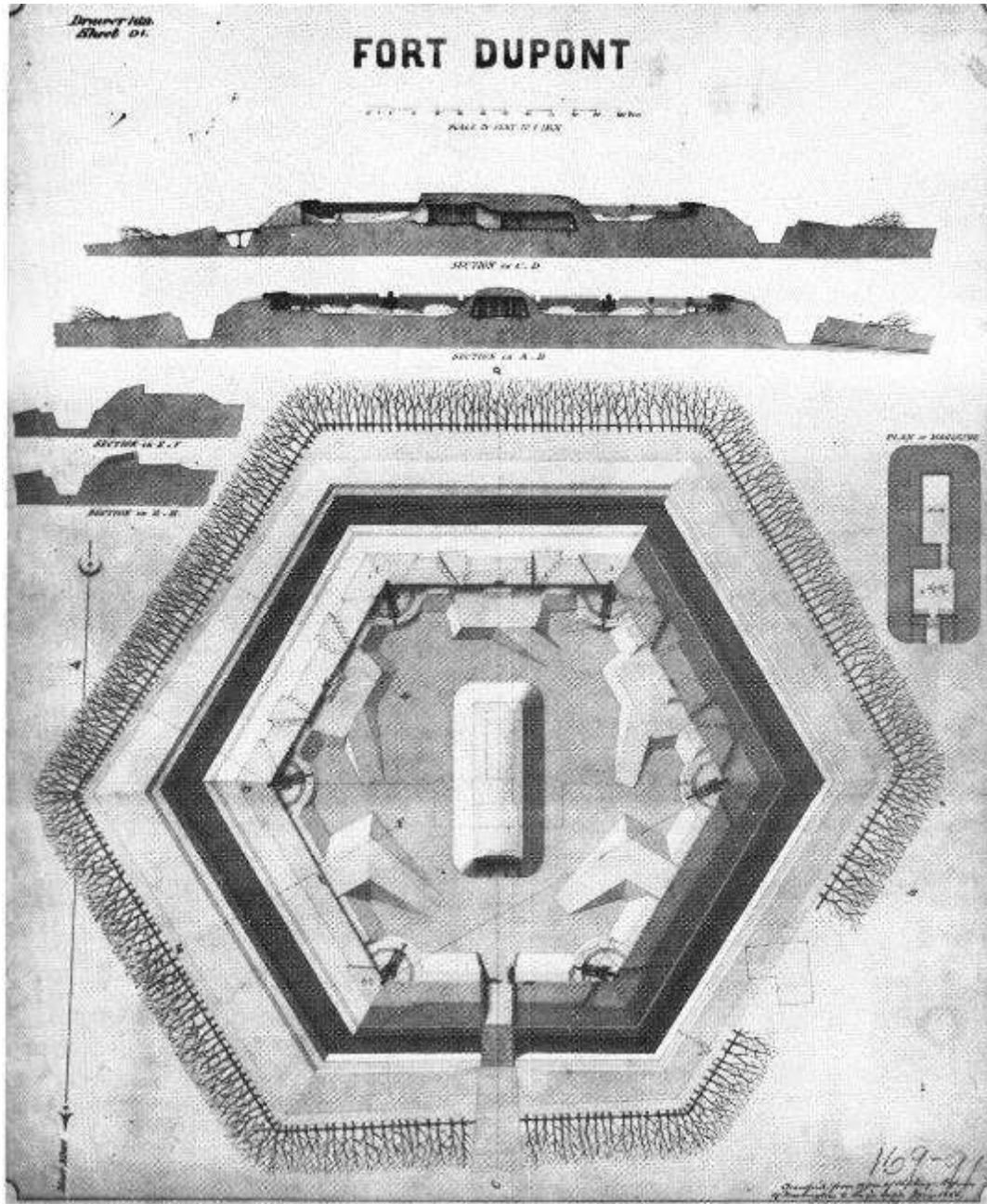


Figure 7. Engineer Drawing of Fort Dupont, redrawn 1866
(National Archives, from Benjamin Franklin Cooling III and Walton H. Owen II, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington* [Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Co., 1988], 195).

Insert Figure 8. Section of Fort Dupont magazine, no date (National Capital Parks-East Drawing Files)

The entrance to the magazine stood facing the sallyport;⁶⁸ inside, the structure consisted of an implement room (18' x 20' x 8') and to the rear a powder magazine (12' x 30' x 6'6").⁶⁹ The magazine, a rounded structure of heavy timbers covered with ten or more feet of rammed earth, was primarily used for storing ammunition and kegs of gunpowder.

Surrounding the exterior wall of the fort, a steep slope led to a dry moat. The depth of the ditch or dry moat surrounding the fort was eight feet. The soldiers entered the fort across a wooden drawbridge and through a stockaded sallyport guarded by two log gates. Beyond the ditch, an abatis⁷⁰ of outward-angled sharp stakes, sixteen to twenty feet long, stood as the first line of defense between the fort and any enemy troops.⁷¹ The heavy timber used in the construction of Fort Dupont and the abatis surrounding it came from the estate of Mr. G. W. Young in the vicinity of Fort Davis.⁷² Lumber from Young's estate was also used in the construction of Forts Davis, Meigs, and Baker. Beyond Fort Dupont's abatis, all trees and shrubs were cleared from the perimeter of the fort for a mile or two, so that advancing enemy troops would be out in the open, with no cover to hide behind.⁷³

Outside the fort but close to it were five wooden structures – two officers' quarters constructed of lumber (24' x 16'), a barracks (100' x 20'), a mess house (50' x 20'), and a guard house (24' x 18').⁷⁴ Due to the small size of the fort, the troops did not live within its walls; instead they resided in the above-mentioned structures, the two officers' quarters, and the barracks on the level open ground to the north and west of the fort. A parade or drill field was also probably located outside of the fort.

Armament

Fort Dupont's armament shifted several times during the course of the war, but primarily included three 8-inch siege howitzers *en embrasure*⁷⁵, three 24-pounder seacoast guns *en barbette*⁷⁶, two 6-pounder field guns, a 24-pounder Coehorn mortar, and six vacant platforms. In early 1862, there were "14 emplacements, eight of them vacant (two for siege guns and six for field guns). Two 8-inch siege howitzers and four 32-pounders [were] in place at the angles of the parapets *en barbette*."⁷⁷ A later 1862 tally counted six 32-pounders, two 24-pounders, and one 30-pounder Parrott. On January 1, 1863, the armament of the fort included six 32-pounder iron guns mounted on barbette carriages, four 12-pounder brass guns on field carriages, two 6-pounder

⁶⁸ The "sallyport" is the entrance to the fort.

⁶⁹ McCormick, May 1967, 6.

⁷⁰ An "abatis" is an early form of barrier consisting felled tree with branches pointed toward the enemy; Lee, 165.

⁷¹ McCormick, May 1967, 6.

⁷² Report by B. Alexander, December 6, 1865, National Archives, Record Group 77, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Entry 553, Vol. 2, 275.

⁷³ Butcher, 227; Jacqui Handly, *Civil War Defenses of Washington, D.C.: A Cultural Landscape Inventory* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office (Falls Church Office, Denver Service Center, National Park Service), 1996), 109.

⁷⁴ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 32.

⁷⁵ "En embrasure" indicates a cannon in an opening in the fortification with no protection in front of it.

⁷⁶ "En barbette" refers to the placing of a gun so that the muzzle projected over the wall.

⁷⁷ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 32.

brass guns on field carriages, one 8-inch howitzer on a siege carriage, and one Coehorn mortar, while one platform was left vacant.⁷⁸ In June 1863, two of the 12-pounders were transferred to Fort Meigs. In May 1864, the fort was protected by two 6-pounder field guns, three 24-pounder barbette, three 8-inch siege howitzers, and one Coehorn mortar.⁷⁹ A. P. Howe, in a letter dated May 17, 1864, described the magazine as “dry and in good order” and the ammunition as in “full supply and serviceable” with the “Implements, complete and serviceable.”⁸⁰ The final assessment of artillery at the fort, when it was dismantled, included three 8-inch siege howitzers *en embrasure*, three 24-pounders *en barbette*, two 6-pounders on field carriages *en embrasure*, one 24-pounder Coehorn mortar, and six empty platforms (four field and two siege).⁸¹

Early's Attack upon Fort Stevens

Neither Fort Davis nor Fort Dupont saw any military action during the Civil War, but were located very close to Early's attack upon Fort Stevens. While Grant applied pressure to Lee's Army at Petersburg, Lee sent a diversionary raid north to the capital. In July 1864, General Jubal Early crossed the Potomac at Harper's Ferry with 12,000 men, and Washington saw its only battle at Fort Stevens on July 12, 1864. General Grant rushed forces to the capital upon hearing of Early's northeastward march across Maryland and prevented what might have been an easy victory for Early and his men. Forts Slocum, Totten, and DeRussy joined in the defense of Fort Stevens on July 11 and 12, firing on the advancing enemy troops. The defenses east of the Anacostia River were particularly vulnerable during Early's raid. Many were in rundown condition and brush had grown up close to many of the forts, which would have provided cover for sharpshooters.⁸² According to Barnard, the defenses located across the Eastern Branch were the “least satisfactory of the whole system of works.”⁸³ As a result, the Army constructed Fort Chaplin and two other forts to provide better protection of the eastern ridge, especially in the area around Fort Mahan, and made several improvements to the existing forts east of the river. The city and its forts, however, were not tested again; after Early's raid on Washington, no further invasions or attacks on the city occurred.

Improvements and Proposed Alterations

Since Fort Dupont (as well as the other forts) was erected hastily and was not of superior construction, its “naked earthen banks eroded rapidly and plank revetment proved inadequate to continued use.”⁸⁴ Since Fort Dupont was “never a strong work,” an 1862 commission studying the capital city's defenses noted that a deep ravine to the west of the fort should be protected by a blockhouse.⁸⁵ In fact, prior to Early's raid, there was concern over the integrity of Fort Dupont. According to Richard M. Lee, in *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of*

⁷⁸ McCormick, May 1967, 13.

⁷⁹ Letter from A. P. Howe to Major-General Halleck, May 17, 1864. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 2003, E-26.

⁸⁰ Ibid..

⁸¹ McCormick, July 15 1967, 32.

⁸² Ibid., 21-22.

⁸³ Brevet Major General J. G. Barnard, *A Report on the Defenses of Washington to the Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1871), 55.

⁸⁴ McCormick, May 1967, 7.

⁸⁵ McCormick, July 15, 1967, 31.

Washington, the “engineers never expressed much confidence in this particular fort and in April 1864 advised abandonment and concentration of effort on larger forts in this sector.”⁸⁶ Indeed, in April 1864, General Barnard advised the abandonment of the forts considered obsolete, including Fort Dupont:

Experience has shown that the objects aimed at in this locality are better attained by a few strong works than by many weaker ones, as the idea of maintaining a line has long since been abandoned. Experience has shown, too, that the great demand for troops, in emergencies, invariably leaves these works feebly garrisoned – hence the greater necessity of concentrating in a few strong works. Small unflanked works such as these I mention, when unsupported by reserves of moveable troops are particularly liable to be carried by a coup-de-main: exactly the kind of attack to which the works over the Eastern Branch are subject.⁸⁷

Fort Dupont’s poor condition combined with the length of the war necessitated a number of repairs and improvements following Early’s surprise attack on the city. The parapet walls were maintained through sodding and repair of the revetment; both of these improvements resulted in the strengthening of the embankments against erosion. Construction of new platforms and embrasures was completed during the fiscal year ending September 30, 1864; on October 4, 1864, repairs were made to the parapets and revetments.⁸⁸ Also in 1864, Barnard recommended the construction of a traverse to provide covering musket fire on the sally port and to protect the entrance to the magazine. Construction of this feature would have required the removal of two gun platforms. In addition, Barnard recommended that rifle trenches be constructed to provide protection against hidden approaches to the fort from the river. It has not yet been determined whether these recommendations were implemented.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Cooling and Owen, 196.

⁸⁷ Letter from Barnard to Augur, April 7, 1864, RG 77, NARA. Quoted in McCormick, July 15, 1967, 31.

⁸⁸ CEHP, Inc., 2003, F-6.

⁸⁹ McCormick, May 1967, 7.

Chapter Three Post-Civil War Changes to Washington and its Forts

Fate of the Defenses after the Civil War

News of the northern victory began to reach Washington immediately following Confederate General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. On this historic date, the forts surrounding the capital performed their last military function. During the celebrations, "The chain of forts around the city, and batteries of field artillery between, made a ring of cannons around the city which were fired in rotation for several hours. The line of cannon salutes running round and round the other always proceeded in the same direction, so that it went round and round the circuit 20 to 30 miles."⁹⁰ Impromptu celebrations were followed by a grand victory celebration and illumination held on April 11. The assassination of President Lincoln drastically altered the celebratory mood of the city, and further victory celebrations were postponed. It was not until May 23, 1865, following the Confederate surrender to General Sherman on April 26, that a large victory parade was held to honor the Union troops. The Grand Review of the Union Army lasted several days and thousands of citizens joined the President, Congress and Supreme Court in honoring war-torn Union soldiers and their generals. General Sherman and General Meade both led their troops down Pennsylvania Avenue, as President Andrew Johnson watched with General Grant and Secretary of War Stanton.

Soon after the surrender, the War Department began reducing the size, property and activities of the military. General Orders No. 77, "For Reducing Expenses of the Military Establishment," issued on April 28, 1865, included the following statements:

That the chief engineers stop work on all field fortifications and other works, except those for which specific appropriations have been made by Congress for completion, or that may be required for the proper protection of works in progress. The chiefs of the respective bureaus will immediately cause property returns to be made out of the public property in their charge, and a statement of the property in each that may be sold upon advertisement and public sale without prejudice to the service.⁹¹

Chief Engineer of the Defenses of Washington, Lieutenant Colonel Barton S. Alexander, gave considerable thought to what should happen to the forts in his charge. On April 29, 1865, Colonel Alexander was ordered to cease work on improving the forts.

⁹⁰ John Munro Longyear, "Georgetown During the Civil War," *Georgetown Today* 7 (March 1975), 10.

⁹¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: The Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Serial 125, Series III, Volume IV, 1280-81. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., *A Historic Resources Study: The Civil War Defenses of Washington, Part II* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1998), Ch. 1, 2.

Alexander listed ten forts on each side of the Potomac River that he deemed worthy of upkeep for military use. Fort Dupont was not included in his list. He questioned if the government wished the defenses of Washington to be kept to a minimum. He felt that with the twenty forts he designated as worthy of maintenance that the Army would “command most of the approaches to the city and have the skeleton of a line of defence which can be readily put up again on the breaking out of a future war.”⁹² In a May 10, 1865, memorandum to Major General Christopher C. Augur, Colonel Alexander placed each Washington-area fort and battery within a classification system based upon importance. Fort Dupont was listed as a “third class” fort in its geographic region north of the Potomac River.⁹³

Chief Engineer of the Army, Richard Delafield, wrote to Secretary of War, Edwin M Stanton, on May 6, 1865, with his thoughts on the Washington defenses:

The necessity for this extensive system of temporary works no longer exists, and I recommend that fifty-one of these forts and inclosed batteries be at once dismantled, the artillery and stores of all kinds withdrawn, and deposited wither in the remaining twenty-three forts or at the arsenals, stores, and depots under charge of the different military departments of the Army. After disarming, dismantling, and withdrawing the stores, a guard should remain to protect the property from fire and injury, and measures taken to restore the grounds to the rightful owners.⁹⁴

Stanton sent the report to the Commanding General of the Army, Major General Ulysses S. Grant. On May 10, 1865, Grant wrote, “The recommendations of the chief engineer as to works in the defensive line around Washington and Alexandria to be dismantled and the manner of doing it are approved.”⁹⁵ At the expendable Washington forts, such as Fort Dupont, laborers “removed pintle crosses, magazine lining, brass locks, hinges, sandbags; dismantled buildings, dismounted artillery, and collected tools and other engineer property and hauled them to one of the four engineer camps.”⁹⁶ Each branch of the Army – including engineer, quartermaster, ordnance, and signal – was responsible for removing its property from each fort.⁹⁷ Items that were of no use to the military were sold at auction or general sales. The Army completed this work by July 14, 1866, when Alexander reported that he closed his accounts for the defenses of Washington by depositing funds in the U.S. Treasury. In just over a year, the impenetrable fort system surrounding the nation’s capital had been dissolved.

⁹² A2175, B. S. Alexander to Richard Delafield, May 1, 1865, Letters Received, 1826-66, RG 77, NARA. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 5.

⁹³ Fort Davis was also listed as a “third class” fort. Among others, Forts Totten, Slocum, Stevens, Reno and Sumner were listed as “first class” forts.

⁹⁴ SW4529, Richard Delafield to E. M. Stanton, May 6, 1865, Letters Received, 1826-66, RG 77, NARA. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 6.

⁹⁵ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Serial 97, Series I, Volume XLVI, Part 3, 1101. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 7.

⁹⁶ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 9.

⁹⁷ Ibid., Ch. 2, 4.

In the June 19, 1865, Special Orders No. 315, the War Department implemented the following recommendation:

The ground occupied by the defenses to be abandoned will be restored to their proprietors of loyal character, endeavors being first made to liquidate all claims for occupation and damage of every kind by transferring to them all the right and title to the buildings and fixtures of timber on the bombproofs, magazines, and stockades erected thereon. In the event that such arrangement is not made to liquidate the claims in full the buildings will be torn down and material transported to and used for construction of permanent defenses elsewhere, or sold, as may be found most advantageous. A sufficient guard will be, meantime, kept to protect the property from fire and injury.⁹⁸

The Army had already owned or purchased some of the land upon which forts were constructed, but the vast majority of forts around Washington were built on private property.⁹⁹ In a May 6, 1865, report, Delafield wrote measures should be taken to restore the grounds to the rightful owners.¹⁰⁰ In addition to losing the use of their land, many of the private owners had suffered additional financial loss since the Army destroyed fence rails, trees, and other property at many of the sites. At Fort Dupont, Caton's land had been stripped of trees and his fields had most likely been ruined. In 1871, Barnard commented on the military's lack of concern for preexisting features:

Long lines of rifle-trenches and military roads were located and constructed where the principles of defense or the convenience of communication required them, without regard to the cultivated fields or orchards through which they might pass.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, Barnard described the hardships experienced by many of the private owners who lost land for fort construction:

The injuries thus inflicted upon the citizens living along the lines, in the destruction and use of private property, were in the aggregate very considerable, and there were probably individual cases of extreme hardship; but, however much these evils might be deplored, they could not be avoided. No compensation for such damages or occupation of lands was made or promised, nor

⁹⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Serial 97, Series I, Volume XLVI, Part 3, 1285-86. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 7.

⁹⁹ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 10.

¹⁰⁰ SW4529, Richard Delafield to E. M. Stanton, Letters Received, 1826-66, RG 77, NARA. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 10.

¹⁰¹ Barnard, *A Report on the Defenses of Washington, to the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Corps of Engineers Professional Paper No. 20*, 85. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 10.

was it even practicable to make an estimate of their pecuniary amount. In some instances a statement of the number of acres denuded of timber, and a general description of its kind and quality, and in others of the number and kind of trees cutdown [sic], was given to the owners, upon requires being made therefor [sic], as a supposed basis of future indemnity by the Government; but no general system of estimating damages was attempted.¹⁰²

Many landowners proffered claims against the Army for use, occupation, and damage to their land; while others had charged the Army rent for the use of their land during the war.¹⁰³ Delafield, on May 5, 1865, advised that the land be returned to its former owner under the following circumstances:

To this end it is advisable, as far as practicable, to liquidate claims on the Government for the uses and changes made to the property by conveying to the owners the right and title to the buildings and fixtures, of timber on the bomb-proofs, magazines, and stockades of the several works; which if unacceptable to the claimants in full satisfaction for the use of the ground, changes, alterations, and removal of fences, woods, trees, and all others made by the authorities of the United States, the same shall be removed and materials in part sold in such manner as shall be found most advantageous to the public interest, and the residue stored as may be useful for the military service elsewhere.¹⁰⁴

The August 26, 1865, issue of *The Army and Navy Journal* published the following notice:

An opportunity has been afforded by the Government to owners of farms upon which forts have been erected, to receive the buildings and other property left in dismantling the works as compensation for the occupation of the land. A few have already accepted the offer, but as there still remains a large amount of valuable property unaccepted, requiring guards for its protection, it is probable that the Government will shortly withdraw the offer, remove the buildings, &c., and leave the owners of lands the unpromising alternative of getting their claims for compensation through Congress.¹⁰⁵

Some owners refused the government's offer, but Michael Caton accepted these conditions. Perhaps the loss of his land did not affect his earnings too greatly since he was employed by the

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 10.

¹⁰⁴ SW4529, Richard Delafield to E. M. Stanton, May 6, 1865, Letters Received, 1826-66, RG 77, NARA. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 6.

¹⁰⁵ *Army and Navy Journal* III (August 26, 1865), 5. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 1, 11.

Globe and operated his own printing business. Two months after it was abandoned by the Army in June 1865, Fort Dupont was returned to its rightful owner. (figure 9) He was paid one dollar, five quartermaster structures, wood portions of the fort, and the removal of any salvageable materials for monetary value as his compensation for Army use of his land.¹⁰⁶ Caton presumably removed salvageable materials for their monetary value. An August 15, 1865, letter described the process of returning the land to Caton:

This is to certify that Michael Caton, owner of the land on which Fort Dupont and the above described buildings [two officers quarters, barrack, mess house, and guard house] are situated having relinquished all claim against the U.S. government for use and occupation of said land and damage which have accrued to him for such use and occupation, therefore all right and title of the United States, to the above buildings, and the fixtures of timber on the bombproofs, magazines and stockades at Fort Dupont is hereby ceded and granted to said Michael Caton . . .¹⁰⁷

Post-Civil War Changes to Washington, D.C.

During the Civil War, Washington became a boom city.¹⁰⁸ Real estate became a profitable business. During the war, the city's total population more than tripled; most of the increase was due to federal workers brought to the city for the war effort.¹⁰⁹ At the end of the war, however, the city of Washington was left in a state of decay. Trees had been felled, roads destroyed, and buildings left in disarray. The city was demilitarized as the lands and buildings taken over for military use were returned to public and private use. There was a great need for a "physical transformation of the city" due to the many physical setbacks suffered by the military occupation of the city.¹¹⁰ In addition to the destruction of the city's infrastructure, Washington was much changed following the War; most notably its population had doubled.¹¹¹ Many military personnel remained behind, and many people, including a large number of freedmen, moved to the city after the war in search of work and a new life.¹¹²

As a result of this migration, Washington's African American population almost doubled during the Civil War.¹¹³ Many were former slaves who managed to escape their plantations and head north. Without means of support, they squatted on land and built shanties. In addition to the

¹⁰⁶ "Fort Dupont . . . the Fort," *Fort Dupont Park* (June-July 2000): 1.

¹⁰⁷ Headquarters Department of Washington, "Report of Government Buildings at Fort Dupont, D.C.," August 15, 1865, NCP-East Files.

¹⁰⁸ Frederick Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 68.

¹⁰⁹ Lois Craig, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 1978), 180.

¹¹⁰ Craig, 180.

¹¹¹ Thomas Froncek, ed., for the Junior League of Washington, *The City of Washington: An Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 230.

¹¹² Gutheim, (1977). 69.

¹¹³ Froncek, 201.

Report of Government Buildings at Fort Dupont D.C.

<i>Number of Buildings</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Now occupied</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>		<i>Condition</i>
			<i>Length</i>	<i>Width</i>	
2	Lumber	Office Quarters	24	16	
1		Barrack	100	20	
1		Wm House	50	20	
1		Guard House	24	18	

*Headquarters Department of War
Office of Chief Quarter Master
Washington D.C. Aug 15th 1865*

This is to Certify that Michael Caton, owner of the Land on which Fort Dupont and the above described buildings are situated, having relinquished all claims against the U.S. Government for use and occupation of said land and damages which have accrued to him by such use and occupation, therefore all right and title of the United States, to the above buildings, and the fixtures of timber on the bomb proofs, magazines and stockades at Fort Dupont is hereby ceded and granted to said Michael Caton, in accordance with section 5 Par: 59 Special Orders No 315 War Department U.S.O. June 19th 1865

*By Command of
Maj Gen: August
J. S. Ludington
Col & Chief Qr Mstr
Dept of Washington*

*A true Copy
Jas. C. Cramer
Port Maj. August*

Figure 9. August 15, 1865, report of buildings and funds transferred to Michael Caton when he received his land back from the federal government (National Capital Parks-East Resource Files).

“Freedman’s Village” established on the former Custis-Lee estate in Arlington, Virginia, many of the freedmen lived in and around the forts vacated between 1865 and 1866. Although the Army returned the forts to their original owners, many were left unattended. Some historians note that immediately following the Civil War runaway slaves stayed at Fort Dupont until they joined the growing community of “contrabands” in Washington.¹¹⁴ No documentation, however, yet substantiates the specific forts used by contrabands.¹¹⁵

Despite this growth and the prosperity it brought with it, the city’s infrastructure could not accommodate the increase in population. Among other amenities, the need for transportation increased as the city’s population increased and its area started to expand to meet the need. In 1862, Henry Cooke had persuaded Congress to grant him permission to build and operate the city’s first streetcar system. The line ran from the Capitol to the Willard Hotel at 14th Street along the center of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The first major effort to improve the city following the war was carried out by Alexander “Boss” Shepherd. He headed the Board of Public Works, created by Congress in 1871 to improve the municipality of Washington. Shepherd was also governor of what was then the territorial government of the city from 1873 to 1874. In his powerful roles, Shepherd attempted to make the District “worthy of being in fact, as well as in name, the Capital of the nation.”¹¹⁶ Many streets were regraded and repaved (or paved for the first time), gas and sewer lines were laid, and thousands of trees were planted.¹¹⁷ Shepherd is credited with changing Washington from a swamp to a modern, paved city, yet his projects caused huge city debts – which some believe resulted in the District’s shift from home rule to a system of commissioners in 1874.

In contrast to the real estate boom west of the Anacostia River, growth of the area around Fort Dupont happened slowly. Due to its location east of the river, Fort Dupont did not experience any of this suburban development, and thus retained a rural quality well into the early twentieth century. By 1892 many of the forts around Washington, experienced the impact of development – prompting comment on the poor condition of the forts and the formation of preservation groups to protect the Civil War defenses. In 1892, Averill commented: “From some [forts] the great works of suburban improvement can be seen going on; great ‘cuts and fills’ for some electric railway line or magnificent boulevard, the grading for streets and the buildings of cottages”¹¹⁸ An 1902 *Evening Star* article focused on the slow development east of the river, although by this time it “progressed sufficiently to involve the demolition of most of the works which protected the capital from attack on that side” to make way for suburban subdivision.¹¹⁹ Fortunately, members of the community and historians valued Fort Dupont and it was protected from development. Other forts were not so lucky.

¹¹⁴ National Park Service, “Fort Dupont Park,” <http://www.nps.gov/nace/ftdupont.htm>

¹¹⁵ George Alfred Townsend, *Washington, Outside and Inside* (Hartford, CT: James Betts & Co., 1873), 219-20.

¹¹⁶ Froncek, 235.

¹¹⁷ Mary Cable, *The Avenue of the Presidents* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), 149-54.

¹¹⁸ Averill, , 15.

¹¹⁹ “The Defenses of Washington During the War,” *Evening Star* (October 9, 1902): n.p.

Post-Civil War Attitude Toward Washington's Forts

Washington's Civil War defenses were designed to be temporary field fortifications to serve the immediate goal of protecting the city. Only the riverside fortification of Fort Foote, located near Oxen Hill, Maryland, was built to be permanent. An October 9, 1902, article in the *Evening Star* lamented the temporary life of the forts: "It is not surprising then, that forty years have obliterated many of them."¹²⁰ Since many forts were left to decay by their owners and were dismantled, the overall state of the city's former defenses greatly deteriorated in quality in the decades following the Civil War.

Few observations on the forts remain from the 1860s until the 1890s, although some guidebooks do mention them briefly. In 1869, John B. Ellis noted the following, while approaching Washington by train from the northeast: "On either side of the road, we see, crowning these eminences, the grim red lines of the earthworks built for the defence of the Capital; each with its lonely, towering flag-staff from which once flapped in defiant pride the starry banner of the Republic, standing out against the blue sky like so many ghostly sentinels keeping solemn watch over the scenes they once guarded so well."¹²¹ A description in *A Guide to the City of Washington, What to See, and How to See It*, further detailed the conditions of the forts in 1869:

About two miles outside of Washington, and completely encircling the city, is a chain of fortifications, completely connected by a military-road, forming a boulevard, which, by the aid of trees and shrubbery, judiciously cared for, would be equal to the famed drives surrounding the city of Paris. All of the fortifications on the north and east sides have long since been dismantled and are now either grass-grown or leveled with the surrounding earth, and completely obliterated by the farmer's ploughshare.¹²²

In 1873, George Alfred Townsend described the forts in his guidebook to the capital city: "All the forts around or overlooking the city are dismantled, the guns taken out of them, the land resigned to its owners. Needy negro squatters, living around the forts, have built themselves shanties of the officer's quarters, pulled out the abatis for firewood, made cordwood or joists out of the log platforms for the guns, and sawed up the great flag-staffs into quilting poles or bedstead posts."¹²³ In the same year, Washington resident Mary Clemmer Ames wrote: "Flowers blossom on the ramparts of the old forts, so alert with warlike life ten years ago. The Army roads, so deeply grooved then, are grass-grown now. . . ."¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ John B. Ellis, *Sights and Secrets of the National Capital; A Work Descriptive of Washington and All Its Phases* (Chicago, IL: Jones, Junkin and Company, 1869), 22-23.

¹²² *A Guide to the City of Washington, What to See, and How to See It* (Washington, D.C.: Philip & Solomons, 1869), 25-26.

¹²³ Townsend, *Washington*, 219-20.

¹²⁴ Mary Clemmer Ames, *Ten Years in Washington: Life and Scenes in the National Capital, as a Woman Sees Them* (Hartford, CT: A. D. Worthington & Company, 1873), 75.

The forts were often praised for their views even if the actual works were in poor condition. In 1892, Averill commented that “the views from the forts are usually the finest which can be found. From many of them, the city, with its glistening white Capitol and Monument, can be seen on one side, and on the other a magnificent stretch of country with hills and streams, farms and forests, stretched out as far as [the] eye can reach.”¹²⁵

In the 1892-94 United States Coast and Geodetic Survey map, Fort Dupont and the land surrounding it are depicted in great detail. (figure 10) The walls of the works were still clearly visible, although the buildings inside the fort were by then in ruins. Several small structures were located near the fort, and three houses of more permanent construction, most likely brick or stone, were also located near the fort. One was situated to the north of the fort, one to the west of the fort, and the largest house to the south. The house to the south (later used by the D.C. government when to house its tree nursery) was constructed between 1870 and 1885. It was surrounded by a drive and was situated near several rows of trees, most likely an orchard. Several roads led through the future site of the park, including one originating on the west side of the fort. The rugged terrain of the park was covered with forests, a few farms, and a few open spaces.

Early Attempts to Preserve the Forts

Efforts to preserve the forts surrounding the city began in the 1890s when groups attempted to preserve Forts Stevens, Reno, and DeRussy. First, Congress and various Union and Confederate patriotic organizations attempted to create a battlefield park at Fort Stevens to commemorate Early’s raid on Washington. Congress examined various legislative efforts to create a Fort Stevens – Lincoln National Military Park between the turn of the century and the beginning of World War I, but none passed. In 1902, Fort Stevens was located in the center of the new suburban community of Brightwood. An association, with the preservation of the fort in mind, had at the time “undertaken to preserve the old fort from further demolition and to convert it into a park; and the plans of the park commission provide that it and all the forts nearby shall be made a part of the greater reservation which is to encircle the city.”¹²⁶ Around this time, William Van Zandt Cox purchased Fort Stevens to preserve its ruins. A portion of the land, however, was conveyed later to the Emery Memorial Church (which constructed a church on a portion of the battlefield).¹²⁷ By 1911, the land around the fort was mostly encroached by development.¹²⁸

The preservation of Forts Dupont and Davis was one of the first victories for preservationists fighting to protect the Civil War fortifications surrounding Washington. In January 1912, the East Washington Heights Citizens’ Association submitted a resolution to Congress “for purchase of Forts Davis and Dupont for park purposes.” On June 24, a law went into effect that allowed for the condemnation of land for the creation of the park. The law included funds to pay for the land. The effort to develop the park and conserve the earthworks at Fort Dupont are described in Chapter Four, “Creation of Fort Dupont Park.”

¹²⁵ Averill, 15.

¹²⁶ “The Defenses of Washington During the War,” *Evening Star* (October 9, 1902): n.p.

¹²⁷ Gene Hart Day, “Washington’s Scenic Masterpiece – A Highway of Forts,” *American Motorist* (February 1933): 32.

¹²⁸ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 2, 14.

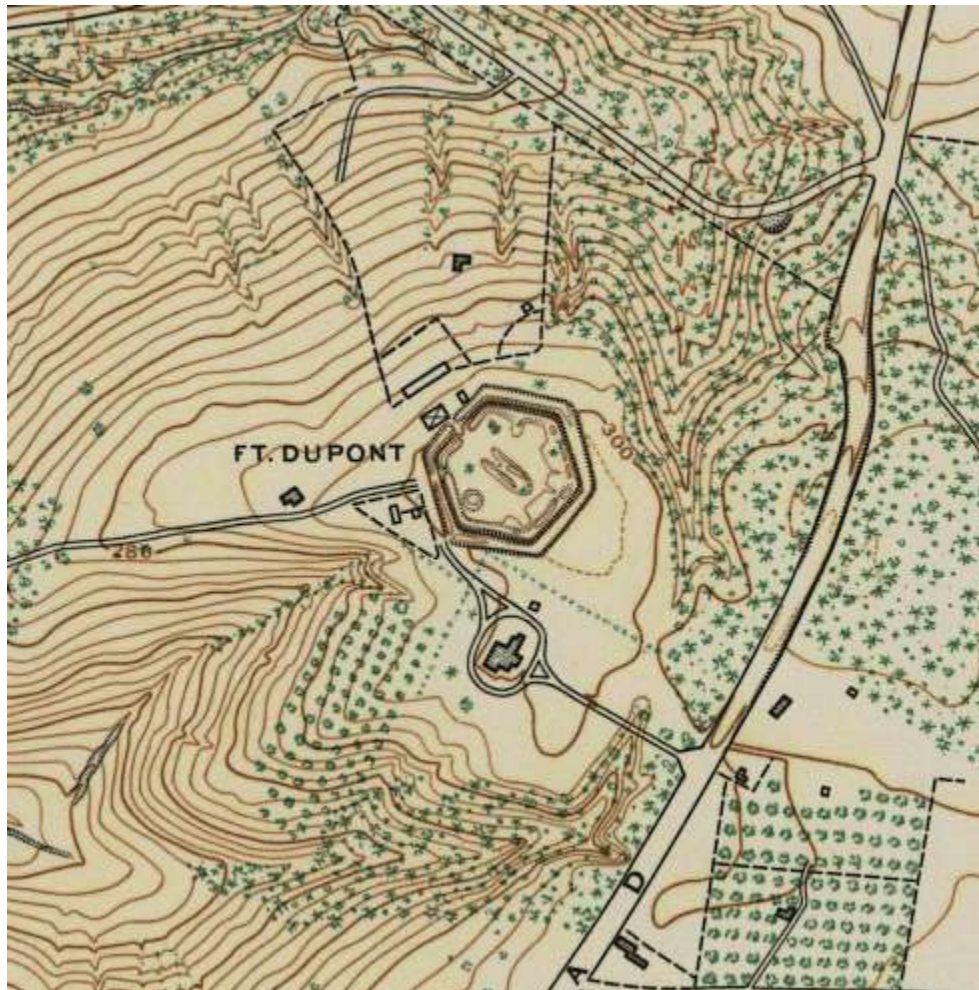


Figure 10. United States Coast and Geodetic Survey Map, 1892-94, depicting the Fort Dupont earthworks and surrounding buildings and roads (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division).

Chapter Four The Planning and Construction of the Fort Drive

Early Proposals for a Fort Drive

During the Civil War, the Army constructed numerous roads to connect the batteries and fortifications that encircled the city of Washington.¹²⁹ Old Fort Road (the current Alabama Avenue), for example, which runs along the Eastern ridge, was originally built as the access route to Fort Dupont and Fort Davis during the Civil War.¹³⁰ Major General J. G. Barnard described the military roads surrounding the city in his 1871 report, “The Defenses of Washington.” Barnard grouped the existing forts by their location and noted that “the perimeter thus occupied, not counting the interval from Fort Greble to Fort Lyon, is about 33 miles, or, including that, 37 miles. The aggregate length of military roads constructed was 32 miles.”¹³¹ The 32-mile system of roads constituted a rough ring around the city.

Before the end of the nineteenth century, various government officials and planners proposed the establishment of a permanent and continuous drive to connect all of Washington’s Civil War forts. An Act of March 2, 1893, called for the City Commissioners to establish a permanent highway system. The concept for a fort drive was first proposed by City Engineer Commissioner Major Powell in 1896, and played an important role in the planning of the city’s permanent highway system. (figure 11) Major Powell wished to “establish a new driveway through the suburbs of Washington, to be called ‘Fort Drive,’ and include in its winding ways some of the most important of the fortifications which served as the defenses of Washington during the rebellion.”¹³² Powell’s plan was met with enthusiasm by the local government. His proposed Fort Drive appeared on the District of Columbia Highway Plan of 1898. In a 1917 memorandum to General William M. Black, Chief of Engineers, Colonel W. W. Harts commented on the old military roads east of the Anacostia River, which he described as being “so obviously well placed that they were used in the [1898] highway plan.”¹³³

1901-02: The Senate Park Commission (McMillan Commission) Plan

In 1900, to mark the hundredth anniversary of the relocation of the national capital from Philadelphia to Washington, the Senate empowered the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia to arrange a proper celebration of the occasion. The Committee was charged with creating a comprehensive plan for the future development of Washington with emphasis placed on expanding Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the city of Washington’s axial organization, street pattern, and system of park reservations to cover the entire District of Columbia. In March of 1901, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution directing the Senate Committee

¹²⁹ Many of the roads still exist, such as Military Road in northwest Washington.

¹³⁰ David V. Miller, *The Defenses of Washington During the Civil War* (Buffalo: Mr. Copy, Inc., 1976), 40.

¹³¹ Carey H. Brown, letter to the Newspaper Information Service, May 4, 1927, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67, 2.

¹³² “The Fort Drive,” *Evening Star* (May 23, 1896): n.p.

¹³³ Colonel W. W. Harts to Brigadier General William M. Black, Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, June 12, 1917, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-57.

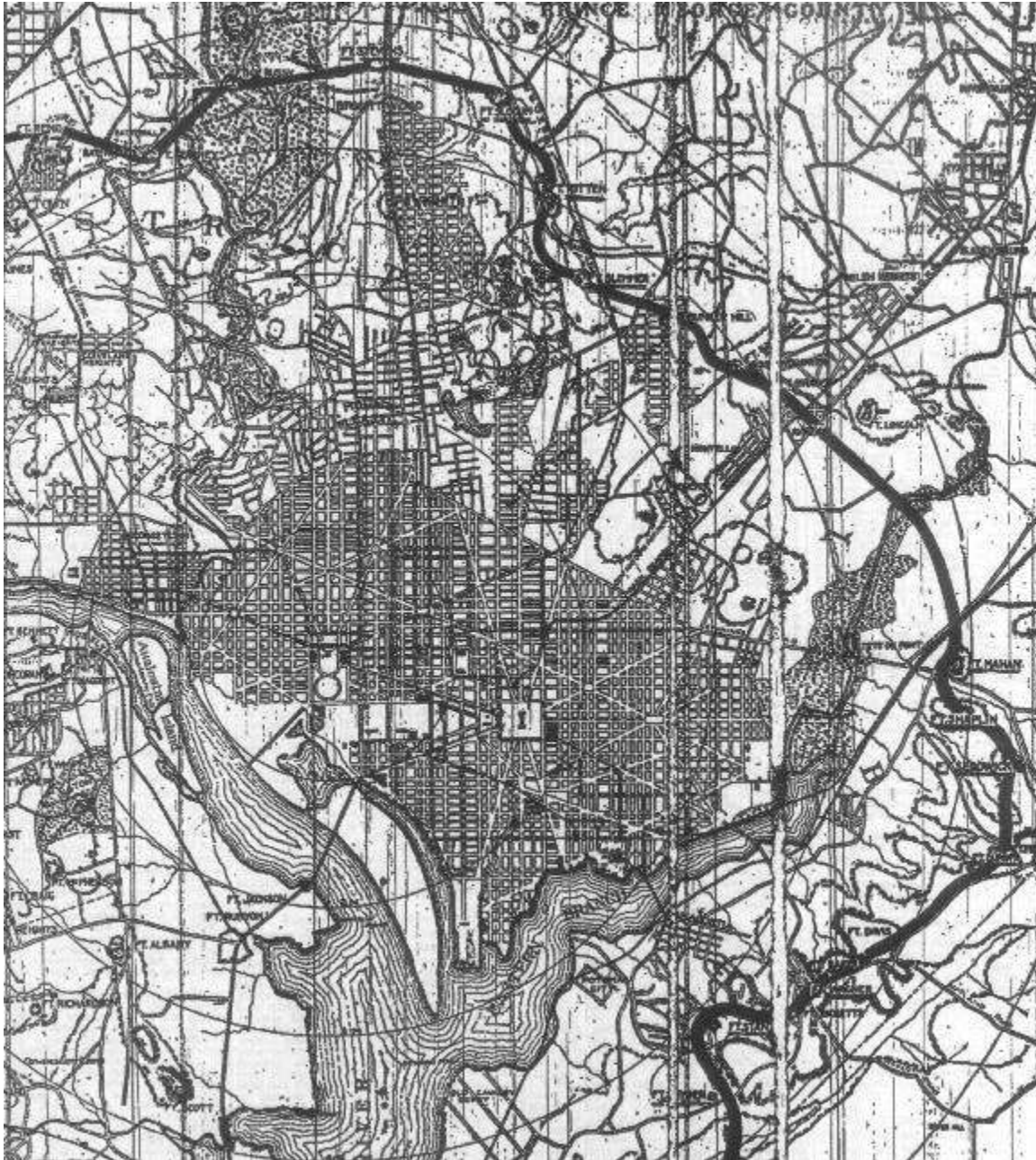


Figure 11. 1896 proposal for a fort drive ("The Fort Drive," *Evening Star* (May 23, 1896): n.p.).

on the District of Columbia, chaired by Michigan Senator James McMillan, to consider plans for the improvement of Washington's park system. The resolution required the committee to seek the advice of experts; as a result, a commission was created, consisting of the following notable experts: architects Daniel H. Burnham and Charles F. McKim, sculptor Augustus Saint Gaudens, and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. The Commission, named the "Senate Park Commission" and popularly known as the "McMillan Commission," began their task by studying L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the city of Washington, familiarizing themselves with the city's topography, and visiting important sites in Maryland and Virginia, such as Wye, Shirley, Westover, Carter's Grove, and the colonial capital of Williamsburg.

In June and July of 1901, the group, along with Senator McMillan's aide Charles Moore, traveled throughout Europe to study the great formal gardens of French landscape designer Andre LeNotre and the plans and buildings of Europe's capital cities, including Paris, Rome, Vienna, and Budapest. The group was heavily influenced by the LeNotre's Baroque planning. In addition, they were impressed by the simplicity of the plan of classical Rome. The city, in fact, was quite similar to Washington topographically as a fluvial city surrounded by hills. And the Commission proposed a parkway for the hilltops of Washington linking the Civil War forts in its comprehensive park development report. Published in 1902, and edited by Charles Moore, *The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia*, known as the Senate Park Commission Plan and more commonly as the McMillan Plan, proposed a twenty-eight-mile long Fort Drive to link Washington's sixty-eight forts.¹³⁴ The plan advocated the preservation of the forts and envisioned future park use at the fort sites, including Fort Dupont. (figure 12) The plan addressed the significance of the proposed drive as follows:

... it is necessary to mention the chain of forts which occupied the higher summits in the northern part of the central section, extending from Fort Stevens, near Rock Creek Park, to Fort Thayer, near the Reform School. The views from these points are impressive in proportion to their commanding military positions, and they are well worth acquirement as future local parks, in addition to any claim their historical and military interest may afford. The boundaries, shown on map No. D-288, are fixed mainly with respect to the character of the views from each fort and the possibility and importance of keeping them permanently open. The areas of the proposed parks are therefore somewhat adjustable, depending upon the attitude of the landowners.

To connect the series advantage is taken of the street laid out for the purpose in the highway plans, but it should be increased to a more liberal width than now provided, which is only 90 feet between houses, the same as H Street in the city. With the forts indicated on the map – Stevens, Totten, Slemmer, Bunker Hill, and Thayer – and with such other small parks and view points as

¹³⁴ David V. Miller, 87.

may be selected later, a northern park circuit of great interest would thus be formed, having views off into the country in contrast with the principal inner circuit of larger parks, presenting views chiefly south toward the city.¹³⁵

The report also described the forts east of the Anacostia River:

In the section east of the Anacostia a similar chain of hill-top forts marks the points of most commanding view. With the Anacostia and Potomac below and the city of Washington spread out beyond and the hills of Virginia in the distance, these are the most beautiful of the broad views to be had in the District. Forts Mahan, Chaplin, Sedgwick, Du Pont, Davis, Baker, Stanton, Greble, and Battery Ricketts can be linked together readily . . .¹³⁶

Some of these recommendations were carried out, while others were not. The Senate Park Commission Plan conclusion that the forts were “well worth acquirement as future local parks” was the first instance of the fort sites becoming part of a park system.¹³⁷ In addition, the Commission believed that the forts in Anacostia could be “linked together readily by means of the permanent system of highways with a few modifications and some widening into a drive comparable in beauty with that long the Potomac Palisades, but utterly different in character.”¹³⁸ In addition to the creation of a park system, the plan also proposed the expansion of L’Enfant’s street grid beyond the boundaries of the old city. The plan addressed the suburban portions of the District by applying “an adaptation of the original plan of the topography and prospective development of Greater Washington” upon the outlying areas.¹³⁹

L’Enfant laid out his plan to “utilize to the fullest extent the natural topography”¹⁴⁰ of the area, but his plan only covered the flat and gently sloping portion of the City of Washington. The Potomac River and Eastern Branch served as boundaries for his plan, and no streets were laid out on the east side of the Anacostia River and on the south side of the Potomac River.¹⁴¹ The boundaries of Washington County, however, did include the area east of the Anacostia River as a result of foresight by both Washington and Jefferson. Washington wished to amend the Residence Act so that the territory would “comprehend the Eastern branch itself, & some of the Country on its lower side in the state of Maryland, & the town of Alexandria in Virginia.”¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Charles Moore, ed., “The Fort Drive,” *The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia*. 57th Congress, 1st Session, U.S. Senate (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 111-12.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Report prepared by the Secretary of the Board of Trade D.C., no title, January 1920, NARA, Record Group 42, General Correspondence, 1907-21.

¹⁴⁰ Ulysses S. Grant III, “The L’Enfant Plan and Its Evolution,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 33-34 (1932), 4.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴² Richard W. Stephenson, “A Plan Whol[l]y New”: *Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s Plan of the City of Washington* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1993), 10.

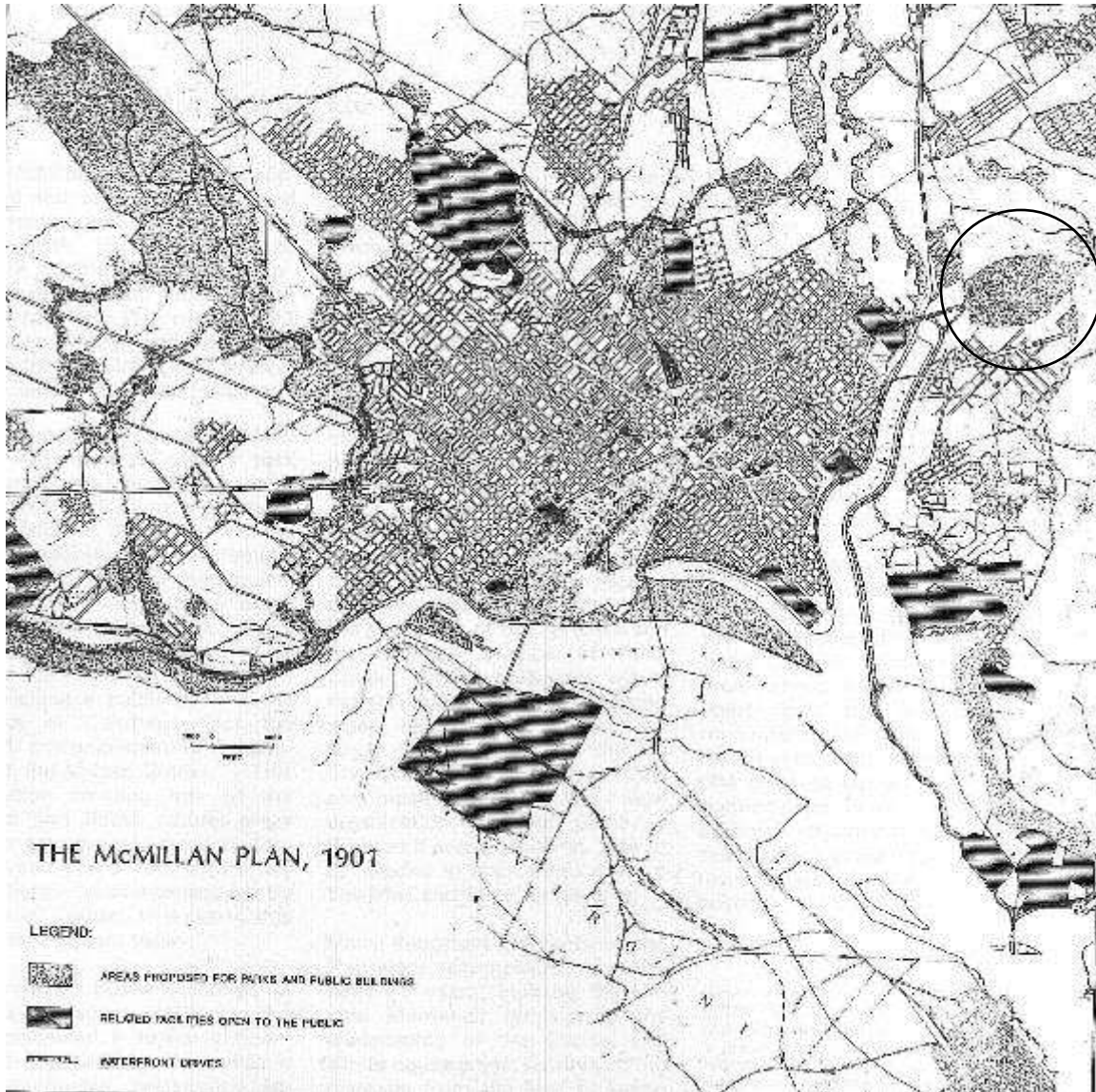


Figure 12. The McMillan Plan, 1901, proposal for a park on the future site of Fort Dupont Park (circled) (National Capital Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* [Washington, D.C.: National Capital Planning Commission, 1982], 12).

Washington believed the potential value of the Eastern Branch for commerce and shipping was so great that both sides of the river should be included in the Federal Territory. Congress gave its approval to this request on March 3, 1791.¹⁴³ Jefferson also suggested extending the District's boundaries and annex land east of the Anacostia River during the early planning stages of the boundaries.¹⁴⁴

Early Planning for Fort Drive

Since the majority of the forts had been returned to their rightful owners following the Civil War, it was difficult for the government to purchase the lands in the early twentieth century for the creation of public parks and a fort drive. In addition, following the completion of the Senate Park Commission plan, an entity to implement the plan was not created until 1924 with the founding of the National Capital Park Commission. As a result, little was done to create the Fort Drive in the years immediately following the Senate Park Commission plan. Public and private interest in creating the Fort Drive was revived following World War I, although planning and authorization for a segment of the drive between Forts Dupont and Davis did begin in 1912 when Congress acquired the two earthworks. In a 1917 memorandum to General William M. Black, Chief of Engineers, Colonel W. W. Harts wrote about the proposed route of the Fort Drive: "there should be serious consideration given to preserving some of the old Civil War forts for there are magnificent panoramic views of the river and city to be had from some of them. . . . The terrace-like formation between the flat land along the Anacostia River and the upland plateau is quite steep, and for the most part adapted to winding roads rather than a rectangular street system."¹⁴⁵

On July 30, 1919, Colonel Clarence S. Ridley, Officer in Charge of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, wrote the Chief of Engineers on the subject of a roadway connecting the Civil War forts. Ridley proposed a reevaluation of the McMillan Plan in relation to the city's expansion since 1902. He also called for the creation of a park system connecting the Civil War forts. Ridley wrote of his concern about impending development upon the success of creating the fort drive:

In looking forward to the future development of Washington, and especially the Federal Park System, it appears that the time is ripe for securing necessary land for parks in the outlying parts of the District, that is, in the portions which are not now built up but which inevitably, in the natural growth of the city, will be entirely covered. In order to secure a proper layout and design, and for economy, the system of parks in these outlying districts should be decided upon at this time and the necessary land acquired before it is too late.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Hutchinson, 68.

¹⁴⁵ Colonel W. W. Harts to Brigadier General William M. Black, Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, June 12, 1917. Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-57.

¹⁴⁶ Colonel Clarence S. Ridley, Memorandum to General William M. Black, July 30, 1919. NARA, Record Group 77, Entry 103, General Correspondence, 1894-1923.

Ridley believed that Congress should view this project as a series of individual parks, rather than to attempt a wholesale acquirement of park land at one time. He proposed that the parkway system as proposed by the Senate Park Commission in 1902 be adapted to reflect the changes in the city since that time. The Chief of Engineers and the Secretary of War approved the plan by October 20, 1919, and sent the correspondence, the proposed bill, and a detailed description of the forts to the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia. The Board, in turn, proposed a bill, H. R. 10695, to the House of Representatives “to make the necessary survey and to prepare a plan of the proposed parkway to connect the old Civil War forts in the District of Columbia.”¹⁴⁷ The bill addressed the importance of the fort sites, as well as the significant role they might play in the creation of a parkway and park system for the capital city:

The old Civil War Forts surrounding the city are not only points of interest but also include points from which some of the best views of the city can be obtained. A parkway connecting these points would form a most useful adjunct to the park system in the District; and with the great activity in building operations, the Commissioners are of the opinion that steps should be taken in the near future to purchase the necessary land. The proposed parkway would occupy, the main, a high ridge providing a splendid view of the city and Potomac River, and would connect the larger parks of the District besides providing numerous small recreation places.¹⁴⁸

A bill, introduced on November 19, 1919, authorized the D.C. Commissioners to make a survey of the forts and submit a plan to Congress with recommendations and proposed cost of creating the fort drive “connecting the site of the following old forts – Greble, Carroll, Battery Ricketts, Stanton, Wagner, Baker, Davis (U.S. owned), Dupont (U.S. owned), Chaplin, A Battery, Mahan, Bunker Hill, Totten, Slocum, Stevens, De Russey, Bayard, Battery Kemble, Battery Vermont (U.S. owned), and Battery Parrott.”¹⁴⁹

The Senate passed the bill a year later, in 1920, but the House of Representatives never approved it. The D.C. Commissioners resubmitted bills to both the House and the Senate in 1921, and again they did not pass. The legislation had still not become law, in spite of increasing local support from the Washington Board of Trade and the newly formed Committee of 100 on the Federal City, a group first composed of Washington businessmen who encouraged the coordinated planning of the city following the principles of the American Planning and Civic Association. By 1920, the Park Commission had successfully implemented its architectural and landscape improvements on the Mall, but no progress had been made north of Florida Avenue or

¹⁴⁷ “HR 10695,” *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 66th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 594. Quoted in CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 2.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 3.

east of the Anacostia River. It appears, however, that the portion of the Fort Drive between Fort Davis and Fort Dupont was in the planning stages by 1920 when Fort Stanton was acquired.¹⁵⁰

The D.C. Commissioners introduced a bill to the House on October 21, 1921, and to the Senate on December 17, 1923, to “make the necessary survey and to prepare a plan of a proposed parkway to connect the old Civil War forts in the District of Columbia.”¹⁵¹ The Commissioners proposed that the forts be preserved and made accessible to the public. The bill authorized the Commissioners to complete a survey and to recommend which lands be acquired “to provide a continuous parkway of suitable width connecting the sites of the following old forts: Fort Greble, Fort Lincoln, Fort Carroll, Battery Ricketts, Fort Stanton, Fort Wagner, Fort Baker, Fort Davis (U.S. owned), Fort Dupont (U.S. owned), Fort Chaplin, A Battery, Fort Mahan, Fort Bunker Hill, Fort Totten, Fort Slocum, Fort Stevens, Fort DeRussey, Fort Bayard, Battery Kemble, Battery Vermont (U.S. owned), and Battery Parrott.”¹⁵² The survey and plan had to be carried out in accordance with the Federal Highway Commission so that, upon completion of the plan, the roads would be incorporated into the D.C. highway system.

By 1922, the drive was seen as the primary means to prevent demolition of the Civil War forts. This sentiment was echoed in a February 7, 1922, *Evening Star* article, in which the author lamented, “Many of the old forts that defended Washington during the civil war will be destroyed if action is postponed too long on the plan to connect up these historic spots with a boulevard driveway.”¹⁵³ The *Evening Star* article concluded that the October 21, 1921, bill was the solution:

The residents of the District are not asking Congress at this time to appropriate a large sum of money to acquire any of the fort sites or to condemn any of the land needed to open the connecting driveway. All they ask now is an appropriation of \$5,000 with which to have made a survey of the forts and of the proposed boulevard between them. With the survey completed, steps then will be taken to acquire those links in the chain not already owned by the government. . . . Once the project has been systematically surveyed and planned, civic leaders say they expect to make more rapid progress in obtaining this valuable addition to the park system.¹⁵⁴

In February 1922, the House District Committee responded favorably to the bill by reiterating: “These forts are located generally on high ground on the outskirts of the District so that in addition to their historical interest as the points selected for defense of the National Capital they and the parkway connecting them would afford magnificent views of the city, the Potomac and

¹⁵⁰ J.C.L. (Langdon?), memorandum to Major Ridley, October 2, 1920, NARA, Record Group 42, General Correspondence, 1907-21; Frederick Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1977), 162.

¹⁵¹ House of Representatives Bill, H. R. 8792, October 21, 1921, 1.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵³ “Civil War Forts as a Part of Park System of Capital,” *Evening Star* (February 7, 1922): n.p.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

the surrounding country.”¹⁵⁵ The report commented that Fort Dupont and Fort Davis had already been acquired. In addition, it predicted that “existing highways will in some cases serve as the parkway as for example, Alabama Avenue, in the case of the forts above named and others to the south.”¹⁵⁶ On December 24, 1923, the Senate passed the bill and approved the \$5,000 sum for the cost of the study.

National Capital Park Commission

In early 1924, the Committee of 100, under the chairmanship of Frederic A. Delano, conducted a study and published a report with their findings, which recommended the establishment of “a Fort Boulevard following the hills encircling the city and connecting the Civil War forts.”¹⁵⁷ As a result, the Committee of 100 called for the introduction of a bill in Congress to ensure the development of a park, parkway, and playground system for the capital. On June 6, 1924, Congress passed legislation creating the National Capital Park Commission (NCPC) to oversee the comprehensive development of such a park system. Congress granted the Commission with responsibilities to acquire lands to complete a park, parkway, and playground system for the National Capital. Two years later, Congress reestablished the Commission as the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and gave it comprehensive planning responsibilities for the National Capital and its environs. In 1952, Congress passed the National Capital Planning Act and renamed the Commission the National Capital Planning Commission and designated it as the central planning agency for the federal and District of Columbia governments.

The new Commission immediately began to reevaluate the McMillan Plan of 1901-02 and the proposed Fort Drive. In fact, the government’s desire to complete the Fort Drive was one of the chief arguments for the creation of the National Capital Park Commission.¹⁵⁸ On March 3, 1925, the Commission received its first appropriation for land acquisition and it began purchasing land surrounding the old forts.¹⁵⁹ The Commission was charged with the creation or acquisition of lands for the following purposes:

Acquiring the forest-covered valleys and springs tributary to Rock Creek, to protect the creek from pollution and preserve the flow of water already reduced one-half.

Establishing a Fort Boulevard following the hills encircling the city and connecting the Civil War forts. Many of these are still well preserved, with long lines of breastworks still untouched.

Widening Piney Branch parkway from Rock Creek to Sixteenth Street, so as to preserve the forest to the hilltops, embracing and preserving the Indian quarry there located. This

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Carey H. Brown, letter to the Newspaper Information Service, May 4, 1927, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67, 1.

¹⁵⁹ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 3.

is described by Doctor Holmes, of the Smithsonian Institution, as “the greatest aboriginal boulder [sic] quarry known.”

Extending the Piney Branch Parkway under and northeast from the Tiger Bridge . . .

Acquiring the Klingle Ford Valley, a natural entrance to the park from the west, and a necessary connection between the upper and lower Rock Creek Valley.

Acquiring the beautiful hardwood forest of the Patterson tract, lying within 1 1/4 miles of the Capitol Building, at an elevation 95 feet higher than the Capitol and overlooking the entire city and rivers and hills beyond.

Transforming the Anacostia River marshes above Bennings Bridge into a water park and the adjacent Mount Hamilton into a national arboretum.

Acquiring tracts in the outskirts at proper intervals for parks and playgrounds before they are built up and the cost increased.

Acquisition of all the lands fronting on the Capitol grounds not already in Government ownership, and of all the property on lower Pennsylvania Avenue near the Capitol, now occupied by unsightly buildings, and improving by proper park development all of such property not required for Government buildings . . .¹⁶⁰

This wide variety of projects was viewed as an important addition to the capital’s park system. The Fort Drive was envisioned at the same time as other important parkways such as Rock Creek Parkway, Piney Branch Parkway, and George Washington Memorial Parkway.

The Corps of Engineers proposed a route in February 1924; it was thirty-nine miles in length and it connected “most of the important public parks, all of the Civil War forts, a large part of the water front, and consistently avoids the more traveled thoroughfares.”¹⁶¹ The route was very similar to the route proposed in the McMillan Plan, the main difference being that the 1924 route would form a complete circuit by passing through Potomac Park. On March 10, 1924, Captain Wood proposed that the route be called McMillan Drive rather than Fort Drive, citing that to “call it Fort Drive might jeopardize the realization of the more pretentious one proposed in the McMillan Commission’s report.”¹⁶²

By 1924, existing roads were being used for the Fort Drive. Senate Report No. 585, “Parkway Connecting Civil War Forts,” published on May 20, 1924, stated that some of the forts, “such as

¹⁶⁰ T. S. Settle, “Legal Authority for Acquisition of Land and Construction of the Fort to Fort Drive, in the District of Columbia,” November 14-15, 1940. Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

¹⁶¹ J. E. Wood, memorandum to the D. C. Engineer Commissioner, February 20, 1924, Archives of the District of Columbia, Central Classified Files: Engineer Department, Case Files, 1897-1955.

¹⁶² J. E. Wood, letter to Lt. Col. C. O. Sherrill, March 10, 1924, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

Fort Dupont and Fort Davis, have already been acquired and no doubt existing highways will in some cases serve as the connecting parkway as, for example, Alabama Avenue in the case of the forts above named and others to the south.”¹⁶³ (The use of Alabama Avenue as the portion of Fort Drive between Forts Dupont and Davis conflicts with photographs from the 1930s showing the construction of Fort Davis Drive connecting the two forts. Perhaps Alabama Avenue was temporarily used as part of the drive.)

The growth and suburban development of Washington continued to affect the plans for the Fort Drive. In December 1925, in a series of eight *Washington Star* articles showing what Congress must do in order to carry out L’Enfant’s plan, Will P. Kennedy wrote on this issue:

Because of intensive building operations within the last few months these plans have been materially changed in many important respects from the system of drives contemplated by the Capital planners for the last quarter of a century. This emphasizes the need for prompt action now, before the more desirable routes are further blocked, or old fort sites leveled by building operations.¹⁶⁴

In addition, the D.C. Commissioners shared this opinion; they felt it was a “matter of historic interest these forts should be preserved and that access to them should be provided before private development brings about their destruction.”¹⁶⁵ In the above article, Kennedy detailed a study planned for the chain of forts on the east side of the Anacostia River as far south as Blue Plains. In addition to the forts in Northwest, the study would address the forts east of the Anacostia River.

With the Anacostia and the Potomac below and the City of Washington spread out beyond and the hills of Virginia in the distance, these are the most beautiful of the broad views to be had in the District. Forts Mahan, Chaplin, Sedgwick, Du Pont, Davis, Baker, Stanton, Greble and Battery Ricketts, can be linked together readily by means of the permanent system of highways with a few modifications and some widening into a drive comparable in beauty with that along the Potomac Palisades, but utterly different in character.¹⁶⁶

The land was to be assembled for the parkway by condemnation. Important steps in creating the drive also included the Commission’s purchase of Fort Stevens on October 15, 1925 and the acquisition of land between Piney Branch and Upshur Street and Alaska Avenue in the District in the same year. Little else, however, had been accomplished by 1926 when on April 30, Congress created the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) to replace NCPC and

¹⁶³ “Parkway Connecting Civil War Forts,” Calendar No. 627, Senate Report No. 585, 68th Congress, 1st Session, Serial 8221, May 20, 1924.

¹⁶⁴ Will P. Kennedy, “Linking of Forts Embodied in Plan,” *Washington Star* (December 4, 1925): n.p.

¹⁶⁵ “Parkway Connecting Civil War Forts.”

¹⁶⁶ Will P. Kennedy, “Linking of Forts Embodied in Plan,” *Washington Star* (December 4, 1925): n.p.

enlarge its duties. The scope of responsibilities of the Commission was expanded to include consideration of all proper elements of city and regional planning, such as land use, major thoroughfares, park, parkway, and recreation systems, mass transportation and community facilities and services.¹⁶⁷ The newly formed Commission also worked to complete the Fort Drive. The NCPPC decided in June 1926 that the drive would be a parkway and “not just widened” city streets.¹⁶⁸

On April 11, 1927, the newly created National Capital Park and Planning Commission purchased a property in the Shepherd Parkway section of the proposed Fort Drive, from Nichols Avenue to Blue Plains (part of Shepherd Parkway). The Commission then approved five major park projects on November 18, 1927 – the Fort Drive was one of them. In addition, city planner Charles W. Eliot II, submitted a comprehensive report on the fort drive proposal to the Commission in 1927 calling for an effort to avoid home construction and improvements in the proposed route, by providing “a satisfactory alignment and width of from 200 to 230 feet for a parkway.”¹⁶⁹

Land was purchased for a portion of the drive in the current Fort Dupont Park as early as 1928. In 1928, Fort Dupont Parkway, the 179.41 acres which extended from Massachusetts Avenue through the park to F Street, SE, was valued at \$170,687.32.¹⁷⁰ In 1929, the Fort Dupont Parkway greatly increased in size to 214.14 acres, valued at \$205,218.30, as a result of several important land acquisitions and donations.¹⁷¹

In 1928, the Commission estimated that it would require \$2,750,000 to acquire the land.¹⁷² On March 10, 1928, the Committee on the District of Columbia of the House of Representatives held extensive hearings on the development of National Capital Parks and Planning Commission’s comprehensive park, parkway, and playground system for the capital. Colonel U. S. Grant 3rd, Major Carey H. Brown, and Eliot testified. Their testimony was published and circulated among members of Congress, civic associations, and citizens’ groups. Eliot focused on the park and parkways to be acquired and developed as part of the Fort Drive:

The conception of the commission was that these forts, extending around the city of Washington, should be connected by a great parkway, so that a Senator or Representative or visitor could get on that route at any point and come clean around the city and get the very finest views all the way around. That parkway would be about 23 miles long, and it should be wide enough to give the effect of a green strip all the way. We did not

¹⁶⁷ National Capital Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* (Washington, D.C.: 1982?), 162.

¹⁶⁸ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 4.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Ch. 3, 5.

¹⁷⁰ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1928*, (Washington, D.C.: 1928), 25.

¹⁷¹ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1929*, (Washington, D.C.: 1929), 33.

¹⁷² Christine Sadler, “One More Mile and the District Will Have a Driveway Linking Forts,” *Washington Post* (October 10, 1937): n.p.

want to use it merely as a street. We wanted to make it a distinctive feature of the park system of the Capital.¹⁷³

In April 1929, Eliot drafted a document titled “Fort Drive,” in which he urged the completion of the drive due to the impending encroachment of development upon the line of the drive. Eliot believed that the soon-to-be-passed Capper-Cramton Act and “independent value of some sections of the Fort Drive” might result in the drive being completed.¹⁷⁴ The city, at this time, focused its efforts on the portions of the drive from Fort Stevens to Fort Slocum and Broad Branch, from Connecticut Avenue to Rock Creek Park, two sections of the drive which were re-estimated.

The Capper-Cramton Act

On May 29, 1930, after extensive hearings, the House passed the Capper-Cramton Act, House Resolution 26, “An Act for the acquisition, establishment, and development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and for acquisition of certain lands in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.” The Act consisted of three parts – \$7.5 million to buy land for the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia and Maryland, \$16 million in interest-free loans to the District to purchase land for parks, playgrounds, and parkway rights-of-way, and \$2 million for Maryland to acquire land for regional parks in designated stream valleys.¹⁷⁵ Specifically, Section 4 of the Act authorized an appropriation of \$16 million for the acquisition of lands in the District of Columbia suitable for the park, parkway, and playground system, including forts and Fort Drive. Each year following passage of the act, the Commission secured appropriations from Congress to purchase land. The Act also required that the development of the acquired land conform to plans approved by the Commission.

The Act was intended “for the acquisition, establishment, and development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway along the Potomac from Mount Vernon and Fort Washington to the Great Falls, and to provide for the acquisition of lands in the District of Columbia and the States of Maryland and Virginia requisite to the comprehensive park, parkway, and playground system of the National Capital.”¹⁷⁶ Virginia, however, chose not to participate in the original plan, although the George Washington Memorial Parkway was funded and completed. The author of the bill, Congressman Louis C. Cramton, presented the bill during the Senate hearings. The Senate approved the bill, widely supported by various government agencies and civic organizations, on April 17, 1930, and it was signed into law on May 29, 1930, by President Herbert Hoover. The timing of the bill was important since it provided money to purchase parkland at the height of development following World War I. The money was used in the District to expand Rock Creek Park and Glover Archibold Park, to create twenty-six neighborhood recreation centers, as well as to purchase land for the Fort Drive.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ C. W. Eliot, II, “Fort Drive,” April 1929, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-57.

¹⁷⁵ Ralph Reikowsky, “Federal Park-Purchase Funds Nearly Used Up,” *Washington Post* (January 20, 1958): n.p.

¹⁷⁶ Capper-Cramton Act, Public Law No. 284, 71st Congress, Approved May 29, 1930, *Statutes at Large*, Vol. 46, 482.

The Capper-Cramton Act played an important role in securing the right-of-way for the drive and acquired more land for this purpose than any other law or appropriation.¹⁷⁷ In the 1930s and 1940s, under the act, NCPPC acquired many Civil War forts for the purpose of creating the drive. In fact, the majority of the right-of-way was acquired between 1929 and 1932. In 1930, the National Capital Parks completed a plan for the drive, to be called “Fort Circle Drive,” which would consist of “an uninterrupted greenbelt of open space land surrounding the inner city area of Washington, D.C., and Arlington County.”¹⁷⁸ The forts were to be reconstructed and preserved as parks, but the project unfortunately was never fully completed.¹⁷⁹ In total, sixteen forts were converted into recreation areas by this act, but that did not necessarily guarantee their preservation.¹⁸⁰ Only Ford Ward and Fort Stevens were reconstructed. The NCPPC divided the drive into sections in 1931 to aid in the management of its development. On September 30, 1932, the Commission approved the complete set of development plans for the drive.

Under authority of the Capper-Cramton Act, the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks (under Colonel U. S. Grant III) purchased land for the Fort Drive. Each fort was to be developed as a small park maintained by the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks. In 1933, the NCPPC completed an “Emergency Public Works Program Brief Justification for Fort Drive Projects,” which listed each project by name, stated what had to be done to the land, and how much was already in government ownership. In February 1933, Fort Dupont and Fort Davis had already been acquired, but while Fort Davis was regarded as a “scenic spot which has been developed as a park and picnic grounds,” Fort Dupont was used as the District tree nursery.¹⁸¹

The Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds shed light on the progress made to the Fort Drive at Fort Dupont. The first deed recorded for the stretch between Fort Mahan and Fort Dupont was made on January 16, 1930.¹⁸² In the 1930 annual report, Reservation 500, the portion of the drive “connecting Fort Mahan, NE, with Fort Dupont, SE” included 4.92 acres and was valued at \$5,637.50, while Fort Dupont Parkway consisted of 221.28 acres valued at \$219, 047.30.¹⁸³ In 1931, Reservation 500 had expanded to 7.97 acres valued at \$9,472.75, while Reservation 518, the “area connecting Fort Dupont Parkway with Fort Stanton Park, SE” consisted of 21.91 acres valued at \$43,575.00.¹⁸⁴ The first land acquisition for the section between Fort Dupont and Branch Avenue took place on August 6, 1931.¹⁸⁵ By 1932, both segments had increased greatly in size and value. Reservation 500, connecting Fort Mahan and Fort Dupont, consisted of 15.41 acres valued at \$19,031.94 and Reservation 528, between Fort Dupont Parkway and Fort Stanton Park included 77.75 acres valued at \$151,526.44.¹⁸⁶ The

¹⁷⁷ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 4.

¹⁷⁸ Deborah Churchman, “Searching for the Civil War,” *Washington Post* (October 23, 1981): n.p.

¹⁷⁹ “1865 Beltway of Forts,” *Washington Post* (August 6, 1987): n.p.

¹⁸⁰ Churchman.

¹⁸¹ Gene Hart Day, “Washington’s Scenic Masterpiece – A Highway of Forts,” *American Motorist* (February 1933): 17.

¹⁸² “Fort Drive: Acquisition of Land,” February 1, 1947, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

¹⁸³ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1930*, (Washington, D.C.: 1930), 44.

¹⁸⁴ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1931*, (Washington, D.C.: 1931), 37.

¹⁸⁵ “Fort Drive: Acquisition of Land.”

¹⁸⁶ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1932*, (Washington, D.C.: 1932), 23.

Commission purchased the land parcel by parcel; for example, on January 25, 1932, the Commission acquired Lot 17, in Square 9, to add to the portion of Fort Drive between Fort Dupont and Fort Stanton. The 2,251-square-foot site cost \$225.00.¹⁸⁷

Fort Drive: 1930s and 1940s

On November 22, 1934, the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), an independent agency created by Congress in 1910 to advise the Federal and District governments on matters of art and architecture in the nation's capital, recommended that the roadways in Fort Dupont Park be restudied in an attempt to employ the separated types of parkways. As a result, the Branch of Engineering and Branch of Plans and Design prepared drawings on both the Fort Drive and the Anacostia Connection, in which they proposed a minimum six-foot separation between the two one-way roadways. The intersection between Fort Drive and Anacostia Connection proved to be more difficult. The CFA gave the NPS the authority to decide the final roadway and intersection types to be employed.¹⁸⁸

On April 15, 1935, the NCPPC approved revised plans for the portion of Fort Drive running through Fort Dupont Park and the Anacostia connecting road with the following provisions:

- Fort Drive:
 - 1. The location for the Fort Drive to be as shown in red on the Commission's 1929 Fort Dupont Park Plan, the grading to be on the basis of a 40-foot single roadway.
 - 2. Adjustments in the location of the roadway at Ridge Road and Massachusetts Avenue ends, to be as recommended by the Commission in September, so as to provide grade connections with Texas Avenue and 39th Street, as well as grade separations for future extension of the parkway road.
- Anacostia Connecting Road:
 - 1. The location for the Anacostia Connecting Road to be generally as shown in red on the above plan, providing for an ultimate 30-foot width of roadway with footpaths and parking spaces on the side.
 - 2. Such changes in grade and alignment to be made as will minimize excessive cuts and fills, and adapt the roadway to the topography as far as practicable.
 - 3. The location of the Minnesota Avenue connection to be shifted so as to come in at Randle Circle instead of at G Street.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, *General Order No. 458, Acquisition of Land*, February 27, 1932, NPS-NCR Files.

¹⁸⁸ Malcolm Kirkpatrick, memorandum to Finnan, November 22, 1934, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 70. Roads & Walks.

¹⁸⁹ John Nolen, Jr., memorandum to C. Marshall Finnan, April 15, 1935, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 70. Roads & Walks. The 1929 Fort Dupont Park Plan is discussed in Chapter 5 and is shown in figure 17.

On November 8, 1935, T. C. Jeffers, a landscape architect with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, completed a report detailing the condition of the forts and the state of the fort drive. He wrote that “due to their historic interest and the remarkable views obtained from them, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission embarked upon a policy of acquiring these forts and the sites of those already destroyed, as park areas. The Commission has also undertaken the task of linking these forts together by a parkway entirely encircling the City of Washington.”¹⁹⁰

In October of 1937, after a decade of forethought and piecemeal buying, the Commission found itself in possession of all but one mile of the 23 ½ miles needed for development of the long-proposed Fort Drive.¹⁹¹ (figure 13) The Commission was credited for its perseverance in acquiring the parcels of land necessary for the drive’s right of way. They tried to avoid condemnation as much as possible and tried to follow existing thoroughfares, such as Military Road for the portion through Rock Creek Park. At this time, the road was proposed as a forty-foot-wide boulevard to be completed in five years.¹⁹² As was the case with earlier proposals for the drive, the route was welcomed as “one of the most scenic and historic drives in America, as well as a most welcome means of quick crosstown travel.”¹⁹³ It was in the 1930s that the route was praised equally for its means of easing traffic congestion as for its aesthetic and cultural value. By October, 1937, seven to ten miles of drive between Fort Dupont and Fort Davis had been graded, mostly by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers. (figures 14, 15) In addition, National Park Service-National Capital Parks requested approximately 1,000 plants, including azaleas, on August 22, 1935, for proposed planting along the Fort Drive by CCC workers.¹⁹⁴

In a November 3, 1937, letter, Anson Phelps Stokes wrote to T. S. Settle of National Park Service-National Capital Parks to inquire about road development through wooded land, including early road construction in Fort Dupont Park; he believed that “too broad a cut has been made, destroying many valuable trees. . . . It seemed to me that for a park driveway this was definitely broader than was needed.”¹⁹⁵ C. Marshall Finnan responded by explaining that the broad cut was necessary due to the cut-and-fill construction technique followed due to the area’s rugged topography. Finnan wrote that with cut-and-fill construction there were two alternatives:

either the cut and fill slopes must be left very steep or else they must be flattened to an easy grade that will enable them to support vegetation. Obviously the steep slopes require less cutting. However erosion sets in and an ugly scar remains for a long time and in certain cases permanently. The technique which we employ of flattening the slopes has proven very

¹⁹⁰ T. C. Jeffers, “A Brief History of the Fort Drive: Evolution of its Concepts and Function,” (March 17, 1947), 1. NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

¹⁹¹ Sadler, n.p.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 50. Planting & Landscaping.

¹⁹⁵ Anson Phelps Stokes, letter to T. S. Settle, November 3, 1937, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 50. Planting & Landscaping.

satisfactory and quite important as a conservation measure since it reduces erosion. Many of the slopes which you saw in Fort Dupont that are now bare will be planted with trees and shrubs indigenous to the area, and the final result will be that it will bring the forest to the road without the interruption of an ugly scar from a steep cut or steep fill.¹⁹⁶

After 1936, the effects of the Depression altered the available funds for land acquisition. In an attempt to jumpstart the drive project, held in abeyance for a number of years due to lack of funds, on August 24, 1938, the District Commissioners asked the Public Works Administration (PWA) for a \$1,080,000 loan and grant to start actual construction of the long-proposed Fort Drive.¹⁹⁷ The portion between Fort Dupont and Fort Davis and the portion between Nebraska Avenue and Chesapeake Street were the only paved segments of the drive. The Commissioners planned to use the funds complete an eight-mile section in Conduit Road to Fort Totten. Detailed specifications were provided for the construction of the roads. In addition, there was also a desire to reduce the number of intersections to a minimum and use grade separators, such as underpasses and overpasses, whenever possible. The PWA, however, denied this request in favor of the Rock Creek pollution abatement project.¹⁹⁸

By the late 1930s, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission decided to focus its efforts on the portion of the Fort Drive in Washington, D.C. This was the case in 1938, when the fort drive was described as a “scenic parkway and boulevard development 23 ½ miles in length encircling Washington from the Potomac Palisades in the west to the Shepherd Parkway on the south, connecting 16 of the more important forts and batteries of the system of fortifications designed and constructed to defend the National Capital during the Civil War.”¹⁹⁹ The drive was seen as a potential connector between outlying residential neighborhoods as well as a convenient route of travel between parts of the National Capital park system. By 1938, the NCPPC had expended \$2.25 million for acquiring land towards the Fort Drive and \$1.5 million towards the forts themselves, using appropriations from Congress for that purpose. The portion of drive between Conduit Road and Fort Totten had been acquired and awaited development. By this time, the CCC had already undertaken improvements to the area east of the Anacostia River, primarily the section from Fort Dupont to Fort Davis and southward.

In spring 1939, the NCPPC prepared a “Statement Regarding Fort to Fort Drive Washington, D.C.” It provided historical background, community needs, and immediate plans of the project – which was proposed as a five-year project constructing five miles of the road each year. The completion of the drive was viewed by many to be of the utmost urgency; indeed, the fort was described as “one of the most important needs of the District.”²⁰⁰ The Commission was

¹⁹⁶ C. Marshall Finnan, letter to Anson Phelps Stokes, November 11, 1937, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 50. Planting & Landscaping.

¹⁹⁷ “\$1,080,000 Asked for Fort Drive,” *Evening Star* (August 24, 1938): n.p.

¹⁹⁸ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 6.

¹⁹⁹ “Justification: The Fort Drive - Washington, D.C., Syllabus, Character of the Project,” 1938. Washington, D.C., Archives, Central Classified Files: Engineer Department, 1897-1955, #248515, 1.

²⁰⁰ “Statement Regarding Fort to Fort Drive, Washington, D.C.,” March 17, 1939, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67, 1.

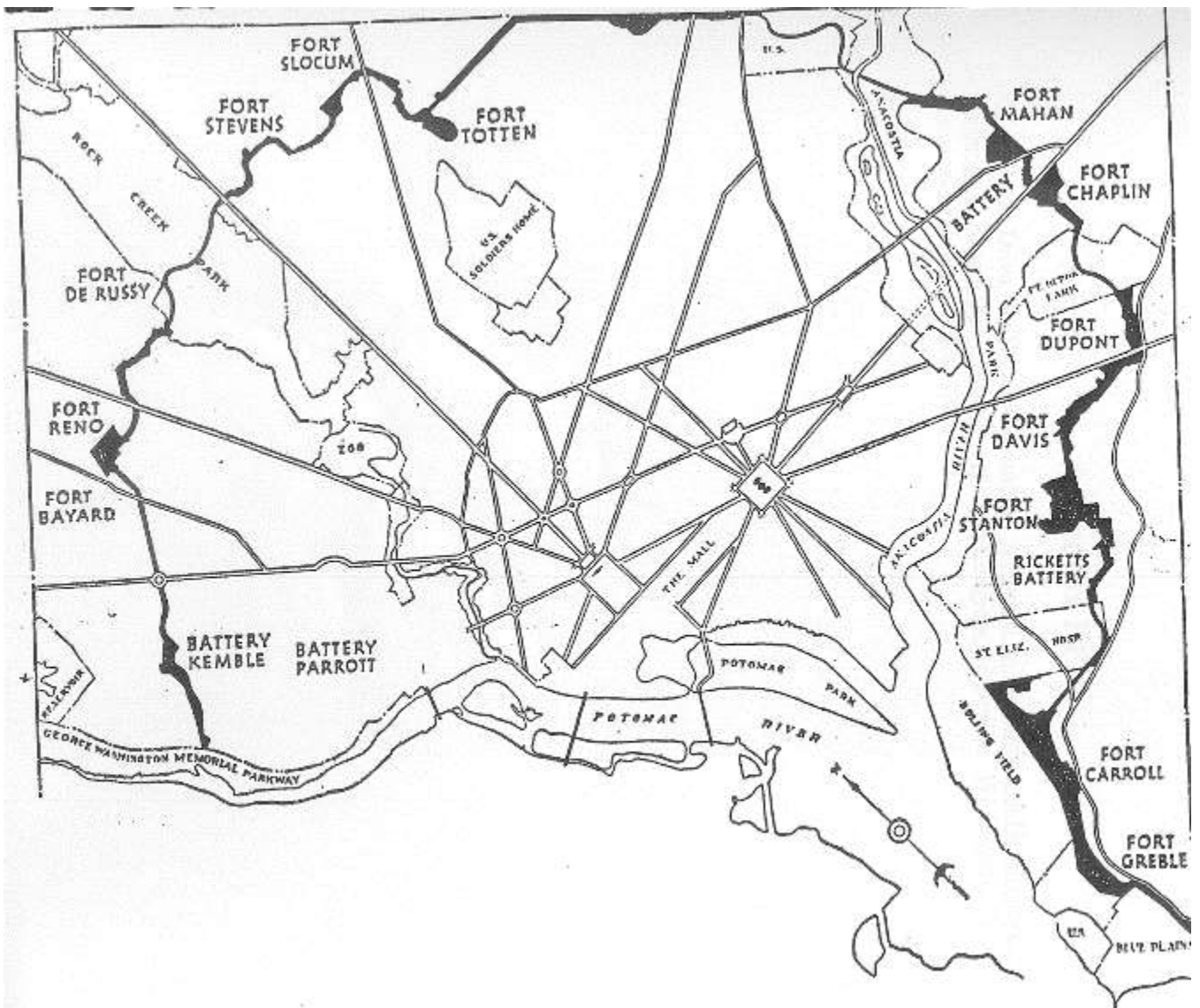


Figure 13. Fort Drive Map, 1937 (Christine Sadler, "One More Mile and the District Will Have a Driveway Linking Forts," *Washington Post* (October 10, 1937: n.p.).

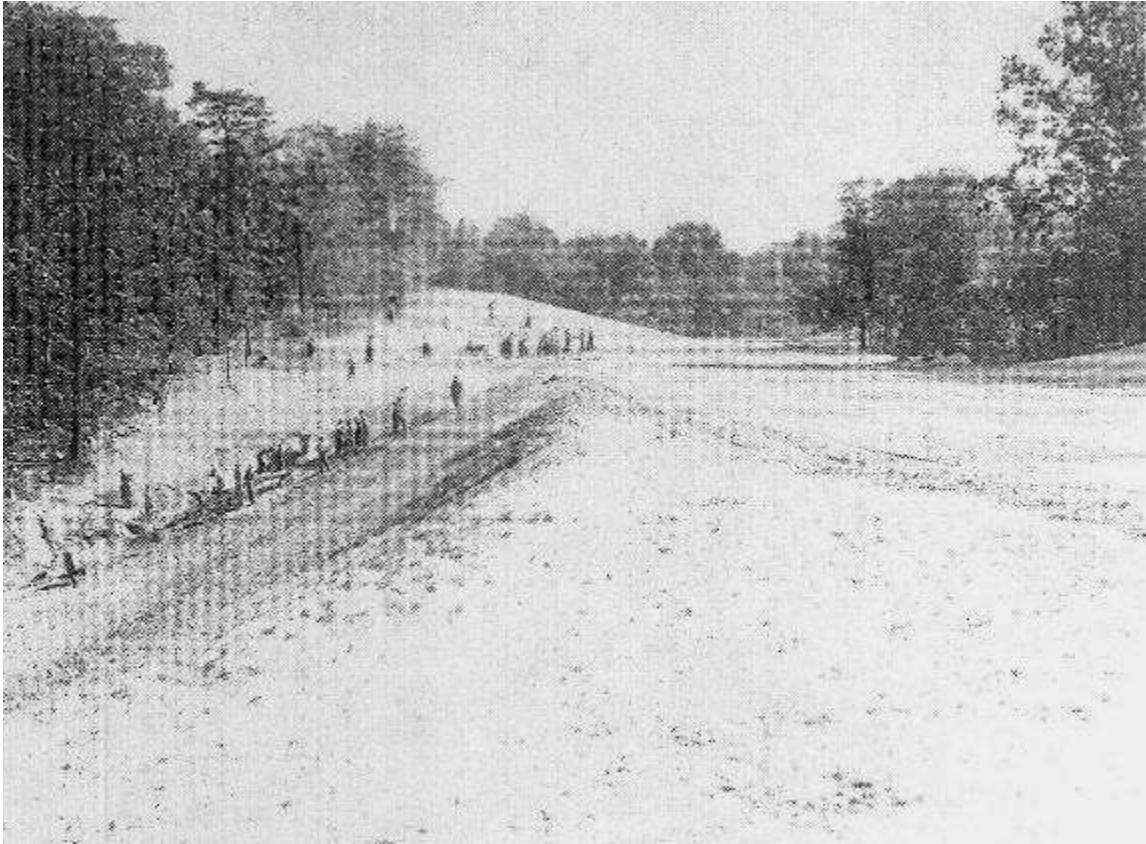


Figure 14. Grading of Fort Davis Drive, September 1935 (National Capital Parks-East Resource Files)



Figure 15. Fort Davis Drive, looking west from Ridge Road, Oct. 20, 1935, after grading and seeding (National Capital Parks-East, Resource Files).

unanimous that the District “stood alone among American cities in the lack of any well-connected boulevard or parkway drives.”²⁰¹ In fact, the Fort Drive was the precursor to the beltway since it was viewed as a connector of outlying neighborhoods, as relief from the city’s bad traffic problems, and as a catalyst for growth in less-developed areas. In addition, the curvilinear route was seen as a welcome contrast to the rectangular grid of the city. Yet again, it was proposed that the completion of the route should take no longer than five years.²⁰² In spite of the route’s endorsement by “Congress, the local organizations of the city, the District Commissioners, and all others concerned,” a lack of funding and difficulty in securing land hindered the completion of the project.²⁰³ In fact, the support enjoyed during the 1930s and 1940s would dwindle in later decades as the drive was still not completed.

By 1940, the Commission owned ninety-five percent of the land, acquired at a total cost of about \$2.7 million.²⁰⁴ One of the first sections of the roadway was completed at Fort Reno. By 1940, CCC workers had graded sections through the future Fort Dupont Park area. The Commissioners urged that some of the District gasoline tax funds be spent on the construction of the drive.²⁰⁵ On November 16, 1940, NCPPC voted to encourage a Congressional appropriation to begin construction of the drive in earnest by approving the Downer Plan. Created by Jay Downer, an engineer consultant from New York, the plan proposed a “limited access, four-lane divided parkway for passenger vehicles.”²⁰⁶ Designed to replace an earlier plan by Eliot, Downer’s plan devised the drive as a freeway that could help ameliorate the city’s traffic problems rather than a scenic tour route around the city.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid., 7.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ T.S. Settle, memorandum to Mr. Gillen, March 5, 1940, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67, 2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 6.

An article in the *Evening Star*, dated November 16, 1940, also addressed the traffic problems affecting Washington. The article stated that the drive – as originally conceived as a strip of park connecting the Civil War forts – be altered to accommodate the growth of the city and the increase in traffic. The drive was proposed as a “double-strip roadway, free of grade crossings, by which cross-town and through traffic may be accelerated and diverted around the more congested sections of the city.”²⁰⁷ The concept of the drive had thus changed from that of a tourist circuit around the city with magnificent views and historic sites to primarily a beltway to ameliorate the city’s traffic congestion.

By November 1940, the drive had been laid out in such a way that access roads would lead to scenic lookout points and the forts – rather than the possible traffic hazards of cars slowing and stopping if the Fort Drive had passed directly by each fort. The drive was envisioned as a direct route between the outlying portions of the city, so the excessive curvature and grading necessary to reach the forts would have been costly and would have added considerable longer distances to the drive. On November 25, 1940, National Capital Park and Planning Commission Director John Nolen, Jr., wrote: “The possibility of having the main route of the Fort Drive immediately adjacent to Fort Drive was studied many years ago, but as the resulting alignment of the road was unsatisfactory and the grades excessive, and additional land acquisition was required, such a plan was abandoned.”²⁰⁸

On December 2, 1943, Irving C. Root, Superintendent of National Park Service-National Capital Parks, announced that the NPS planned to install ordnance at various Washington parks with a military history, especially the nineteen park areas along the proposed Fort Drive. This would be done in order to lend an “air of authenticity” to the parks.²⁰⁹ NCP, by this point, had collected more than sixty guns over the course of several years, the majority of which were surplus Civil War field pieces from Gettysburg. These field pieces were to be placed along the Fort Drive. Root was unable, however, to acquire twenty-four- and thirty-two-pounders, which would have been the big guns actually used at the forts and batteries. He expected to use concrete models in their place.²¹⁰ There is no known record of the concrete models being put in place.

In 1943, the D.C. Highway Department reported that it would cost the D.C. government \$35 million to complete the Fort Drive highway with its expensive grade separations. This prompted the D.C. Budget Officer and Assessor to declare in 1947 that the Fort Drive “never [would] be built because there is no need for it and there will be no money for it.”²¹¹ This is the first example of opposition to the costly nature of the project and the lengthy time of its construction. General consensus of transportation planners was that the city needed a larger and more comprehensive ring road rather than a road “which would absorb every cent of the District’s available highway

²⁰⁷ “Fort Drive,” *Evening Star* (November 16, 1940): n.p.

²⁰⁸ John Nolen, Jr., memorandum to F. P. Randolph, November 25, 1940, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 70. Roads & Walks.

²⁰⁹ “60 Guns of Civil War Collected for Placing in Capital’s Old Forts,” *Evening Star* (December 2, 1943): np.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Budget Officer and Assessor, District of Columbia, “Acquisition of Land,” January 21, 1947, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67, 4.

funds for a decade and contribute nothing whatsoever to solving our urgent traffic problem.”²¹² It was suggested that some of the land acquired thus far be sold for private development. The National Capital Park and Planning Commission responded that the officials had made “unfortunate and unwise recommendation[s] in this particular excursion into city planning” since the drive is a “noble and practical conception.”²¹³ Gilmore D. Clarke, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, agreed, stating that his organization, as the keeper of the McMillan Plan, would “unanimously disapprove the idea” of abandoning the fort drive.²¹⁴

By 1945, approximately 24 acres of Fort Dupont Park had been purchased under the Capper-Cramton Act. Acreage was also purchased for the Fort Drive under the act, including 12.2 of the total 36.38 acres of drive between Fort Mahan Park and Fort Dupont Park and 90 acres of drive of the total 125.2 acres between Fort Dupont Park and Fort Stanton Park.²¹⁵ In 1947, the NCPPC reported the number of acres acquired to that date, 33.74 acres at a cost of \$74,037.52, had been purchased between Fort Mahan and Fort Dupont and 53.93 acres had been acquired for \$111,583.83 between Fort Dupont and Branch Avenue.²¹⁶ By 1968, Reservation 500 (Fort Mahan Park to Fort Dupont Park) totaled 32.33 acres and Reservation 518 (Fort Dupont Park to Fort Stanton Park) totaled 128.66 acres.²¹⁷

Since 1902, the government had acquired sixteen of the forts and the majority of the land needed for the drive’s right-of-way, but little construction of the drive occurred during World War II.²¹⁸ In 1946, the D.C. Engineer Commissioner determined that the drive would cost \$32,000,000 and in 1947 the estimate was \$37,000,000, which was so high that the D.C. Commissioners cut off funding. In January of that year, the District Budget Officer and Assessor wrote a report which found the drive too costly and impractical to build, and stated that the already acquired land should be sold. (D.C. abandoned its earlier idea of raising gasoline taxes in order to raise funds for the construction of the parkway.) NCPPC approved a modified plan (which incorporated existing streets) on June 20, 1947.²¹⁹ The NCPPC, CFA, and NPS all wished to see the drive constructed but none of them had the funds to complete the project.

By 1947, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission had acquired 98.9 percent of the right of way for the Fort Drive at a cost of \$2,903,119.70 – an average of 9 cents per square foot.²²⁰ In 1947, the NCPPC approved modifications to its plans for Fort Drive in the hopes of making the project more appealing to District officials. There were three parts to the improvement: (1) deferring construction of sections of the drive until needed; (2) using existing

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Gilmore D. Clarke, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, to John Russell Young, President of D.C. Board of Commissioners, March 6, 1947, Record Group 66, Entry 17, Project Files, 1910-52.

²¹⁵ Margaret Stratton, “Approximate Acreage Purchased Under Capper-Cramton Act,” National Capital Parks, June 1, 1945, 1.

²¹⁶ “Fort Drive: Acquisition of Land,” February 1, 1947, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

²¹⁷ National Park Service, *Master Plan: Fort Circle Parks* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, April 1968), 91.

²¹⁸ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 8.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Stanley McClure, Memorandum to Kelly, Thompson, Gartside, Jett, and Sager, May 24, 1954, 2.

streets where possible; and (3) eliminating certain grade crossings.²²¹ These alterations to the earlier plans would reduce the cost of the drive in an attempt to quell the criticism of city officials who had called the drive “useless and prohibitive.”²²² In addition, Major General U. S. Grant, III, Chairman of NCPPC, recommended that the Fort Drive proposal be referred to the Joint Highway Committee for study.

In 1948, Jesse Nichols, developer of the Country Club district in Kansas City, past President of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, and director of the Urban Land Institute, assured the Washington Board of Trade that the Fort Drive would have a greater beneficial effect on traffic conditions than any other solution that could be found.²²³ The Thoroughfare Plan of 1950 proposed portions of the drive as express parkways and express highways.²²⁴

National Capital Planning Commission

In 1952, Congress passed the National Capital Planning Act, which renamed the Commission the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) to “plan the appropriate and orderly development of the National Capital and the conservation of the important natural and historical features thereof.”²²⁵ NCPC was designated as the central planning agency for the Federal and District of Columbia governments. The Commission was interested in protecting the city’s ‘Topographic Bowl’ – a natural landform, or escarpment, of hills encircling the city. The bowl approximates a circular dish defined by three important lines of hills and trees, namely the Florida Avenue escarpment on the north, the Arlington hills on the west, and the Anacostia hills on the east.²²⁶

The newly formed Commission believed that one of the principal ways of enhancing, protecting, and conserving these natural features was “through the creation of national parks and other open space systems in the Region through the efforts of all levels of government.”²²⁷

Fort Drive: 1950s to Present

²²¹ “Park Board Approves Changes in Fort Drive Project Plans,” *Washington Post* (June 21, 1947): 5.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia, “The Story of the Fort Memorial Freeway: 1894-1953,” from the “Washington Needs the Fort Memorial Freeway,” pamphlet, 1953.

²²⁴ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 8.

²²⁵ National Capital Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* (Washington, D.C.: 1982?), 155.

²²⁶ National Capital Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Parks, Open Space, and Natural Features* (Washington, D.C.: 1983), 24.

²²⁷ National Capital Planning Commission, *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, 156.

By 1953, the drive was referred to as the Fort Memorial Freeway, at which time 98.9 percent of the right of way was in public ownership waiting for construction of the freeway.²²⁸ (figure 16) The \$20.5 million approved by the Capper-Cramton Act had been nearly used up by 1958.²²⁹ Plans in 1959 proposed that portions of the drive be incorporated into a newly planned intermediate loop roadway within Washington.²³⁰ Indeed, in 1961 the District Highway Department attempted to use portions of the unused right-of-way for Interstate 95, but the NPS refused.²³¹

In 1962, the fort drive plan was met with community opposition and did not receive congressional funding for construction, even after President John F. Kennedy submitted a request to Congress that the parkway be constructed.²³² In the same year, NCPC determined that it would be impossible to connect the forts by a drive because of changed conditions and the great increase in



Figure 16. September 1951 photograph of Fort Davis Drive (National Capital Parks-East Resource Files).

²²⁸ Civil War Round Table of the District of Columbia.

²²⁹ Reikowsky, n.p.

²³⁰ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 8-9.

²³¹ Ibid.98, Ch. 3, 9.

²³² National Park Service, *Fort Circle Parks: Draft Management Plan, Environmental Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, May 2002), 49.

traffic on the city's streets. NCPC proposed that the Fort Drive be renamed Fort Park System and proposed as a park rather than a drive. As a result, the National Park Service conducted a study to see if the drive was still a "valid park project" or should just be built as a major highway.²³³ The NPS concluded that the parkway was no longer a valid concept because of "changed urban conditions, right-of-way limitations, and traffic increases on the cross streets that the road would have intersected."²³⁴

In May 1962, in response to increased opposition to use of the fort drive as a scenic parkway, the NCPC created a list of design and development objectives for the Fort Drive. They opposed the route becoming part of an interstate and refused to allow the road to be more than four lanes.²³⁵ The NPS, however, believed that it would be feasible to construct the route as originally planned. A June 25, 1962, letter from T. Sutton Jett, Regional Director of the NPS, to H. L. Aitken, Director of Highways and Traffic of the D.C. Highway Department, revealed Jett's criticism of the interstate proposal:

The Fort Drive as now conceived has been shorn of its recreational-oriented aspects, that its function in memorializing the Civil War forts is found only in the retention of the word 'Fort' in the name of the facility and that instead of a parkway which will contribute to the amenities of the neighborhoods through which it passes, it will be a divisive element, impairing the livability of these areas because of the concentrated stream of heavy traffic, with its attendant hazards, noise and air pollution.²³⁶

In 1965, NCPC hired consultant Fred W. Tuemmler, of the planning consulting firm Tuemmler and Associates, to reevaluate the drive. In his May 6, 1965, report to NCPC, Tuemmler suggested that the land be reconstituted as a recreational facility renamed the "Fort Park System" rather than as a parkway.²³⁷ He advised that the existing portions of the Fort Drive system, which he described as an "undeveloped mixture of highway, park, and forest," be turned into a "ring of recreation and green space" around the city.²³⁸ To improve the Fort Park System, Tuemmler recommended that the National Park Service purchase an additional 159 acres of land in order to complete the system.²³⁹ In addition, he envisioned fully restoring several forts, including Fort Dupont. Lack of funds ended Tuemmler's plan, but two miles of hiking and biking trails were built in Fort Dupont Park.

The National Park Service prepared a Master Plan in 1968 in response to Tuemmler's study. The *Master Plan* recommended a continuous bikeway and foot trail to be called the "Fort Circle

²³³ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 9.

²³⁴ *Fort Circle Parks: Draft Management Plan, Environmental Assessment*, 49.

²³⁵ Fred W. Tuemmler & Associates, "History of Fort Drive," in *Fort Park System: A Reevaluation Study of Fort Drive, Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: National Capital Planning Commission, April 1965), 7.

²³⁶ Tuemmler, 8.

²³⁷ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 9.

²³⁸ "Beauty Duty Sought for 16 Old Forts," *Washington Post* (May 7, 1965): n.p.

²³⁹ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 9.

Parks” in accordance with Tuemmler’s proposed park system. This landscape, consisting of three units to be administered separately by the National Park Service based upon geographic location, was to comprise an entity called the Civil War Defenses of Washington. In 1968, the integrity of many forts, parks, and undeveloped portions of Fort Circle Drive were threatened by “industrial and residential expansion: threatens the integrity of the undeveloped portions of Fort Circle Parks.”²⁴⁰ As a result, the NPS wished to protect the land and draw visitors – of varied social, economic, and cultural backgrounds – to the historic sites by creating active and passive recreation opportunities along the almost continuous twenty-three-mile route.²⁴¹ The master plan was approved in 1974, and detailed plans were completed for its implementation. Only three miles of the hiker-biker trail were constructed through the eastern section of fort parks, connecting Fort Mahan, Fort Chaplin, Fort Dupont, Fort Davis, and Fort Stanton.

In *Washington Bicentennial, 1976: The Living City*, the General Services Administration promoted the creation of a park system on the site of the Fort Drive right of way. The park, as proposed in 1972 to be completed in time for the Bicentennial, was to be “linked by strips of parkland, providing bicycle paths, golf courses, and, especially in the Anacostia sections, overnight camping grounds for city residents.”²⁴² This plan and various other proposals in the 1970s and 1980s suffered from a lack of funding and overall support. A hiker-biker trail running from Fort Mahan to Fort Stanton, which was first proposed in the 1960s, was completed in the 1980s.

The National Capital Planning Commission revived its interest in the topographic bowl, when in its *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Parks, Open Space, and Natural Features*, published in 1983, the Commission made recommendations about how to treat the terrain features:

The Topographic Bowl formed by lowland and rim features of the L’Enfant City and environs should remain evident, particularly by controlling the urban and natural skylines in the Anacostia, Florida Avenue and Arlington portions of the bowl . . . The green background of the Anacostia hills should be preserved, and building masses should be integrated with and subordinated to the hills and ridges.²⁴³

In spite of the lack of progress made in completing the parkway and later the hiker-biker trail, the National Park Service maintained and improved the existing portions of the Fort Drive. The NPS solicited bids for pavement reconstruction and general improvements to Fort Dupont Drive and Fort Davis Drive in 1999. The work, which included replacing the existing roadway and the associated drainage structures, took place in the summer of 2000.

²⁴⁰ National Park Service, *Master Plan: Fort Circle Parks* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, April 1968), 1.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² General Services Administration, *Washington Bicentennial, 1976: The Living City* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), n.p.

²⁴³ *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Parks, Open Space, and Natural Features*, 24.

Chapter Five Creation of Fort Dupont Park

Congressional Authorization of Fort Dupont Park

Congress authorized the creation of Fort Dupont Park in 1912. While not identified by name in the Senate Park Commission's 1901-02 report, Fort Dupont Park was located in the area identified by the Commission for a future park to encircle the city and connect all of the Civil War-era earthworks. The District Appropriations Act for the fiscal year 1913, approved June 26, 1912, permitted the D.C. Commissioners to purchase land along Alabama Avenue to preserve Fort Dupont and Fort Davis as parkland. The act further stated that the parks should become part of the D.C. park system, yet be operated by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Engineers in the United States Army. The law allowed for the condemnation of land for the creation of the park, and proposed the appropriation of funds to pay for the land. The law stipulated that its goal was to "preserve the site of Fort Davis and Fort Dupont for park purposes, and to provide a connecting highway between [them]."²⁴⁴ The D.C. Commissioners were "authorized and directed to institute in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia a proceeding to condemn the land that may be necessary to preserve the sites of Fort Davis and Fort Dupont for park purposes and to provide a connecting highway between these sites by widening Alabama Avenue to one hundred and fifty feet, comprising in all approximately forty-one and twenty-five one hundredths acres of land."²⁴⁵ An appropriation was made to cover the costs of acquiring this land. The War Department retained many area forts, including Fort Dupont, until 1925, at which point they were transferred to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks.²⁴⁶ In 1933, the government-owned forts were placed under National Park Service administration.

First Parcels of Land Acquired

In 1916, the D.C. Commissioners acquired the original 16.55 acres of what would become Fort Dupont Park and transferred it to the Park Office.²⁴⁷ By letter of November 17, 1916, as the original law required, Forts Dupont and Davis were placed by the D.C. Commissioners under the jurisdiction of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds under the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers. In a November 29, 1916, letter, F. F. Gillen, then of the Engineering Section of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, recommended the transfer of the land, which he described as having a grove of trees in front of the fort and cleared areas in the rear.²⁴⁸ Both Fort Davis and Fort Dupont were included on the 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Washington,

²⁴⁴ CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 2, 15.

²⁴⁵ "Fort Davis and Fort Dupont Parks," United States Statutes at Large, Containing the Laws and Concurrent Resolutions . . . and Reorganization Plans, Amendments to the Constitution and Proclamations, vol. 37, part 1, 1911-13 (Washington, D.C.: The Government Printing Office, 1918), n.p.

²⁴⁶ The Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks was created in 1925 to replace the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds.

²⁴⁷ John Nolen, Jr., to Mr. Wirth, Memorandum on Fort Dupont Park, June 5, 1937, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

²⁴⁸ H. E. Van Gelder, *Fort Dupont: District of Columbia Temporary Tree Nursery*, June 25, 1942, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

D.C., as “Public Parks.” On January 3, 1917, Major General W. M. Black, the U.S. Chief of Engineers, accepted stewardship of the forts and the land surrounding each fort from the D.C. Commissioners. Black also stated that the “Fort Davis site [would] be numbered Reservation 336 and the Fort Dupont site, Reservation 337.”²⁴⁹ At this time, some of the land still contained homes that were rented to tenants by the D.C. government. Black requested “the names of the occupants of these buildings, the terms under which they are occupied, [since] the rentals paid for their use.”²⁵⁰ The Office of the Chief of Engineers recommended that houses on the land surrounding the fort remain in place, and renters allowed to stay, since there was little development in that region at that time and no public transportation to make the park amenable to anything but automobile recreation.²⁵¹

In 1918, Fort Davis (Reservation 336) contained 13.33 acres while Fort Dupont (Reservation 337) still contained 16.55 acres.²⁵² No further actions pertaining to this law occurred before or during World War I; it would take two decades for Fort Dupont to be opened as a public park. In the *Office of Public Buildings and Grounds Annual Report* for 1918, the Chief of Engineers described both sites:

The grade at Fort Dupont in the front is about that of Alabama Avenue and is level for a distance of about 500 feet back, where the grade changes abruptly and falls off to the northwest. The front part of the area is covered with deciduous trees of medium size and there is a cleared area between this grove and the brow of the hill. There are very few houses in the neighborhood of either tract, and it will be a great many years before it will be necessary to develop the areas as parks. At present they would only serve as recreation grounds for automobile parties, as there are no car lines within walking distance of either. There are houses on both tracts and these are rented to the former occupants, the rentals being collected by this office and deposited in the Treasury.²⁵³

Since the land surrounding the forts was relatively undeveloped, the parks were open to the public but provided no amenities and expected only middle-class visitors who had access to an automobile. Several roads already provided access to the forts, namely Ridge Road, which traveled southeast from the Anacostia River to Fort Dupont and beyond, and Alabama Avenue (called Bowen Road in 1892 and still referred to as Marlboro Road as late as 1926), which traversed the ridge between Fort Dupont and Fort Davis. Ridge Road formed the northeast boundary of the park, Burns Street marked the east border, and Massachusetts Avenue traversed the southwest side of the park. The Fort was located “about 800 ft. north of Bowen Road about

²⁴⁹ Major General W. M. Black, Chief of Engineers, letter to Hon. O. P. Newman, President of the D.C. Boards of Commissioners, January 3, 1917, NCP-East Files.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance & Protection.

²⁵² Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, *Annual Report, 1918*, (Washington, D.C.: 1918), 3076.

²⁵³ Ibid.

1000 ft. from its junction with Ridge Road.”²⁵⁴ The land around Fort Dupont was in a wild state and the existing houses near the fort remained. The squares to the northwest of Fort Dupont Park were more developed at this time due to their location closer to the commercial district of Anacostia. (These squares would later be purchased as part of Fort Dupont Park and the houses condemned.)

District Tree Nursery

During the influenza epidemic of 1918, the D.C. government took over the District Nursery at Upshur Street and Georgia Avenue for a temporary hospital. In order to save their current seedlings and to continue their propagation, the District Nursery searched for a temporary site. On November 4, 1918, upon request of the D.C. Commissioners, the Chief of Engineers gave the D.C. Street Trees and Parking Department permission to use portions of the Fort Dupont reservation for nursery purposes for the propagation of trees for street planting. The Office of Public Buildings and Grounds limited the District’s use of the area to rear of the fort and required that their occupancy of the land could be revoked by the Chief of Engineers at any time. The nursery propagated seedling trees, which were then transplanted to the District’s roadsides. The 16.56 acres assigned to the nursery, located near and around the fortification, however, were already under lease to William Davis. As a result, the D.C. Commissioners were only allowed to use the land under the following conditions:

- (a) Only the buildings and the cleared portions of this reservation may be occupied. The old fort is excluded.
- (b) This entire reservation is now rented to Mr. Wm. Davis. Notice will be served at once on Mr. Davis that he must give up the use of the cleared ground within thirty days and the use of the house by March 1, 1919. It will be satisfactory to this Office if arrangements are made with Mr. Davis for earlier use of the cleared portions of land.
- (c) No cutting whatever is to be done in the wooded portions of the reservation.
- (d) A fence may be placed around the entire reservation if desired.²⁵⁵

The D.C. Commissioners made an attempt in 1919 to gain permanent transfer of the nursery tract, but the Chief of Engineers opposed the request.²⁵⁶ A representative of the D.C. Commissioners, in a July 16, 1919, letter, pointed out that the District needed to spend about \$10,000 on the property for planting, fencing, and repairs to the residence.²⁵⁷ In a September 2, 1919, letter to D.C. Commissioners, Colonel Ridley stated that land could be used as nursery until needed for

²⁵⁴ October 1919 Listing of Forts, NARA, Record Group 42, Office Public Buildings and Grounds, General Correspondence, 307, Public Grounds: Extension of Park System, Civil War Forts Parkway.

²⁵⁵ Major General W. M. Black, Chief of Engineers, letter to the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia, November 4, 1918, NCP-East Files.

²⁵⁶ NARA, Record Group 79, Drawing 16-17, “Preliminary Plan for Landscape Development,” 1934, n.p.

²⁵⁷ Van Gelder.

park purposes.²⁵⁸ The 1919 *Annual Report* for the Chief of Engineers stated that “no improvements [had] been made by this office to this reservation” during the fiscal year, and that the dwelling house was vacated by the tenant on January 25, 1919.²⁵⁹ Fort Dupont was still used as a tree nursery in 1927, when a survey of the reservation, by then renumbered as Reservation 405, was undertaken by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. (figure 17) The survey detailed the 97.66 acres of the reservation, of which the tree nursery occupied 158,405.5 square feet. The reservation also included 3,673,243.03 square feet of forest area and 388,780.8 square feet of lawn. The reservation was enclosed with 1,325 linear feet of privet hedge, 7,401 linear feet of strand wire fence, 93 linear feet of picket fence, and 4,533 linear feet of board fence. A 2,017 linear feet stretch of Ridge Road traversed the northeast corner of the reservation, and 407 linear feet of concrete paths and 234 linear feet of gravel paths ran through the property.²⁶⁰ In November 1925, Lanham had cleared a portion of the woods surrounding the fort – even though the original permit “expressly stated that use by the Commissioners did not include the woods.”²⁶¹ As a result, the Chief of Engineers granted the Commissioners temporary use of additional parcels 196/4 and 200/6 totaling 82.94 acres on January 23, 1926. The grant could be revoked with 30 days notice and was dependent upon the area being admitted to the property.²⁶² Lanham, the Superintendent of Trees and Parking, requested the use of additional land in April 1928.²⁶³

At this time, the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks also allowed the use of Fort Davis for propagation purposes. On November 20, 1925, G. E. Clark and Lieutenant Carroll visited the site of Fort Davis, which had been originally purchased for park purposes. At the time, the area was used by the U.S. Botanic Gardens for planting purposes. Clark described the area as follows: “This area presents a most unsightly appearance and I should think that it would be most desirable for this office to assume jurisdiction over this area and have the Park Maintenance Division take steps toward cleaning it up and putting it in a more sightly condition.”²⁶⁴

Continued Acquisition of Land for Fort Dupont Park

The National Capital Park Commission, after visiting the site, authorized the enlargement of Fort Dupont Park on April 30, 1925. As a result, the Commission made an acquisition of eighty-one acres on October 28, 1925.²⁶⁵ The Commission was dedicated to their goal of establishing a park east of the Anacostia River, but limited funds in 1926 prevented the NCPC from promptly purchasing the lands needed for park purposes. The Commission promised that Fort Dupont Park would receive increased consideration for its completion in the near future. The Commission acknowledged that “whether it will extend from Ridge Road to Pennsylvania Avenue has not

²⁵⁸ “Preliminary Plan for Landscape Development.”

²⁵⁹ Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, *Annual Report, 1919*, (Washington, D.C.: 1919), n.p.

²⁶⁰ Office of Public Buildings & Grounds, “Field Survey, Reservation 405,” 1927.

²⁶¹ Van Gelder.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ W. B. Ladue, letter to Lt. Col. U. S. Grant, 3rd, April 23, 1928, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

²⁶⁴ G. E. Clark, memorandum to Colonel Sherrill, November 20, 1925, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

²⁶⁵ John Nolen, Jr., to Mr. Wirth, memorandum on Fort Dupont Park, June 5, 1937, NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

Figure 17. Detail of Fort Dupont Park, tree nursery, and earthworks, Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, 1927 (National Capital Parks-East Resource Files)

been determined in the plans, although much of this land now is virgin area and largely undeveloped. However, at the present time the government does own a large tract of land on Pennsylvania Avenue in what was formerly the site of Fort Davis. This is close to the Fort Dupont tract, and could be made a connecting link in the park system in this area.”²⁶⁶

In the mid 1920s, it became increasingly necessary for NCPC to purchase the lands needed to complete Fort Dupont Park. There was concern at this time that land prices for land in Northeast and Southeast Washington would increase greatly, as they had in the Northwest quadrant. Senator Jones of Washington called attention to the matter that the southeast section seemed to have been neglected in the purchasing of park areas, and Major Grant also expressed the belief that that area of the city should have some attention at the hands of the park commission.²⁶⁷ Grant further pointed out that the “northeast section now is developing rapidly and the Government should take prompt steps to set aside lands for park and recreation purposes.”²⁶⁸ But the park commission was limited by the funds allowed by Congress, and they were not able to make any purchases since the \$600,000 appropriation for that year had already been spent or obligated.²⁶⁹ The Commission could do nothing until an estimate of the appropriation for the following year was made available. The budget bureau “recommended that [funds] be made immediately available instead of waiting for the beginning of the next fiscal year.”²⁷⁰

In addition, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission requested a study of a possible extension of Fort Dupont Park to Anacostia Park on July 16, 1926. At this time, Major Carey H. Brown, chairman of the city and park planning committee of the National Capital Park Commission, gave much attention to the development of a parkway in the eastern section of the city comparable to Rock Creek Park. Fort Dupont and the tract of eighty acres recently connected with the old fort would “form the nucleus of this parkway, which [would] extend from Alabama Avenue to the shore of the Anacostia River.”²⁷¹ William Wheatley in a January 31, 1926, *Evening Star* article praised the proposed parkway:

Extending between the present Government holdings in this area and the river are between 300 and 400 acres of virgin land, mostly covered with heavy timber, which, it is said, would make a parkway rivaling Rock Creek Park in beauty and natural splendor. It will be a different type of park, in that Rock Creek Park on both sides of the creek is natural valley, while in the proposed Fort Dupont park the land is a great hillside, extending from the Alabama Avenue boundary and sloping gently to the banks of the Anacostia. It would join with the development of Anacostia Park, made from a throwing up of dredgings from the

²⁶⁶ William Wheatley, “Great Northeast Park is Projected,” *Evening Star* (January 31, 1926): n.p.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ The Park Commission Organic Act provided for an allowance of 1 cent for each citizen of the United States as shown by the last census, which would be \$1,110,000, but Congress has never given the commission this amount to expend for lands.

²⁷⁰ Wheatley.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Anacostia River and filling the flats, improvement work which now is going on.²⁷²

The extension was approved on October 15, 1926, and the first extension was made on January 29, 1927. Parkland still extends from Fort Dupont Park to Anacostia Park along the route of the Fort Dupont Creek, and even though proposals for the parkway connecting the two parks continued for several decades the parkway was never constructed.

By 1926, Major U. S. Grant III, Director of the Office of Public Buildings and Parks of the National Capital, the new steward of the Fort Dupont Park, issued instructions to the District authorities that the land be made available for public use even while under the jurisdiction of the District government. In fact, by 1926, the land was already available for public use, but it was difficult to access and greatly altered by the presence of the District Tree Nursery. The land was predicted to “furnish ideal picnic grounds, away from the lanes of main travel during the summer months.”²⁷³

On February 12 and April 27, 1927, Charles Carroll Glover and his wife made a generous donation of 39.29 acres, in the heart of the proposed boundaries for the park.²⁷⁴ (figure 18) The February 12, 1927, donation included 1,361,983.48 square feet from parcel 204/4, and the April 27, 1927, donation consisted of 454,845.80 square feet of land from parcel 204/4.²⁷⁵ Glover was widely respected as a philanthropist, civic leader, financier and the president of the Corcoran Gallery. On July 6, 1928, a further extension of the park, proposed by Fred G. Coldren of the Commission, was authorized. The park’s extension north of F Street permitted the inclusion of a prominent hill, known as Chappellear Hill after a former property owner. It was located at the intersection of Ely Place and Ridge Road. On July 31, 1931, the National Park Service-National Capital Parks officially renamed the hill as Coldren Hill, following the death of Coldren, in memory of his service to the park and his support of including the view from the hill within the boundaries of the park.²⁷⁶ At the end of fiscal year 1928, Fort Dupont Park totaled 97.66 acres and was valued at \$127,621.89.²⁷⁷ The task of acquiring land for Fort Dupont Park, and other D.C. parks, was aided by the Capper Crampon Act of 1930, which authorized the appropriation of funds for land acquisition for parkways, including the future site of the Fort Drive.

The 1929 Report by Conrad L. Wirth on the Development of Fort Dupont Park

In July 1929, Conrad L. Wirth, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission’s landscape architect who later went on to become the director of the NPS in 1951, authored a comprehensive plan for the design of Fort Dupont Park. (figure 19) Wirth’s report served as the basis for the development plan for the park approved on September 27, 1934. In the plan, Wirth stated the approved boundaries of the park as Alabama Avenue to the east, Massachusetts Avenue to the south, Anacostia Park to the west, and Ely Place and Ridge Road to the north. A crescent-shaped

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ John Nolen, Jr., to Mr. Wirth, Memorandum on Fort Dupont Park, June 5, 1937.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 1460. Fort Dupont.

²⁷⁷ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1928*, (Washington, D.C.: 1928), 25.

Insert Figure 18. Plan showing Fort Dupont Park, "Gift of Charles Glover, Sr.," February 1927
(National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-1).

Insert Figure 19. 1929 Development Plan for Fort Dupont Park
(National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-13)

border road was created at the northeast corner of the park connecting Ely Place and Ridge Road. While the outline of Fort Dupont Park was set, much of the 367 acres of land was still in private hands.²⁷⁸ Wirth described the existing conditions of the land. The entire park needed very little planting and reforestation, although dead trees and underbrush would be removed.²⁷⁹ Outside of this, with a small amount of planting in connection with the proposed golf course and reforestation of the small area between Anacostia Park and Minnesota Avenue and certain sections along Massachusetts Avenue, no further planting was contemplated.²⁸⁰ In addition, Wirth emphasized the scenic qualities of the stream valley which traveled west to the Anacostia and its drainage area. The many springs in the park provided a permanent source of water for the stream, by then named Fort Dupont Creek. The stream had a clearly defined channel except for the area between Minnesota Avenue and Anacostia Park where the floor of the valley became quite broad and the ground soft.²⁸¹ Wirth further described the site of the park:

The hills bordering the stream are quite steep and high, some extending one hundred feet above the stream on a slope that rises at the rate of three and four on one. Although there are many high hills within this park, it is almost impossible to see for any great distance due to the heavy growth of trees. You can, however, obtain a fine panoramic view of the District from the hill-top in the northeast corner of the property at the junction of Ely Place and Ridge Road. This view has been made possible by the fact that the foreground has been cleared of trees . . . it is very important to preserve this view.²⁸²

Parking was to be provided along the route since it had spectacular views of the city. Wirth claimed this area had been used as a farm at one time, although he did not specify if the farm was owned by Michael Caton or an earlier owner. A golf course was planned for the area once used as a farm. The 44 acres of land would be transformed into a nine-hole golf course with 200-foot fairways, grass greens, and clay tees at a projected cost of \$30,000. The existing farmhouse would be remodeled into a clubhouse for the course, and the course would be augmented by the construction of a caddy pen and toll house; all three projects were expected to total \$20,000.²⁸³

The report described the proposed plan for the development of Fort Dupont Park. The character of the park was to be strictly naturalistic. Wirth pointed out that most of the land was wooded with a fine undergrowth of mountain laurel. To traverse the wooded valley, the plan proposed two park drives. One drive, part of the planned Fort Drive, entered the park on the north at the intersection of Texas Avenue with Ridge Road and extended generally south across the park's main valley by means of a high-arched bridge, crossed the east and west park drive, and exited

²⁷⁸ Faragasso, 4.

²⁷⁹ C. L. Wirth, *Fort Dupont Park* (Washington, D.C.: National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1929), 3-4.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 3-4.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁸² Wirth, 1929, 1.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1-6.

the park by means of an underpass at Massachusetts Avenue. The drive then “connected with a District street, which climbed a hill and joined the Upper Park Drive at Fort Davis.”²⁸⁴ Wirth noted that studies were underway being done to see if the District street could be widened, so that it could serve as the Fort Drive connection between Fort Dupont and Fort Davis.²⁸⁵ The other drive, Dupont Drive, ran east to west through the park. The eastern point of the drive was to originate at the Anacostia waterfront drive and passed under the B & O railroad tracks before intersecting Minnesota Avenue at the east boundary of Fort Dupont Park. Wirth described Minnesota Avenue as “the only heavy traffic highway that crosses the Park. This Avenue crosses some eleven hundred feet to the east of the point where Fort Dupont Park joins Anacostia Park. East of Minnesota Avenue the park is wide and very well wooded, while west of the Avenue toward Anacostia Park it narrows down to approximately four hundred feet and acts more as a parkway connection than a park.”²⁸⁶

Wirth evaluated three options of how the intersection between Dupont Drive and Minnesota Avenue should be addressed: an at-grade crossing, an overpass over Minnesota Avenue, or the elevation of Minnesota Avenue some twenty feet through the entire park. Wirth favored the Minnesota Avenue overpass. After the intersection with Minnesota Avenue, Dupont Drive continued on the ridge toward Fort Dupont, near which it passed Fort Drive and continued across the small valley by means of a bridge and up the side of the hill to Fort Dupont proper. The drive made a half circle around the north and east sides of the fort and then paralleled Alabama Avenue south to a point where a proposed circle was to mark the intersection of Massachusetts and Alabama avenues. On the other side of the circle, Dupont Drive continued south to Fort Davis where it joined the previously mentioned Fort Drive.²⁸⁷

In addition to the proposed golf course, the plans also provided for a great many recreational options. The plan included picnic areas and recreation areas for small children. The two picnic areas were to include tables, chairs, and fireplaces, three shelters of rough-hewn timbers similar to those constructed in Rock Creek Park, and three masonry toilet buildings. Twenty-five rustic benches were to be constructed throughout the entire park. The playground, to include wading pools, swings, and sand boxes, was to be located near Massachusetts Avenue and the Fort Drive. In addition, a seven-acre athletic field was proposed.

The design was unique since it located the recreational features, such as paths, picnic groves, and the golf course, along the outskirts of the park and on the ridges in order to “[preserve] the valley in its natural state. This should allow those who are really interested in the stream and its woodland surroundings an opportunity to really enjoy it.”²⁸⁸ The park planners designed and implemented 5.7 miles of foot paths, located to allow easy access into and across the park.²⁸⁹ Wirth projected that the paths would provide views “not otherwise utilized by the roads and bridle paths.”²⁹⁰ The four-foot-wide foot paths, projected to cost \$6,000, were to be cindered with

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 1.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

steps, small bridges, and stepping stones to traverse the steep terrain. The location of the paths in relation to existing foot paths is unknown since many paths currently are overgrown. The plan also included 4.75 miles of bridle paths located to provide pleasant views and not to interfere with the drives and foot paths. The cindered Bridle Paths, projected to cost \$5,000, were to be six feet wide and use fords to cross the stream.

In fact, at this time, proposals for the Fort Drive included a bridle path around the entire circuit of forts. Since this circuit would be such a long horseback journey, Wirth proposed Fort Dupont Park as an overnight resting place. He suggested that an existing house on Ridge Road could be remodeled to accommodate a caretaker on the second floor and an evening gathering room. A corral could be constructed in conjunction with the barn now on the property to care for the horses overnight. Several lean-tos could be built on the hills to the southeast and northwest, and the riders could spend the night in these quite comfortably. Sleeping bags and blankets could be rented out by the keeper, and the keeper's wife could cook the few meals necessary.²⁹¹

The fort also was to play a prominent role in the program of the park. Wirth commented on the condition of the park: "Fort Dupont itself is in a good state of preservation and should be kept so."²⁹² (figure 20, 21) The area in the vicinity of this Fort had been put in good condition by the Street Trees and Parking Department of the District of Columbia which had been using the open space surrounding the Fort for tree nursery purposes.²⁹³ All buildings in the vicinity of the fort would be removed with the exception of the residence. The residence was to be remodeled as a community gathering space "for refreshments and light luncheons."²⁹⁴ The plan allowed for ample parking around the fort.

Of the proposals made in Wirth's plan, several were implemented, including the previously mentioned foot paths. Both park drives were completed in the 1930s by CCC workers, although as previously described, Dupont Drive never extended to the Anacostia waterfront. Planning for the golf course began at Wirth's suggestion, but the farmhouse was never remodeled into a clubhouse for the course. One picnic area and the Play Meadow were both completed off of Fort Dupont Drive. Finally, the proposed bridle path connecting all of the city's forts was never implemented.

Development of Fort Dupont Park in the 1930s

In 1930, following the publication of Wirth's plan for the park, the area around the fort totaled 97.66 acres valued at \$127,621.89 while the park included 221.28 acres valued at \$219, 047.30.²⁹⁵ In 1931, the park grew to a size of 228.23 acres valued at \$242,411.86.²⁹⁶ Between 1931 and 1932, the park grew to 338.91 acres, which were valued at \$381,393.75.²⁹⁷ (figure 22) The NCPPC aimed to acquire a total of approximately 360 acres for the park. This amount had not

²⁹¹ Ibid., 3-6.

²⁹² Ibid., 3-4.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.

²⁹⁵ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1930*, (Washington, D.C.: 1930), 44.

²⁹⁶ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1931*, (Washington, D.C.: 1931), 37.

²⁹⁷ Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, *Annual Report, 1932*, (Washington, D.C.: 1932), 23.



Figure 20. View of interior of Fort Dupont earthworks, 1928 (National Capital Planning Commission).

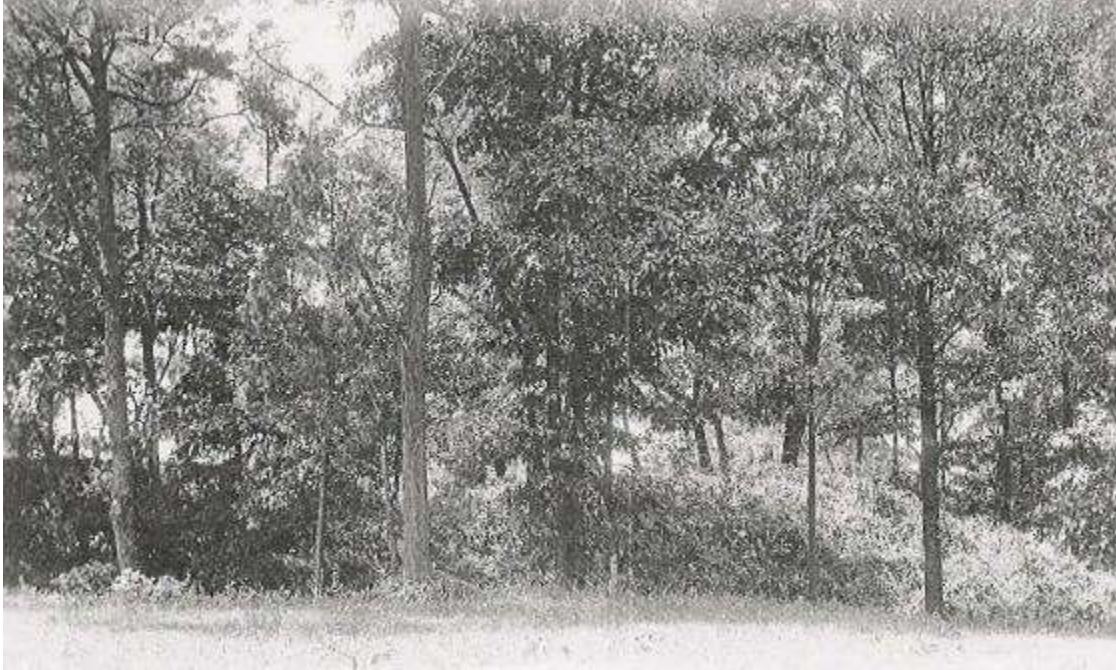


Figure 21. Exterior of Fort Dupont earthworks, date unknown (National Capital Planning Commission).

Insert Figure 22. Map of Fort Dupont Plan, March 1, 1932, showing acquired area (shaded) and the amount of development that existed within the future boundaries of the park in the 1930s prior to its opening in 1937 (Resource Files, National Capital Region, National Park Service).

been reached by 1935, a year before the planned completion date of the summer of 1936. On October 30, 1935, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission authorized its land purchasing agent, Norman C. Brown, to proceed with further land acquisitions to complete the project.²⁹⁸ Many of the properties acquired by the Commission contained inhabited houses and the tenants remained in the residences, making it difficult to clear the land for park uses. To assist in the acquisition of land, many condemnation proceedings were instituted – a just price was paid to the owners and the properties became vested in the United States in fee simple.²⁹⁹ On December 10, 1935, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission held condemnation proceedings for Fort Dupont Park in the District Supreme Court. The suit involved 85 parcels of land and 125 defendants.³⁰⁰

Wirth's June 1929 plan and report for development of Fort Dupont Park received the tentative approval of the NCPPC. The National Capital Parks office completed a plan for the park in 1934. (figure 23) Titled *Development Outline for Fort Dupont Park*, the 1934 plan proposed incremental development for the park in accordance with Wirth's Comprehensive Plan, so that features could be adapted to meet the needs of the community as they arise. The *Development Outline*, for example, recommended such development for the park's proposed "Play Meadow" feature, for which it stated: "The opportunities this area provides for casual recreative activities, will, for some time, be adequate for the southeast section. It is ideally suited for such usage, yet should the need arise for a carefully organized recreational development, it is the logical site to use. Thus without altering the organization of the plan, the park can grow with the section of the city it serves."³⁰¹ The outline proposed the immediate development of the Pine Woods Picnic Area and grading of the Anacostia Connection with the rest of the park development to follow when need and funds arise.³⁰² The outline detailed the proposed circulation plan, primarily the road system, for the park. It suggested that Fort Drive should travel under Massachusetts Avenue on the south and Ridge Road on the north. The outline created a hierarchy for the road system with Fort Drive considered the "most important roadway, and the most important feature physically within the park."³⁰³ This road, in addition to Alabama Avenue from outside the park, provided access to the fort. The report categorized Fort Dupont Drive, which was to parallel Massachusetts Avenue and serve the Fort Picnic Area in a loop, as a secondary road. The design philosophy behind the design of the circulation system was as follows: "The road system is designed in such a manner as to make it possible to get to the various use areas within the park, rather than to make an obvious attempt to show off the park through an automobile scenic route. Fort Dupont Park is relatively too small, and the vistas it has to offer (except for that area where the golf course will be) are not unusual enough to warrant the expense of building any more roads than are absolutely necessary. The area is much better adapted to pedestrian use."³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ "CCC Dam in Fort Dupont Park," *Evening Star* (October 31, 1935): n.p.

²⁹⁹ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 1460. Fort Dupont.

³⁰⁰ "Fort Dupont Park Suits Under Way," *Evening Star* (December 11, 1935): B4.

³⁰¹ NARA, Record Group 79, Drawing 16-17, "Preliminary Plan for Landscape Development," 1934, n.p.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

Insert Figure 23. 1934 Preliminary Plan for Landscape Development at Fort Dupont Park
(National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-20).

The outline divided the park into use areas; the two main uses were historic areas and developed areas. The park retained only one site for its former usage, the fort.³⁰⁵ The house used by Lanham “could be used eventually as a general administrative building & superintendent’s quarters.”³⁰⁶ The primary developed areas, including the golf course, the picnic areas, and the play areas, were all used for recreational purposes. The park was to have a golf course laid out “over a rather interesting rolling piece of ground in the northern section of the park.”³⁰⁷ The outline included four picnic areas near other points of interest, such as the Fort Picnic Area. The West Picnic Area and the Central Picnic Area were both sited near the Play Meadow off of Fort Dupont Drive, while the Pine Woods Picnic Area was located off of Fort Drive. The meadow, located near the center of the park with oak trees lining three of its sides, was planned as the main play area. The outline proposed an additional picnic area for the triangular tract of land north of Ridge Road.

T. C. Jeffers, of NCPPC, described the 1934 plan as follows:

1. Roads
 - a. *Fort Drive*: The alignment in general follows that shown on the 1929 plan. Certain adjustments have been made to fit the new topography which results in the more direct and certainly more pleasing alignment. The location at the southern end at Massachusetts Avenue underpass needs slight adjustment to fit location to Fort Davis.
 - b. *Connecting Roads*: The road connection to Anacostia Park seems satisfactory except at the proposed grade separation over Minnesota Avenue where it would seem desirable to take advantage of the higher ground on the east side of Minnesota Avenue and immediately north of the location shown.
 - c. Encircling road at play area on Ridge Road should be eliminated as this area will be surrounded by District streets. The north corner of this triangle must of necessity be cut off to connect Burns Street through. The principle adopted of locating the roads to connect use areas instead of as scenic drives seems sound in a park of this size.
2. Old Fort: The plan calls for the preservation of the Old Fort in its present state, which is, of course, what the Commission desires.
3. Golf Course: The first fairway is indicated as a dog leg which is not considered good practice. The first hole should be a fairly long, easy shot to get the player away quickly and allow other waiting players to start. A reversal of the course as indicated would seem to remedy this fault. . . . Some of the pars as indicated are not those normally used. The 9 holes should have a

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

- par of not over 35. Provision must be made along the north side for dedication of one half the District street.
4. Outdoor Theatre: The location for this important feature is shown axeing on a ridge. This seems an unusual location requiring an excessive amount of excavation to accomplish with the destruction of more trees than necessary. The choice of another location is urged where the natural contour of the ground can more easily be moulded to the shape desired. Several bowl-like depressions area available within the boundaries of the park.
 5. Play Meadow: The Play Meadow is well located. The Play Area near the west Picnic Area is a unit of the proposed recreation system for the District of Columbia and it would seem desirable to have it located as near Massachusetts Avenue as practicable. If this Play Area could be shifted to the space indicated as Central Picnic Area, it would still be as close to the Play Meadow and would more adequately serve the children south of Massachusetts Avenue.
 6. Picnic Area: With the exception of the Central Picnic Area as mentioned above, these areas seem well located and are adequately provided with parking space.
- Summary: The design as a whole is excellent and will, I believe, with the above minor modifications, provide a park of dignified beauty and maximum usefulness with easy access to and between the different use areas. It is recommended that the plan be approved subject to the modifications mentioned.³⁰⁸

Several elements of the 1934 plan were implemented, including the Pine Woods Picnic Area and Central Picnic Area (now known as the Ridge Picnic Area). The Pine Woods Picnic Area and Council Ring, a circular space for picnickers to gather, were constructed east of Fort Davis Drive. The picnic area and Council Ring are no longer extant (they were removed sometime after 1966). As a result, little is known of their appearance. The West Picnic Area was not constructed. The golf course, when constructed, was located in the site proposed in the plan. Underpasses were never constructed for the Fort Drive under Massachusetts Avenue and Ridge Road as called for in the 1934 plan. Finally, the outdoor amphitheater, proposed for a site adjacent to the earthworks, was not implemented.

Connection between Fort Dupont Park and Anacostia Park

In 1936, the NPS envisioned a major parkway extending from Alabama Avenue to the Anacostia River and encompassing 300 to 400 acres of virgin land, mostly forested.³⁰⁹ The Parks Commissioner noted that the terrain was hilly, unlike that of Rock Creek Park.³¹⁰ Park officials

³⁰⁸ T. C. Jeffers, "Report on Plan for Development Presented by Office of National Capital Parks," September 24, 1934, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance & Protection.

³⁰⁹ John Nolen, Jr., to Mr. Wirth, Memorandum on Fort Dupont Park, June 5, 1937,

³¹⁰ Williams, 120.

also hoped to link the park into an extensive parkway system that was being developed – including the forthcoming George Washington Memorial Parkway, Fort Circle Drive, Anacostia Highway, and a new highway to Baltimore. The NPS believed that the combination of the roads and the park would revitalize the area of “undeveloped fields and heavily wooded hills and valleys with only major roads and streets being partially completed.”³¹¹ Fort Dupont Park was “thus part of a larger strategy to revitalize the area east of the Anacostia River, develop it for residential and commercial use, and connect it to other parts of Washington and Baltimore through automobile transport.”³¹² By 1937, Fort Dupont Park was “linked with the comprehensive park scheme by the Fort Drive and by [a] connecting parkway between the Fort Drive and the Anacostia Parkway.”³¹³ By 1938, a plan envisioned a continuous 1,200 acre park linking Fort Dupont Park, Anacostia Park, and others to serve the whole eastern portion of the city. The Park Commissioners intended to create “another great park unit, similar to Rock Creek, [to] provide recreation for Capital residents,” in addition to a connection between several Southeast neighborhoods and transportation links.³¹⁴ Park officials imagined “virtually boundless areas for recreation – golf, tennis, field games, swimming, riding, boating, picnicking, and outdoor acting, with a wide variety of scenery.”³¹⁵ In December 1938, only a few acres of land were needed to make the connection between the two parks.³¹⁶ Plans to connect the two parks with a road were abandoned by 1943. A May 24, 1943, study proposed that bridle and pedestrian paths would connect the two parks.³¹⁷

1933: National Park Service Ownership & Maintenance of Fort Dupont Park

A shift in the ownership and maintenance of Washington’s parks occurred in 1933 when on June 10, the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks was abolished, and its duties transferred to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations under the Department of the Interior. The Office was renamed the National Park Service (NPS) on March 2, 1934. This transfer took place as a result of the reorganization of the executive branch in 1933, which took place during the Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Executive Order 6166 abolished the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the nation’s capital, and its holdings, and transferred functions thereof to the Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations of Department of Interior, renamed the National Park Service on March 2, 1934. The name of National Capital Parks³¹⁸ was

³¹¹ Ibid..

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ John Nolen, Jr., to Mr. Wirth, memorandum on Fort Dupont Park, June 5, 1937.

³¹⁴ “Fort Dupont Park, Little Publicized, to be Elaborate One: Best 18-Hole Golf Course in City to be Built There,” *Evening Star* (December 18, 1938): n.p.

³¹⁵ John Nolen, Jr., to Mr. Wirth, memorandum on Fort Dupont Park, June 5, 1937.

³¹⁶ “Fort Dupont Park, Little Publicized, to be Elaborate One: Best 18-Hole Golf Course in City to be Built There.”

³¹⁷ NPS Drawing, #16-101, National Archives.

³¹⁸ The office of National Capital Parks was charged upon its creation in 1934 with the design and development of park areas, the maintenance of all areas and facilities, protection of park property and park visitors, operation of recreational facilities and the general supervision and administration of recreational facilities, cooperation with the National Capital Planning Commission in general planning of parks and parkways for the District of Columbia, and care and maintenance of the Executive Mansion and grounds.

first applied to the capital's parks in the District of Columbia appropriation act of June 4, 1934.³¹⁹ The Office of Public Buildings and Grounds transferred ownership and maintenance of Fort Dupont Park to the NPS in fiscal year 1934-35. The National Park Service continued the work of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds in developing the naturalistic and recreational facilities planned for Fort Dupont Park.

Proposals for a Water Tower in Fort Dupont Park

The D.C. government first proposed the construction of a water tower in Fort Dupont Park in 1935. The D.C. Engineer Commissioner suggested the erection of a 500,000-gallon elevated water tank to serve the D.C. Water Division. In 1936, the Commission of Fine Arts did not approve a design for a tower, which the Commission likened to an “unadorned metallic tower which would be a detriment rather than an ornament to the region.”³²⁰ There was great need for additional water facilities in the area due to the construction of Defense housing in Anacostia and development of private property in the Oxon Run Valley area. Careful study of the problem resulted in the “conclusion that an elevated tank of two million gallons capacity in the vicinity of Massachusetts and Alabama Avenues, S.E., [was] urgently required.”³²¹ NCPPC suggested that the Louisiana Army Post water tower be emulated as an example of appropriate water tower design. A February 1936 design for the tower at a site near the intersection of Alabama and Massachusetts avenues was met with similar disdain: “the erection of a water tower such as is proposed would be a serious blot on the landscape of the Anacostia region.”³²² Charles Moore, chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, recommended that the NPS look at the water tower at the Fort Reno Reservoir as a guide for a future design, noting that it was more elaborate than the design at Fort Dupont Park needed to be.³²³ The D.C. government, in collaboration with the NPS, submitted additional designs for the water tower, but eventually sought a privately owned site since the NCPPC and CFA did not approve their various submittals. The attention given to this project by the NCPPC and CFA, in terms of altering views within, from and of the park, corresponded with the planning carried out by the two commissions in preparation of opening the park to the public.

Opening of Fort Dupont Park

By 1937 the park totaled nearly 400 acres; the National Capital Park and Planning Commission acquired 267 acres of that total, at a cost of more than a quarter of a million dollars, or \$1,000 an acre. At this time, NCPPC needed eight more acres to complete the park's acreage. The park, which had been used informally by the public up until that time, opened to the public in the spring of 1937. It was designed for those who “wanted to get out of their cars such as hikers, picnickers, strollers, and those who didn't mind a little inconvenience in order to escape from

³¹⁹ Cornelius W. Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks* (U.S. Office of National Capital Parks: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1953), 36.

³²⁰ C. W. Kutz, letter to Irving C. Root, September 5, 1941, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Charles Moore, letter to A. B. Cammerer, February 10, 1936, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

³²³ Ibid.

daily cares and responsibilities.”³²⁴ Developed primarily as what Nolen called a “neighborhood park,” Fort Dupont Park was “the only one of its kind serving the eastern part of town”³²⁵ In 1938, about three-quarters of the land east of the river was undeveloped. Much of the land was covered in fields and heavily wooded tracts, with major roads only partially completed. The remaining quarter contained residences, many of a “more or less low-income type.”³²⁶ NPS officials hoped that the beautiful park would “hasten the lapsed development of the whole of East Washington.”³²⁷ The officials expected land values to increase and new residents to be drawn to the area by an attractive environment. It was expected that the opening of a large park would hasten the lapsed development of the whole of East Washington just as Rock Creek Park had been a catalyst for development in Northwest Washington.³²⁸ Officials claimed that the “scenery and topography of [this] section of the District are distinctly beautiful but the heretofore ugly approaches to the area have discouraged its private development as a residential area.”³²⁹

The land was wild and heavily wooded with laurel and dogwood thickets. Except for a few picnic areas and structures erected by CCC workers in the early 1930s, the land remained untouched (see Chapter Seven for more information on CCC work in Fort Dupont Park).³³⁰ The wooded park was especially wild in comparison to the grass and young trees of Anacostia Park. When Fort Dupont Park opened, its recreational facilities included a baseball diamond and horseshoe-pitching area.³³¹ Many features proposed by Wirth had not been constructed when the park opened, such as the golf course. By March 1937, Wirth’s proposed bridle paths had not been constructed.³³² By 1938, the National Park Service planned to implement the golf course and club house.³³³ The fort was improved in the park’s opening year. In 1937, only Fort Stevens had been restored, but National Capital Parks proposed preserving and landscaping the other forts in their system. By October, the NCP had preserved the earthworks of Fort Dupont. No logs or guns were remaining, but the location of trenches, breastworks, and gun placements, was evident. As part of this preservation effort, “honeysuckle [had] been used as a covering and a narrow white bridge [was constructed] ‘into the fortification.’”³³⁴

In December 1938, National Capital Parks proposed extensive improvements, in accordance with earlier plans, for the undeveloped areas in Fort Dupont Park to feature “the best 18-hole public

³²⁴ “400 Wild Acres to be Opened This Year in Eastern D.C. Will be ‘Picnic Heaven,’” *Washington Daily News* (March 1, 1937): 14.

³²⁵ A neighborhood park is governed in its aims by a desire to serve the needs of its surrounding neighborhood, and is influenced in its design and amenities by the character and daily life of the people who congregate within its area; “400 Wild Acres to be Opened This Year in Eastern D.C. Will be ‘Picnic Heaven,’” *Washington Daily News* (March 1, 1937): 14.

³²⁶ “Fort Dupont Park, Little Publicized, to be Elaborate One: Best 18-Hole Golf Course in City to be Built There.”

³²⁷ Williams, 120.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ “Fort Dupont Park, Little Publicized, to be Elaborate One: Best 18-Hole Golf Course in City to be Built There.”

³³⁰ Williams, 120.

³³¹ Federal Writers’ Project, 590.

³³² “400 Wild Acres to be Opened This Year in Eastern D.C. Will be ‘Picnic Heaven,’” 14.

³³³ Olivia Walling, “Enjoy Fort Dupont Park,” *East of the River* (April 2002): n.p.

³³⁴ Sadler: n.p.

golf course in the city, a handsome clubhouse, picnic areas, play meadows and parking facilities.”³³⁵ (figure 24) The plan envisioned the construction of a playground when the land around the park had become more developed (and residents were in need of a playground). This early plan for a golf course proposed that the first tee start at the clubhouse and that subsequent tees progress west toward Anacostia Park and then travel through the narrow strip linking Fort Dupont Park with Anacostia Park and then along the river to Pennsylvania Avenue, replacing part of the existing Anacostia golf course. The unused portion of the Anacostia golf course would then be converted into playing fields, courts, and other recreational facilities.³³⁶ The plan also called for an outdoor amphitheater in the woods near the ruins of the fort and a large picnic area in the eastern end of the park.³³⁷ As was the case with the 1934 plan, the amphitheater was not constructed and it would take several years before a picnic area would open near the earthworks in the eastern portion of the park.

Development of Fort Dupont Park within Context of Other Washington, D.C., Parks

During Fort Dupont Park’s prime development from its creation in 1917 to its opening in 1937, several other large parks were under development or nearing completion. These parks include Rock Creek Park, East and West Potomac Parks, and Anacostia Park, all of which were envisioned as part of the 1901-02 Senate Park Commission (McMillan) Plan’s comprehensive park plan. The largest of these contemporary parks, Rock Creek Park, was created several decades earlier than Fort Dupont Park. It was, however, the most similar of Washington’s parks due to its size, combination of natural areas with recreational facilities, picnic areas, and alignment along a creek. In addition, both parks were planned to include parkways. Rock Creek Park was a great valley while Fort Dupont Park was situated on a hillside. In 1937, Fort Dupont Park was likened to Rock Creek Park as follows:

Fort Dupont Park is a rugged area extending high into the hills guarding the Anacostia River. It offers opportunity for development similar to Rock Creek Park. Providing both natural beauties and recreational possibilities, the area is destined to receive future park development.³³⁸

Major efforts to create a large park in Washington, comparable to New York’s Central Park in size, began in 1866 in a campaign led by General N. Michler, who reported to the U.S. Senate on the suitability of the Rock Creek Valley as a public park.³³⁹ In the second half of the nineteenth century, long before it became a park, the valley and its bridle paths and transit routes were used and enjoyed by Washingtonians. By act of September 27, 1890 (26 Stat. 492-95), Congress authorized the establishment of a national park in the Rock Creek Valley. A Commission was created to purchase the necessary land. The act authorizing the park stated that specified land

³³⁵ “Fort Dupont Park, Little Publicized, to be Elaborate One: Best 18-Hole Golf Course in City to be Built There.”

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ National Park Service, National Capital Parks: A History, http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nace/adhi3g.htm.

³³⁹ Heine, 12.

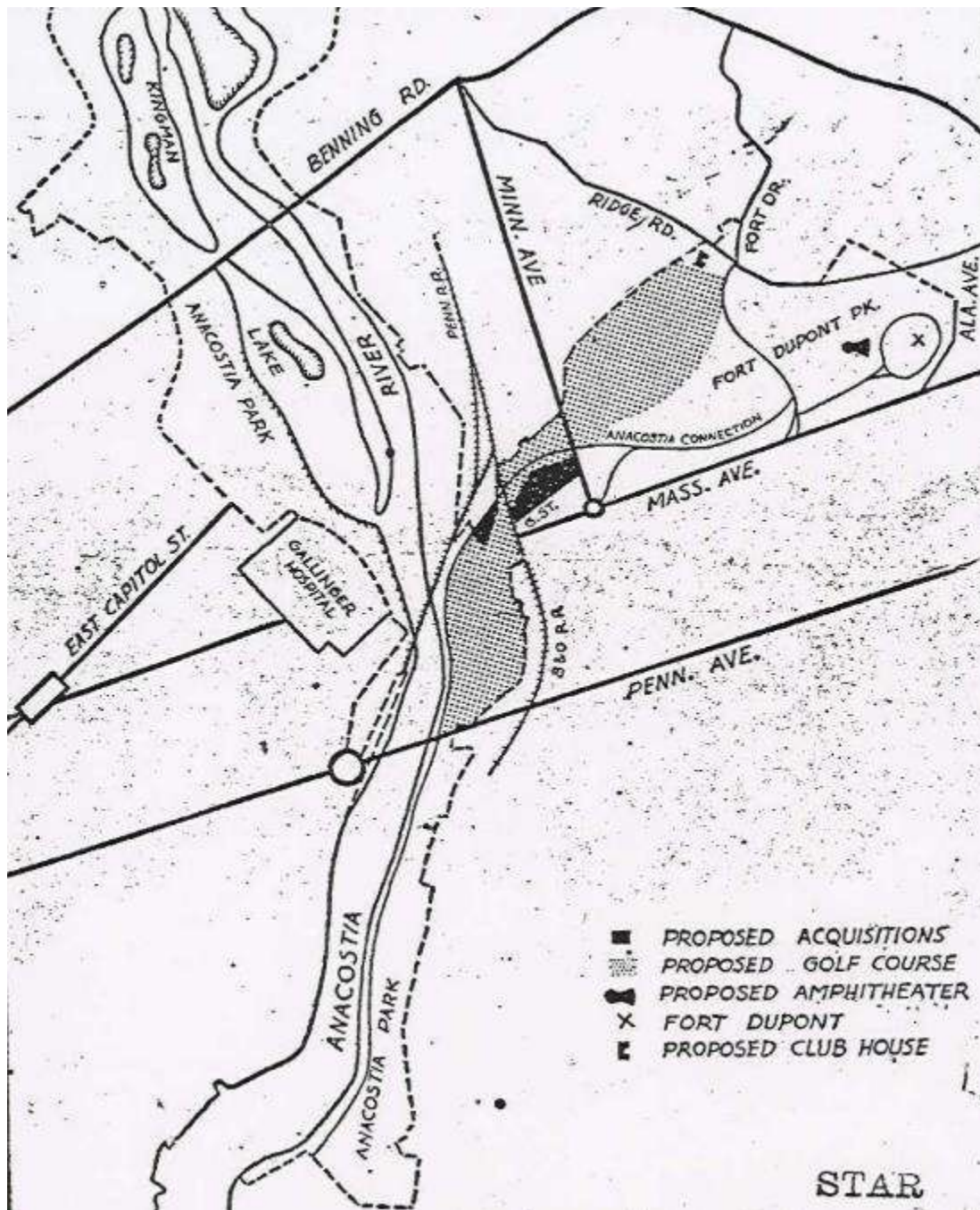


Figure 24. 1938 drawing of the proposed golf course and the connection between Fort Dupont and Anacostia Parks ("Proposed Fort Dupont Development," *Sunday Star* (December 18, 1938): n.p.).

“shall be secured, as hereinafter set out, and be perpetually dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States, to be known by the name Rock Creek Park.”³⁴⁰

A Commission was created composed of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, and three private citizens appointed by the President of the United States. When the land was turned over to the Board of Control of Rock Creek Park in 1894, the Commission had purchased 1,605.9 acres – all the lands possible under the appropriation allotted. Charles C. Glover, who donated land to Fort Dupont Park, was instrumental in the effort to preserve the important stream valley of Rock Creek. After the original purchase, additional lands were acquired, including approximately 120 acres around 1894. Land extending the park 22 miles upstream was acquired in 1925.³⁴¹ The area of Rock Creek Park now comprises 1,754 acres.³⁴² Beach Drive, the primary parkway through Rock Creek Park was constructed in 1899.

James Bryce, in his 1913 *The National Capital*, described the park as follows:

Rock Creek – winding, rocky glen, with a broad stream foaming over its stony bed and wild leafy woods looking down on each side, where you not only have a carriage road at the bottom, but an inexhaustible variety of footpaths, where you can force your way through thickets and test your physical ability in climbing up and down steep slopes, and in places scaling the faces of bold cliffs, all that you have in Rock Creek Park.³⁴³

The years following Bryce’s description played a significant role in the development of the park into what it is today. In 1918, prominent landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., produced the *Rock Creek Park Report*, detailing future development and plantings for the park. Olmsted played a role in the development and design of East and West Potomac Parks.

East and West Potomac Parks contained a combined area of 730 acres; West Potomac Park contained nearly 400 acres and East Potomac Park contained nearly 330 acres.³⁴⁴ The large land masses that the parks occupy today were sculpted from tidal flats by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in an ambitious reclamation project lasting over thirty years. The character of the site was established in 1897 by Senate Bill 3307, which provided that the entire reclaimed area, including the tidal reservoir, was to become a public park for the “recreation and pleasure” of the people. The resulting parkland was further shaped by a number of successive development plans, most notably the Senate Park Commission (McMillan) Plan of 1901-02, the country’s first major manifestation of the City Beautiful movement, and the Army Corps of Engineer’s work creating

³⁴⁰ Gail Spilsbury, *Rock Creek Park* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 6.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, ix.

³⁴³ James Bryce, *The National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Byron S. Adams, 1913), 61-62.

³⁴⁴ The text on East and West Potomac Parks is adapted from Robinson & Associates, Inc., *East and West Potomac Parks Historic District: Revised National Register of Historic Places Nomination* (Washington, D.C.: July 16, 1999).

the Tidal Basin. East Potomac Park shared similar recreational facilities with the early plans of Fort Dupont Park, but West Potomac Park was very different in character with its many monuments and memorials and its designed landscape. In 1907, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds hired Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., to complete a draft plan for West Potomac Park. The OPB & G completed a public playground plan for East Potomac Park in 1916. The implementation of these plans, similar to development of Fort Dupont Park, proved to be a long and uneven process. However, both parks were improved and developed during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, a road linking Rock Creek Park and West Potomac Park, was approved on March 4, 1913. The act creating the parkway also attempted to prevent the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek and provided for the connection of West Potomac Park with the National Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park. This road foreshadowed other road proposals in the city, including the 1926 plan by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to extend Fort Dupont Park to Anacostia Park with a parkway. The NPS revived the proposal for a parkway between Fort Dupont and Anacostia parks in 1936. It was not constructed, but the parks remain linked by the Fort Dupont Creek which empties into the Anacostia River.

Anacostia Park parallels Fort Dupont Park in its development, and due to their close proximity, both parks were planned to have joined features, such as a golf course with portions in each park. Wooded land along the Fort Dupont Creek connected the two parks. The parkway proposed to connect them was never implemented. When Fort Dupont Park neared its completion in 1937, Anacostia Park was already open to the public, although some of its recreational facilities, such as the Langston Golf Course, were still under construction. Anacostia Park's development was delayed because of financial and labor problems.³⁴⁵ By 1937, the eastern side of the park included the recreational facilities, such as baseball fields, tennis courts, croquet grounds, field house, and the site of the Langston Golf Course. Anacostia Park followed both sides of the Anacostia River from the Navy Yard and the community of Anacostia to the Maryland-District line. A concrete drive followed the river's eastern edge from the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge south to the Anacostia Bridge and the boundary of Bolling Field. A 1937 Washington Daily News article on Fort Dupont Park's impending opening described Anacostia Park as "mostly grass and regularly planted young trees."³⁴⁶ Indeed, due to its marshy state along the river, Anacostia Park was very different in terms of vegetation and terrain from Fort Dupont Park. It also was a short distance away from the historic homes in Anacostia, while Fort Dupont Park was surrounded by emerging suburban developments and existing neighborhoods. The 1,200-acre Anacostia Park did include two unique features: a forested area (northeast of the railway bridge which crossed the Anacostia River) and the Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens. The aquatic gardens were devoted to the propagation and display of aquatic plants. Situated on fourteen acres along the east bank of the Anacostia River, the Gardens were begun as a hobby by Civil War veteran W.B. Shaw in 1882, and operated for fifty-six years as a commercial water garden known as the Shaw Lily Ponds. In 1938, the Federal government purchased the land from Shaw's family and it became part of the National Park system. Both Fort Dupont and Anacostia parks were

³⁴⁵ Federal Writers' Project, 585.

³⁴⁶ "400 Wild Acres to be Opened This Year in Eastern D.C. Will be 'Picnic Heaven,'" 14.

viewed as parks which would receive greater use as the population expanded.³⁴⁷ Today, Anacostia Park includes fields, picnic areas, basketball courts, boat ramps and marinas, the Anacostia Park Pavilion for roller skating and events, and the Kenilworth Marsh and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, all of which experience wide usership, especially from the Southeast community.

It is of course important to examine Fort Dupont Park in the context of the creation of parks surrounding other Civil War defenses. (See Chapter Three, “Post Civil War” for more information on the early preservation efforts to save the Civil War forts and Chapter Four, “Fort Drive” for information on the envisioned parkway and parks connecting the forts).

In 1919, when Fort Dupont was in its early years of land acquisition, Forts Davis, Lincoln, and De Russey, and Battery Vermont were also owned by the federal government. Forts Davis and Dupont were newly set aside as parks at this point, while Fort De Russey, located just north of Military Road, had long been part of Rock Creek Park. Fort Stevens and Fort Totten, both of which later became National Park Service sites, were available for purchase or development at that time. Fort Stevens – as the only fort at which battle occurred during the Civil War – commanded more attention than the city’s other forts, and although it had been the focus of preservation efforts since the late nineteenth century it was not yet a park in 1919.

Charles Eliot described the condition and usage of thirty-two batteries and forts in 1933. He wrote that Fort Davis, Fort Dupont, Fort Bunker Hill, Fort Kemble, Fort Totten, and Fort Mahan were preserved as parks.³⁴⁸ Fort De Russey and Battery Sill were located in Rock Creek Park. Fort Stevens, Battery Terrell, Fort Chapin, Fort Stanton, and Fort Carroll were partially preserved as parks. Several others had been destroyed by development. Fort Slemmer, for example, had been neglected as it became part of the development of the Catholic University of America and other Catholic institutions; Battery Cameron and Battery Parrott both were the sites of residential development; and Fort Sedgwick had been partially destroyed by the construction of a cemetery.³⁴⁹ Several other fort parks had been created by 1937 when Fort Dupont Park opened. These included Fort Bayard Park, Fort Bunker Hill Park, Fort Davis Park, Fort Kemble Park, Fort Mahan Park, Fort Reno Park, Fort Slocum Park, Fort Stanton Park, Fort Stevens Park, and Fort Totten Park. Fort Davis Park had public picnic facilities, and Fort Kemble Park had picnic, day camp, and playground facilities.

The staff at Rock Creek Park, National Capital Region, currently administers a semicircle of Civil War sites, beginning near Chain Bridge. The ring starts with Battery Kemble, and continues to Fort Bayard, Fort Reno, Fort DeRussy in Rock Creek Park itself, Fort Stevens, Fort Slocum, and Fort Totten before ending with Fort Bunker Hill, beside the Franciscan monastery in northeast Washington. National Capital Parks-East administers several forts east of the Anacostia River, including Fort Mahan, Fort Chaplin, Fort Dupont, Fort Davis, Battery Ricketts next to Fort

³⁴⁷ National Park Service, National Capital Parks: A History, http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nace/adhi3g.htm.

³⁴⁸ Charles W. Eliot II, Director of Planning, letter to L. F. Schmeckebier, The Brookings Institution. (January 26, 1933), NARA, Record Group 328, General Records, Planning Files, 1924-67.

³⁴⁹ Eliot, January 26, 1933, n.p.

Stanton, Fort Carroll, and Fort Greble. Fort Ward, maintained by the City of Alexandria, offers the region's most complete reconstruction of a Civil War fort, an effort carried out to commemorate the Civil War Centennial.

Chapter Six

1933-42: The Civilian Conservation Corps Camp at Fort Dupont Park

Like other significant park developments, parts of Fort Dupont Park were landscaped and its infrastructure was built using labor provided by one of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal work relief programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Roosevelt administration created the Civilian Conservation Corps (originally known as the Emergency Conservation Work or ECW) in 1933 as part of the Emergency Work Program.³⁵⁰ The Emergency Conservation Work program was designed as a Depression-era economic stimulus, at a time when five million young men were unemployed.³⁵¹ The Corps put over 500,000 unemployed youths to work revitalizing natural resources.³⁵² Their manual labor improved the country's national, state, and local parks and forests. The men who were interested in the program were required to be between eighteen and twenty-five years old and unmarried. Camps were set up where the workers received free room and board; the Army ran the camps. Much of the work was manual labor and the men worked hard for their monthly salary of \$30, \$25 of which was automatically deducted and sent to their families at home. The salary was a source of pride to the young men – it was earned, not a handout.³⁵³

In early April 1933, the government asked National Forest and National Park Superintendents to submit proposed sites and programs for Emergency Conservation Work. Two sites – Skyland and Big Meadows – were selected in May 1933 as the locations for the first CCC camps in national parks.³⁵⁴ In his June 1933 annual report, NPS Director Horace Albright described goals for the Corps:

Officials of the National Park Service have a deep appreciation that they were enabled to assist in carrying out President Roosevelt's emergency conservation program, one of the greatest humanitarian movements ever conceived for the relief of distress. In addition to its primary purpose of relief, the conservation work accomplished will be of far-reaching importance to the whole country and will build up the health and morale of a large portion of the young manhood of the Nation, fitting them better to be leaders of the future.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁰ Initially, the organization was called the Emergency Conservation Work, or ECW. In 1937, Congress changed the name to the Civilian Conservation Corps, the name originally used by Roosevelt in his congressional speech creating the program.

³⁵¹ Stan Cohen, *The Tree Army: A Pictorial History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-42* (Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1980), 6.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ Reed L. Engle, *Everything Was Wonderful* (Luray, Virginia: Shenandoah National Park Association, 1999), 30.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁵⁵ Harlan D. Unrau, and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, September 1983), Chapter 3, 3.

Albright also noted, “All work within the areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service was carefully planned by experienced landscape architects, park engineers, and foresters, and in the historical and military parks historical technicians were employed to insure the careful preservation and interpretation of the historic values.”³⁵⁶ The following types of work for the CCC were approved:

1. Structures – trail, camp and picnic ground shelters, toilets, custodian’s cottages, bath houses, etc. – construction and repair.
2. Camp tables, fire places, other camp and picnic ground facilities – construction and maintenance.
3. Bridges, as adjuncts of park roads, protection roads and trails, and recreational bridle and foot trails – construction and maintenance.
4. Water supply systems, sewers, incinerators and other waste disposal facilities – construction and repair.
5. Park roads – construction and maintenance.
6. Dams, to provide water recreation facilities – construction and maintenance.
7. Fire towers, tool sheds, fire control water supply reservoirs – construction and maintenance.³⁵⁷

In September 1933, the government planned to establish two or three CCC camps in the Washington area.³⁵⁸ Arno B. Cammerer, Director of the Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, said that the Interior Department was impressed with the work carried out by CCC workers in national parks and believed that they could carry out similar work in the nation’s capital, in the National Capital Parks. This assistance would be helpful since there was a great deal of undeveloped parkland – including Fort Dupont Park – that needed to be adapted to a park use. In addition to potential sites along the future George Washington Memorial Parkway and in Rock Creek Park, Cammerer pointed out that in Fort Dupont “there exists a fine chance for the young woodsmen to open up this picturesque territory for the enjoyment of the public.”³⁵⁹ Cammerer stated that the young men could be based at a camp and taken to various sites around the city for work.

In October 1933, the NPS established two camps – one at Fort Hunt in Virginia and the other at Fort Dupont in the District. At first, the Interior Department requested only one camp – to be located at Fort Hunt on Mount Vernon Highway. At this time, 400 PWA workers were already working to clean up storm damage in Rock Creek and Anacostia parks. A September 16, 1933, article in the *Washington Times*, however, stated that the first and only CCC camp had opened at the government-owned reservation of Fort Dupont at 3600 E Street, Southeast. Frank T. Gartside, acting superintendent of the National Capital Parks, had the Fort Dupont camp site laid out and plans drawn for water and sewer facilities. The camp was sited on E Street just below Ely Place between 35th and 36th streets. The vanguard of the initial outfit, assigned to the camp,

³⁵⁶ Ibid., Chapter 3, 3.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., Chapter 3, 3.

³⁵⁸ “Plans Indicate D.C. Will Harbor Forestry Camps,” *Evening Star* (September 12, 1933): n.p.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

were twenty-two young men from New Jersey who were relocated after a four-and-a-half-month stint in Idaho. They built a permanent camp at Fort Dupont to house 200 men.³⁶⁰ The recruits lived in canvas tents until they erected the new lumber buildings to the west of their present campsite. The outfit was commanded by Captain Gregory S. Lavin of the Ordnance Department of the Army.

The September 16, 1933, *Washington Times* article commented on the demeanor of the first workers assigned to the Fort Dupont camp: “The young men seemed delighted with their new camp, on the uplands well above the Anacostia River, with a view of the city of Washington stretching out westward, with a hint of the white domed Capitol in the golden dusk. They looked eager when told that President Roosevelt and Senators and Representatives as well as other distinguished personages would visit them.”³⁶¹ The young men were interested to learn that another CCC camp was soon to open in Virginia at Fort Hunt adjoining the Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway. After preliminary work by the outfit from Idaho, the Fort Dupont Park CCC camp (Camp #7) officially opened on October 23, 1933.³⁶² The camp was one of nine such camps that were eventually operated for the CCC in the Washington area. On November 15, 1933, men from Camp Dix in New Jersey joined the twenty-four men from Idaho, and the construction of the barracks began in earnest.³⁶³

The camp consisted of housing for the CCC workers, a two-car garage, toilets, and a sewer system.³⁶⁴ The camp included two roads, Cinder Road and the extension of E Street. CCC workers constructed a swimming pool at the southernmost point of the camp. A June 22, 1934, drawing shows the proposed layout of camp #7 (although many of the buildings had been completed at this time) – six barracks, mess hall, administration building, latrine, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, toolhouse and garage, and a recreation building.³⁶⁵ (figure 25) The CCC workers completed the two-car garage in 1934, a one-car garage in November 1935, and the two administrative buildings in March 1936. The numbers and dimensions of many of the buildings were as follows: Building 12 (Garage, 40’ x 85’), Building 13 (Garage, 30’ x 40’), Building 14 (Shop, 25’ x 45’), Building 15 (Garage, 25’ x 65’), Building 16 (Black Smith Shop, 15’ x 15’), Building 18 (Storage Building, 20’ x 50’), Building 19 (Oil House, 10’ x 16’), Building T-2203 (Barracks, 20’ x 110’), and Building T-2204 (Barracks, 20’ x 110’).³⁶⁶ A February 16, 1936, plan of the camp was annotated in the early 1940s to indicate that the following buildings had been constructed since 1936: a swimming pool, frame garage building (No. 15), garage (No. 13), Technical Services Quarters (No. 18), Carpenter Shop (No. 14), Education Building (No. 26 or 28), and a frame garage (No. 22).³⁶⁷ (figure 26) A 1939 drawing of the camp listed plantings

³⁶⁰ “D.C. to Get One C.C.C. Camp,” *Washington Times* (September 16, 1933): n.p.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² CEHP, Inc., 1998, Ch. 3, 7.

³⁶³ “168 Youths Fill District’s C.C.C. Quota,” *Washington Post* (November 15, 1933): n.p.

³⁶⁴ Cooling and Owen, Ch. 3, 5.

³⁶⁵ NARA, Record Group 79, Drawing 16-40, CCC Camp Existing Layout & Planting Plan, 1939.

³⁶⁶ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

³⁶⁷ NARA, Record Group 79, Drawing 16-119, Planting Plan for Civilian Conservation Camp NP-7, February 16, 1936.

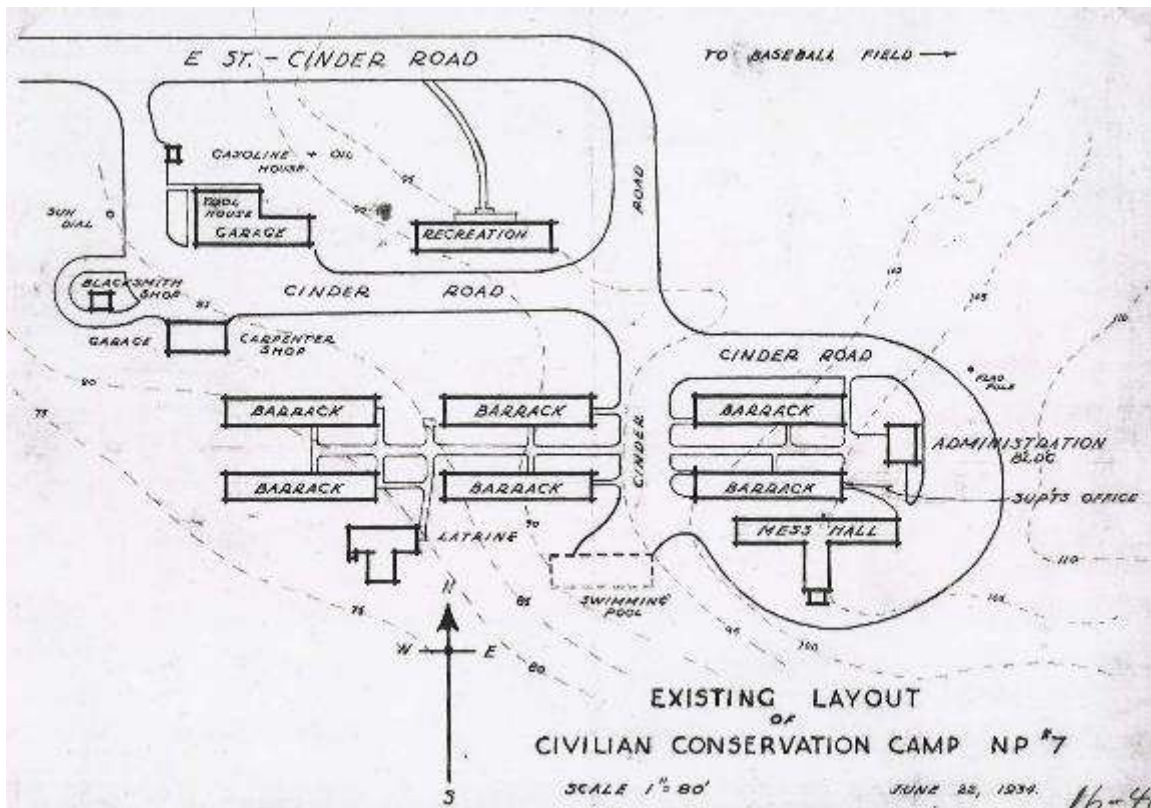


Figure 25. Plan of Civilian Conservation Camp No. 7, June 1934
 (National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing # 16-40).

Insert Figure 26 – 1936 Plan of CCC Camp, with post-World War II notes (National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing # 16-119).

proposed for the site, such as pines, privet hedges, mountain laurel, red cedars, sumac, and dogwoods, in addition to the existing oak, sycamore, and maple trees.³⁶⁸

The Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations supplied camp supervisors and foremen who would work with the young men in showing them what must be done to improve the park system.³⁶⁹ Fort Dupont CCC workers completed landscaping work on Columbia Island of the Mt. Vernon Highway.³⁷⁰ They also removed old Hickory Road, which ran from Bladensburg Road to the Anacostia Flats. Eighty Fort Dupont CCC men were assigned to work on the National Arboretum, where they were to “[clean] out timber and underbrush” under the supervision of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Department of Agriculture.³⁷¹ In addition, in 1937, CCC workers partially reconstructed Fort Stevens, located on upper 13th Street, NW.³⁷²

At Fort Dupont Park, the CCC workers were charged to “take out dead and down timber, remove fire hazards, construct roads and trails and bridle paths, and generally improve the appearance of the region.”³⁷³ J. H. Peterson was superintendent of Fort Dupont at the time. He began this position in 1933 when the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks was abolished and replaced with the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations under the Department of the Interior (later renamed the National Park Service). Ten civilian foremen, who worked under Peterson, were involved in supervising projects, while discipline was to be “maintained and recreational activities directed by Army officers.”³⁷⁴ The workers built structures and provided labor for the park. Camp #7 was engaged in developing Fort Dupont Park by December 8, 1934. During the first year of enrollment from 1933 to 1934, the work consisted of forest clean-up, removal of fire hazards, and a limited amount of landscaping. Upon completion of this work, the camp workers commenced construction of physical improvements to make the park accessible to the public. The development of Fort Dupont ultimately made the park similar to Rock Creek Park in terms of amenities so that it could amply serve the large population of Northeast and Southeast Washington. As part of their development projects, the CCC workers were charged with construction of roads and picnic areas in Fort Dupont Park.³⁷⁵ (figures 27, 28, 29)

The workers constructed a wooden dam at Fort Dupont Park by October 31, 1935.³⁷⁶ The dam created an artificial lake above the dam over which the workers built a bridge, constructed out of logs in a rustic style. The CCC also constructed a playfield for children near the earthworks of the old fort. In December 1939, approximately eighty percent of the personnel of the CCC camp were employed in the work of improving Fort Dupont Park. A December 28, 1939, letter

³⁶⁸ NARA, Record Group 79, Drawing 16-40, CCC Camp Existing Layout & Planting Plan. 1939.

³⁶⁹ “D.C. to Get One C.C.C. Camp.”

³⁷⁰ Keith Melder, *City of Magnificent Intentions: A History of Washington, District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C. and Silver Spring, MD: Intac, Inc., 1997), n.p.

³⁷¹ “168 Youths Fill District’s C.C.C. Quota.”

³⁷² Deborah Churchman, “Searching for the Civil War,” *Washington Post* (October 23, 1981): n.p.; Elizabeth Wiener, “Agency Looks to Preserve Civil War Legacy,” *The Northwest Current* 36.18 (April 30, 2003): 1, 33.

³⁷³ “D.C. to Get One C.C.C. Camp.”

³⁷⁴ “168 Youths Fill District’s C.C.C. Quota.”

³⁷⁵ A. E. Damarary, letter to Robert Fechner, December 8, 1934, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance, and Protection.

³⁷⁶ Caption for Image of CCC Dam in Fort Dupont Park, *Evening Star* (October 31, 1935): n.p.

Insert Figure 27. Drawing of stone hearths, as designed for Pine Woods Picnic Area, circa 1935
(National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-25).

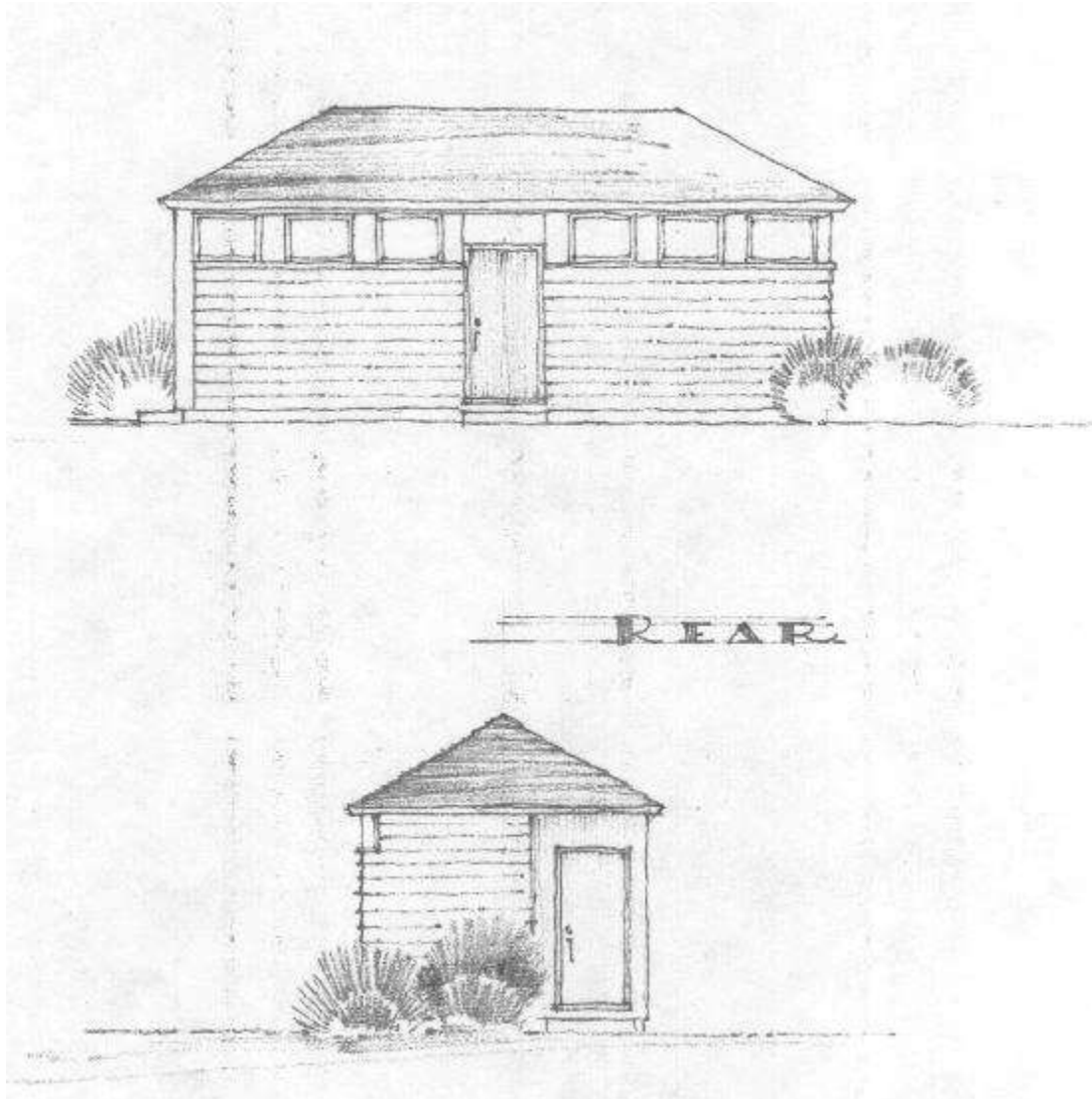


Figure 28. Proposed Comfort Station for Fort Dupont Park, 1935
(National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-77).

Insert Figure 29. Drawing of Fort Dupont Park Picnic Groves as constructed, circa 1935
(numbers indicate groups of tables) (Federal Records Center, Record Group 79).

described the improvements: “work upon the golf course is actively under way, picnic areas and equipment have been constructed and installed.”³⁷⁷ The memorandum stated that CCC workers stationed in Fort Dupont Park “will be utilized to the fullest extent in the development and improvement of Fort Dupont Park and immediately adjacent areas.”³⁷⁸ In 1940, some CCC workers continued to clear land for the park’s proposed nine-hole golf course. Ray M. Schenck’s *Inventory of Work Accomplished by CCC Camps Under the Jurisdiction of National Capital Parks, October 19, 1933 to January 1, 1942*, stated that the workers carried out selective cutting and “removal of trees and brush from golf course fairways.”³⁷⁹

In addition to connecting Alabama Avenue with Anacostia Park, the CCC workers were involved in construction of portions of the Fort Drive in the 1930s. In 1934-35, CCC personnel from the camp at Fort Dupont Park graded Fort Drive toward Good Hope Road and to Station 16, on the Anacostia connecting road. They also removed trees and roots from the Fort Drive right-of-way. The Works Progress Administration constructed a section of Fort Drive in the Fort Reno area. In short, most of the existing portions of Fort Drive road were completed during the Depression.³⁸⁰ On August 22, 1935, NCP ordered approximately 1,000 plants for the CCC workers to plant along the Fort Drive.³⁸¹ By December 1939, considerable progress has been made toward the completion of the Fort Drive roadway and the planting and treatment of the slopes.³⁸²

In 1936, the workers began building sixty picnic tables designed in a rustic style. The tables, constructed of hewn lumber, were located in groups of two to five in two picnic groves in the Ridge Picnic Area. An additional picnic area, with an amphitheater to serve as a council ring to be located east of Fort Davis Drive, was never constructed. Unlike similar places in Rock Creek Park, the picnic grounds were set back from the road.³⁸³ Each cluster had a fireplace and water fountain. The CCC workers also constructed a children’s playground near the remains of the fort. NCP approved the design of comfort stations with stone retaining walls for the picnic groves in 1937. The stations had not been constructed by 1940, when a visitor complained to the NPS about the lack of facilities in the park. F. F. Gillen, Senior Assistant Superintendent of NCP, responded to a May 18, 1940, inquiry by stating: “The provision of shelters to be located adjacent to the picnic groves is included in the approved plans for the development of Fort Dupont Park. The shelters will be of an attractive design, well-suited to the natural features of the

³⁷⁷ George E. Clark, letter to A. C. Edwards, December 28, 1939, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance and Protection.

³⁷⁸ George E. Clark, letter to A. C. Edwards, December 28, 1939, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance and Protection.

³⁷⁹ Ray M. Schenck, *Inventory of Work Accomplished by CCC Camps Under the Jurisdiction of National Capital Parks, October 19, 1933 to January 1, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Field Supervisor, January 15, 1942), 6.

³⁸⁰ CEHP, 1998, ch. 3, 6 – Records of the National Park Service, RG 79, Narrative Reports Concerning ECW (CCC) Projects in NPS Areas, 1933-35, District of Columbia, Box 13, Camp NP-7, Narrative Report, April-October 1935, Camp Name, Fort Dupont, projects 7-10 – 7-22.

³⁸¹ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 50. Planting & Landscaping.

³⁸² George E. Clark, letter to A. C. Edwards, December 28, 1939, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance and Protection.

³⁸³ “400 Wild Acres to be Opened This Year in Eastern D.C. Will be ‘Picnic Heaven,’” *Washington Daily News* (March 1, 1937): 14.

park.”³⁸⁴ Sufficient funds were not available in 1940 to construct the shelters, although it had been planned for the CCC to complete them. The shelters were erected by 1942. It does not appear that any of the CCC shelters remain today.

The workers spent three years cleaning up the woods.³⁸⁵ The CCC also improved the wide, sloping ravine immediately behind the nursery and fort. The work, completed in 1938 under the direction of Lanham, left the wooded area in a natural appearance but the improvements to the slope of the valley “[seemed] to present a pleasing transition between the upper park like area and the lower dense forest area.”³⁸⁶

An April 29, 1941, development update by Gillen detailed the progress of road construction in Fort Dupont Park: “The roads within the Park have been developed in so far as possible by the CCC. The surfacing of these roads, which would materially improve conditions, has not been possible because the limited funds available through CCC will not permit the purchase of the necessary materials.” Gillen also described the preparatory work by CCC for the Golf Course: “We expect to materially increase the rate of development of the Golf Course during the coming summer and winter, and although we are unable to promise a completion date, it is expected that the work will proceed with reasonable rapidity. The work, involved, because of the rugged terrain, requires extensive grading and drainage, installation of the water system, and conditioning of the soil to provide fairway turf, will require major expenditures of CCC labor.”³⁸⁷

Schenck’s *Inventory* also listed and described the CCC work completed at Fort Dupont Park by 1942:

- Comfort Station – one of clapboard & board and batten construction, measuring 28’ x 13’, hand-made shingled roof.
- Log Guard Rails – 64 yards along picnic area roads.
- Sewage and Waste Disposal System – 6 reinforced concrete septic tanks.
- Drinking Fountains – 15 rustic log-type with bubblers and faucet.
- Water Lines – 7,100 feet to service picnic areas and comfort stations.
- Fireplaces – 53 stone-lined fireplaces with fire brick, steel grate.
- Signs – 30 park entrance & directional signs.
- Stonewall – 35 yards, 50’ long by 6’ high retaining wall at comfort station.
- Table & Bench Combinations – 79 picnic tables, hand hewn timber, structural members and plank top table construction, half log on timber supports for benches.

³⁸⁴ F. F. Gillen, letter to May T. Kile, May 18, 1940, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

³⁸⁵ “400 Wild Acres to be Opened This Year in Eastern D.C. Will be ‘Picnic Heaven.’”

³⁸⁶ William F. Heiber, memorandum to C. Marshall Finnan, May 17, 1938, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 50. Planting & Landscaping.

³⁸⁷ F. F. Gillen, letter to A. C. Edwards, April 29, 1941, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance & Protection.

Road – 2 miles of roads. .8 miles, 20 feet wide, Anacostia Connecting Road; .6 miles, 30 feet wide, Fort Drive; .6 miles, 12 feet wide, Picnic Roads, gravel surface.
Foot Trails – 3.5 miles, grand paths in park and picnic area.
Pipe & Tile Line – 1520 feet, 24” corrugated culvert pipe used in construction of park roads & play area.
Gutter – One cobblestone gutter on concrete base, 80’ long, 6’ wide.
Fine Grading Road Slope – 63,114 sq. yard, grading cut and fill slopes along park roads.
General Cleanup – 274 acres, removed trash, brush, dead trees & undesirable plant growth.
Landscaping – 10 acres, clearing & grading playfield.
Moving & Planting trees & shrubs – 25,200 native plant materials collected & planted along park roads & in picnic area.
Park Areas – 2,160 square yards, along picnic area roads.
Public Picnic Ground Development – development of two picnic areas.
Razing Undesirable Structures – 13 buildings outside park razed to salvage materials for CCC jobs.
Seeding or Sodding – 15.1 acres, 1.1 acres of gutter and shoulders along park roads sodded and 14 acres seeded.
Topsoiling – 11.1 acres of road slopes.
Selective Cutting for Effect – 31 acres, removal of all trees & brush from golf course fairway.
Tree Preservation – 2,705 man days, pruning of specimen trees in the park.³⁸⁸

By 1940, the CCC was involved in more than conservation work; it had become part of the national defense. Many camps were operating from military bases in response to Roosevelt’s declaration of a limited national emergency after Hitler’s troops invaded France.³⁸⁹ The CCC continued working in and around Fort Dupont Park until March 25, 1942 – a few months prior to the date when all CCC camps were closed because of an increase in available jobs and cuts in Congressional funds in Depression-era programs as the nation went to war. In 1942, the National Park Service estimated that the CCC workers at the Fort Dupont Camp had expended 224,600 man days and \$83,100 in funds.³⁹⁰ The buildings constructed and used by the CCC were offered to the park in 1944.³⁹¹

NCP wished to retain several buildings when the CCC camp closed, including the technical service quarters and four garages. The office needed the quarters and garages for use by the Maintenance and Mechanical forces assigned to the park areas in the east section of the city. All of the facilities formerly used by the East Section Maintenance and Mechanical forces had been

³⁸⁸ Schenck, 5-6.

³⁸⁹ Cohen, 129.

³⁹⁰ Schenck, n.p.

³⁹¹ CEHP, 1998, III, 11.

transferred to the Army and Navy for emergency war purposes, which seriously affected the office's ability to care for the parks in their care. Irving Root, Superintendent of National Park Service-National Capital Parks, requested the immediate transfer of the former CCC camp back into NCP jurisdiction, so that it could be used for maintenance and also for NCP's defense organization covering parks in the east portion of the city in the event of an air raid or other emergency.³⁹²

³⁹² Irving C. Root, memorandum to Conrad L. Wirth, August 28, 1942, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

Chapter Seven

1942-45: Antiaircraft Artillery Command Positioned in Fort Dupont Park

Just as it was prior to the Civil War, Washington was found to be inadequately protected in the years leading up to World War II. Herbert F. L. Allen in a November 18, 1934, *Evening Star* article, "Washington is Defenseless," detailed the poor military defenses protecting Washington. Allen claimed Washington could be more easily destroyed by an enemy air attack than New York. Major General Hase, Chief of the Coast Artillery, which oversaw the military's anti-aircraft defense system, laid out a system for the city of New York which he surmised would be equally adaptable to the Capital.³⁹³ Hase's plan for Washington called for "one hundred of the latest model anti-aircraft guns, with complements of batteries of powerful searchlights, sound detectors, range finders, automatic loading devices for the large guns, and the most scientific fire control. . . . Under this plan a cordon would be established about the city, extending in all directions five miles from the city limits. The cordon would be formed of one hundred guns distributed in twenty-five batteries of four guns each..."³⁹⁴

The first London Blitz on September 7, 1940, and the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, left Washington, D.C., feeling vulnerable to attack. On May 5, 1942, the Military District of Washington was created to consolidate the military units assigned to protecting the nation's capital. Prior to this, the local tactical defense of the city was comprised of four distinct commands: local Air Forces units, the Potomac River Naval Command, the Antiaircraft command, and the Washington Provisional Brigade. The Eastern Defense Command was in charge of protecting the entire eastern seaboard, but no unit existed solely commanding the protection of the nation's capital. As a result in the shift in structure, the Military District of Washington was reorganized into two departments: the Mobile Force and the Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) Command. Colonel Edward W. Timberlake served as the first Commanding Officer of the Military District of Washington Antiaircraft Artillery command. The command was enlarged during the summer and fall of 1942 in preparation for any future defense needs. The Army inspected the former CCC camp at Fort Dupont Park in early September 1942 with the view of locating a gun battery in that position to increase the strength and effectiveness of the defense of Washington.³⁹⁵ As a result of the temporary antiaircraft defenses, Washington's protection greatly increased.³⁹⁶ The Antiaircraft Artillery Command's two gun battalions were housed at each of five batteries (including the installation at Fort Dupont Park); these "were strategically located to have effective fields of fire extending on a radius of nine miles from Hains Point."³⁹⁷ The 93rd Detachment of the 212th Antiaircraft Search Light Battery moved onto the old reservoir site at 16th and Kennedy streets, N.W., a week after the Pearl Harbor attack. In addition, to confuse the enemy and create the impression that the defense system was more than complete, a number of dummy antiaircraft installations were set up on various buildings in Washington.

³⁹³ Herbert F. L. Allen, "Washington is Defenseless," *Evening Star* (November 18, 1934): n.p.

³⁹⁴ Ibid..

³⁹⁵ Colonel E. W. Timberlake, letter to F. F. Gillen, September 7, 1942, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

³⁹⁶ William H. Cartwright, Jr., *The Military District of Washington in the War Years, 1942-45* (Bethesda, MD: 1995), 32.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

On September 10, 1942, the Department of Interior granted permission to the Antiaircraft Artillery Command of the Military District of Washington, under the Baltimore District of the War Department, to occupy a fifty-one-acre tract of land in Fort Dupont Park. The land included the former site of the park's CCC camp on E Street between 35th and 36th streets. The Army requested that all CCC buildings, except for the few used for storage purposes, be available for their use and that a fence be erected between the Army and NCP buildings.³⁹⁸ Battery A, of the 89th Antiaircraft Artillery Command occupied the Fort Dupont Park base and their antiaircraft missiles were positioned in the park.³⁹⁹ The boundary of the occupied area was as follows:

Beginning at the point on Ely Place 500 feet east of the intersection with Minnesota Avenue, thence eastward along the north boundary of the park to its intersection with Ridge Road, thence southeasterly along Ridge Road 800 feet, thence southwesterly along a line parallel to the north boundary of the park and 800 feet south of the same boundary to a point 500 feet east of Minnesota Avenue and thence northward to the point of beginning.⁴⁰⁰

The permit was amended on September 16, 1942, so the boundaries could be altered slightly. As requested by Major A.A. Treutel of the Antiaircraft Artillery Command headquarters, the NPS revised the boundaries of the occupied tract as follows:

Beginning at the point on Ely Place 500 feet east of the intersection with Minnesota Avenue, thence eastward along the north boundary of the park to its intersection with Ridge Road, thence southeasterly along Ridge Road 800 feet; thence northwesterly to a point 90 degrees tangent to boundary line S 79 degrees 25' E at Monument No. 405-13 to a point 800 feet SW thereof; thence NW and parallel to north boundary line between Monument 405-14 and 405-13 to a point 500' E of Minnesota Ave.; thence NE to point of beginning.⁴⁰¹

In both the original and amended boundaries, a portion of the AAA site ran through the recently closed CCC camp. The NPS granted the Military District permission to use the CCC camp buildings for military purposes associated with the antiaircraft system. The buildings were no longer under the jurisdiction of the CCC at the time, and the NPS noted they would retain buildings 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 19.⁴⁰² The National Park Service allowed the Military

³⁹⁸ Colonel E. W. Timberlake, letter to F. F. Gillen, September 7, 1942.

³⁹⁹ Frank Faragasso, "History of Fort Dupont Park," (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, date unknown), 4.

⁴⁰⁰ F. F. Gillen, Senior Assistant Superintendent, letter to Col. E. W. Timberlake, September 10, 1942, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁰¹ F. F. Gillen, Senior Assistant Superintendent, letter to Major A. A. Treutel, September 16, 1942, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

District to use the grounds and buildings under the following circumstances: “permission to occupy the above-described area is granted with the understanding that the area will be vacated and restored to a condition satisfactory to [the National Park Service] within one year after the present war is declared to be ended and with the understanding that any instructions from official representatives of this Service will be complied with.”⁴⁰³

The exact date upon which the AAA command vacated Fort Dupont Park is unknown, but on July 13, 1943, the Real Estate Division of the Army Corps of Engineers notified the National Capital Parks that an engineer from the U.S. Engineer Office had completed a physical restoration of the Fort Dupont Park premises used by the military, which implied that the buildings were vacant by that date. Major E. B. Hughes of the Corps of Engineers requested that the National Park Service inspect the subject area “at the earliest possible date so that this office may be informed as to whether the restoration has been accomplished in a manner satisfactory to the National Park Service.”⁴⁰⁴ The work must not have been satisfactory to the NPS since this would not be the last time that the officials inspected the land.

In 1944, the War Department moved half of the antiaircraft force in Washington elsewhere when threats against the city seemed more and more unlikely. On February 23, 1944, Lieutenant Colonel H. B. Rumsey, wrote a memorandum from the Pentagon to declare that thirty-five antiaircraft positions in the area were now deemed to be surplus.⁴⁰⁵ The memorandum called for the dismantling and restoration of the gun battery positions at McMillan Reservoir and Fort Dupont Park. At Fort Dupont, Rumsey wrote that the 90-mm gun battery position required the following work: “Removing camouflage covers, sliding track, barbed wire fences, and the filling in of revetments.”⁴⁰⁶ A memorandum by Lt. Colonel Charles L. Southward of the Military District of Washington dated March 31, 1944, noted that the Rumsey’s memorandum listed all of the thirty-five surplus sites to be abandoned and restored. Lt. Colonel Southward noted the McMillan Reservoir, Fort Dupont, and Battery Drum as exceptions since their restorations were to be “expedited.”⁴⁰⁷

The Army released the facilities at Fort Dupont Park in November 1944. By November 10, 1944, the NCP was occupying buildings 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 19 and had use for buildings T-2203 and T-2204 (which the Army painted and renumbered). The NCP requested that the Army formally transfer the above buildings and demolish the remainder of buildings, tunnels, and revetments and return the grounds to a satisfactory manner. The Navy Department considered using the buildings not requested by NCP for storage purposes. The War Department retained the right to transfer two portable buildings, Buildings 20 and 21, to a new site, such as Fort Myer, Virginia. A September 8, 1944, NCP memorandum stated that the land used by the War

⁴⁰³ F. F. Gillen, Senior Assistant Superintendent, letter to Col. E. W. Timberlake, September 10, 1942.

⁴⁰⁴ Major E. B. Hughes, letter to the National Capital Parks Office, July 13, 1942, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁰⁵ Lt. Colonel H. B. Rumsey, Army Service Forces, The Pentagon, memorandum, February 23, 1944, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Lt. Colonel Charles L. Southward, Military District of Washington, memorandum, March 31, 1944, NCP-East Files.

Department must be restored to its original state and all installations removed; this work would be subject to an inspection by the NPS.⁴⁰⁸

On February 13, 1945, the War Department officially transferred Buildings nine buildings to the National Capital Parks, which took over maintenance of them.⁴⁰⁹ The buildings were all rigid construction that had part of the CCC camp: Building 12 (Garage, 40' x 85'), Building 13 (Garage, 30' x 40'), Building 14 (Shop, 25' x 45'), Building 15 (Garage, 25' x 65'), Building 16 (Black Smith Shop, 15' x 15'), Building 18 (Storage Building, 20' x 50'), Building 19 (Oil House, 10' x 16'), Building T-2203 (Barracks, 20' x 110'), and Building T-2204 (Barracks, 20' x 110').⁴¹⁰ On May 23, 1945, the War Department finished the demolition of buildings at Fort Dupont and commenced on the restoration of the grounds.⁴¹¹ The NPS inspected the site on July 12, 1945, and "found [it] to have been satisfactorily restored."⁴¹² In an August 17, 1945, letter, the War Department declared the fort surplus to its needs, and returned the land to the Department of Interior. Accordingly, the NPS released the War Department from further responsibility in connection with the use of this area and their permit to use the land was terminated effective August 17, 1945.⁴¹³

Veterans' Housing Created in Fort Dupont Park

With the end of World War II, homelessness reemerged as a significant problem in many American cities, just as it had after World War I. Many United States Armed Forces Veterans faced homelessness and unemployment upon returning to their hometowns. The Federal Public Housing Authority attempted to solve the problem by constructing temporary housing for the veterans in cities across the country. The authority chose five sites to serve as temporary dwelling accommodations in Washington, D.C. All five sites – Shepherd Parkway, Blue Plains, 4th at Naval Lab, SW; Camp Simms, 15th & Alabama, SE; Shepherd Parkway, Portland & South Capitol, SE; Fort Dupont Park, 32nd & F St., SE; and Anacostia Park, the rear of National Capital Housing Authority Lily Ponds property – were under construction in 1946.

In conformity with an Act of May 18, 1946, Public Law No. 385, the D.C. Commissioners were granted use of two acres of land at Fort Dupont Park as a site for Veterans' Housing facilities. The parcels requested were located as follows: two in Square 5465 on the east side of Croissant Place, two in Square 5466 on the east side of 31st Street, and one in Square 5467 on the west side of 31st Street. The NPS allowed this construction, as mandated by law, but did require that the D.C. Commissioners notify the NPS when construction began, protect park property, seek permission prior to removing any trees or shrubs, and leave the Victory gardens in squares 5465

⁴⁰⁸ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

⁴⁰⁹ Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks*, 40.

⁴¹⁰ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

⁴¹¹ N.C.P. memorandum, May 23, 1945, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

⁴¹² Irving C. Root, letter to Major E. B. Hughes, August 17, 1945, NCP-East Files.

⁴¹³ In 1994, the Baltimore District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commissioned a study on the status and history of properties formerly used by the Department of Defense. National Capital Parks-East charged with the task of determining the function of several pipes (18" in diameter), located to the north of the earthworks, which might have been used as cisterns, wells, or munitions storage.

and 5466 undisturbed. The Federal Public Housing Authority erected the buildings, and the D.C. government constructed the necessary streets and utilities.⁴¹⁴ The number and appearance of the temporary buildings is unknown.

The contract between the NPS and the D.C. Commissioners was to expire June 30, 1948, unless otherwise extended by the Superintendent of National Capital Parks.⁴¹⁵ On December 1, 1948, the NPS extended the permit until June 30, 1949.⁴¹⁶ The D.C. government inquired as to whether the permit might be extended to June 30, 1952. The termination date of the permit and the demolition of the Housing Authority buildings is unknown, although it likely occurred in the early 1950s. Events of the late 1940s and early 1950s, such as a national economic upturn and the G.I. Bill, greatly ameliorated the extent of this problem. The housing is no longer located in the park.

⁴¹⁴ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases & Licenses.

⁴¹⁵ Irving Root, letter to Colonel K. E. Madsen, July 15, 1946, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases & Licenses.

⁴¹⁶ Irving Root, letter to G. M. Thornett, December 1, 1948, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases & Licenses.

Chapter Eight History of the Golf Course

The game of golf started to become popular among wealthier Americans in the east and midwest in the late 1880s. The U.S. Golf Association was formed in 1894 with just five member clubs and sponsored the first national amateur and open championships the next year. Sporting goods companies helped further the spread of the game across the country between 1900 and 1920 by supporting the construction of public courses and introducing equipment that made the game easier to play and more economical. There were more than five times as many golfers in the United States in 1923 as there had been ten years earlier.⁴¹⁷

In the Washington area, the game's spread followed a similar course. The Washington Golf Club, established in 1894 by members of the Metropolitan Club, was the first such association to be organized in the capital. The Metropolitan Club, a social organization, built a nine-hole course near Rosslyn, Virginia, the following year. The Chevy Chase Club, established as a country club in 1892, added golf to its activities in 1895, carving a golf course out of its own lands just north of the District border. Six holes were ready for play in the fall of 1895.⁴¹⁸ The first public golf links established in the National Capital Park system was a three-hole practice course constructed in West Potomac Park between 17th and 19th streets in fiscal year 1914. The course was built in response to public demand, according to the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. A nine-hole course was begun in East Potomac Park in 1917, but, due to the United States' involvement in World War I, the course did not open until the summer of 1920. Nine more holes were completed by 1923, and a second 18-hole course added in East Potomac Park by 1930. In this era of segregation, the city's African American golfers could play only on a nine-hole course constructed by the 1920s on what is now Constitution Gardens in West Potomac Park. A second nine-hole course for African Americans was constructed in Anacostia Park and opened in 1939. The Anacostia Park course was named for John Mercer Langston, longtime dean of the Howard University Law School.⁴¹⁹

Fort Dupont Park became the fifth District park in which local golfers could play. The first discussion of constructing a golf course there took place in May 1928 when Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Charles Eliot, and Conrad L. Wirth toured property owned by the Chappelear family to consider the possibility of purchasing it for inclusion in the park. The tour concluded that to the south of the property "a beautiful view of the present Dupont Park could be obtained," while to the west "a panorama picture of Washington and the Anacostia River opens up provided,

⁴¹⁷ Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Golf," *The Oxford Companion to United States History*, Paul S. Boyer, editor in chief (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 313-314.

⁴¹⁸ John M. Lynham, *The Chevy Chase Club: A History, 1885-1957* (Washington, D.C.: The Chevy Chase Club, 1958), 54-55.

⁴¹⁹ "A Brief History of the Operation of Golf Courses in National Capital Parks," Federal Records Center, file 1150-40 1460-65-95; Robinson & Associates, Inc., National Register of Historic Places, Nomination Form – East and West Potomac Parks Historic District, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., July 16, 1999, 8:76; Joseph H. Cole, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form – Langston Golf Course Historic District, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., October 15, 1991, 8:5-10.

however, that the foreground can be preserved.”⁴²⁰ The National Capital Parks office of the National Park Service suggested that a possible way of preserving the vistas from the soon-to-be acquired site would be the construction of a golf course – as long as it did not interfere with the wooded sections of the park.⁴²¹

This suggestion was followed in July 1929 with the proposal of a golf course in the park by Wirth, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission’s landscape architect, in his comprehensive plan for the design of Fort Dupont Park. He proposed siting the nine-hole course in the area once used as a farm, located to the west of the ridge (west of Ely Place and Ridge Road). The forty-four acres of land would be transformed into a course with 200-foot fairways, grass greens, and clay tees at a projected cost of \$30,000. The existing farmhouse would be remodeled into a clubhouse for the course and would be augmented by the construction of a caddy pen and toll house; all three projects were expected to total \$20,000.⁴²² Wirth praised the contours of the course stating: “the land is adaptable to golf. It is not as rough as the Rock Creek course and is much more rolling than the Potomac Park course.”⁴²³ Wirth also valued the site for its fine panoramic views of the District. A 1934 Preliminary Development Plan for the park also proposed a golf course to be laid out “over a rather interesting rolling piece of ground in the northern section of the park.”⁴²⁴ When the park opened to the public in 1937, the course had not been constructed. A March 1, 1937, *Washington Daily News* article stated that “some day a golf course may be built in one end” of the park, but “now it is a spot appealing more to the hiker and the old-fashioned picnicker who likes a little inconvenience and hard work with his outings.”⁴²⁵ The proposed golf course would “run along the northeast edge and would take up almost half the park.”⁴²⁶

In 1938, the National Park Service revived Wirth’s plan for the golf course and clubhouse.⁴²⁷ (figure 30) National Capital Parks proposed the development of “the best 18-hole public golf course in the city, a handsome clubhouse, picnic areas, play meadows and parking facilities.”⁴²⁸ The plan intended the golf course to be joined with nine holes of Anacostia’s links. The remaining nine holes in Anacostia Park would be replaced with a recreation center, including playing fields, courts, and other recreational facilities.⁴²⁹ The course was to start at the clubhouse, progress west toward Anacostia Park and then travel through the narrow strip linking Fort Dupont

⁴²⁰ “Development of Possible Additions to Fort Dupont,” July 6, 1928, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance, and Protection.

⁴²¹ “Development of Possible Additions to Fort Dupont,” July 6, 1928, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance, and Protection.

⁴²² Wirth, 1929, 1-6.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴²⁴ NARA, Record Group 79, Drawing 16-17, “Preliminary Plan for Landscape Development,” 1934, n.p.

⁴²⁵ “400 Wild Acres to be Opened This Year in Eastern D.C. Will be ‘Picnic Heaven,’” *Washington Daily News* (March 1, 1937): 14.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ Olivia Walling, “Enjoy Fort Dupont Park,” *East of the River* (April 2002): n.p.

⁴²⁸ “Fort Dupont Park, Little Publicized, to be Elaborate One: Best 18-Hole Golf Course in City to be Built There.”

⁴²⁹ “East Washington Parks,” *Evening Star* (October 20, 1940): C-2.

Insert Figure 30. 1938 design for the Golf Course (National Archives, Record Group 79,
Drawing # 16-1-1).

Park with Anacostia Park and along the river to Pennsylvania Avenue.⁴³⁰ The park's CCC workers completed preliminary work for the course in 1940, including the felling of trees, burning of stumps, clearing of sixteen acres, and installation of 450 feet of concrete pipe,⁴³¹ but the course was not completed.

In the mid-1940s, the National Park Service revived their plans for a golf course to be cut out of the park's woods and a portion of the former CCC camp, but with no connection to Anacostia Park. At this time, the NPS hired the S. G. Leoffler Company, the concessioner operating other local NPS golf courses, to construct and operate the Fort Dupont course. A *Development Plan* for Fort Dupont Park, completed October 1, 1944, described its status:

Golf Course: We have consulted Golf Architect William Flynn, of Philadelphia, on this subject. Mr. Flynn is prepared to develop an 18-hole course, ½ in Fort Dupont, ½ in Anacostia, and connecting strip, using the 9 holes in Dupont as now roughed out. The present Anacostia course must be re-adjusted to take care of the parkway along the river. Mr. Flynn is the golf architect retained by Mr. Leoffler under Leoffler's new contract.

Golf Clubhouse and Restaurant: Mr. Flynn, Mr. McGovern, both golf architects, advise against putting the clubhouse on the hill next to Ridge Road as previously contemplated, [and instead recommended that it] be somewhere near Minnesota Avenue, in the middle of an 18-hole course.⁴³²

Leoffler and the NPS did not end up hiring Flynn to design the course; instead, Leoffler, hired notable golf course architect William F. Gordon.⁴³³ Gordon procured several contracts to design public golf courses in Washington from the Leoffler family. Gordon began his involvement with golf course design in the golf course construction division of Carter's Tested Seed Company in 1920, but did not start to design his own course until the 1940s. His output (more than five dozen course designs, either alone or with his son David W. Gordon, in eleven states, the District of Columbia, and Canada between 1946 and 1963) testifies to his popularity. In addition, Gordon's company constructed courses for renowned golf course architect Donald Ross. Gordon was the founder of the Pennsylvania Public Golfers Association, and served as its first president from 1936 to 1940. In 1941, Gordon founded his own firm, which was involved until 1945 in the seeding of military installations. It was not until 1950 that Gordon designed and built golf

⁴³⁰ "Fort Dupont Park, Little Publicized, to be Elaborate One: Best 18-Hole Golf Course in City to be Built There."

⁴³¹ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴³² "Fort Dupont General Development," text accompanying Drawing 16-109, October 1, 1944, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

⁴³³ Merrel Whittlesey, "Leoffler Gets 8-Year Extension of Public Links Franchise," *Evening Star* (June 23, 1954): n.p.

courses under the firm name of William F. Gordon Company. Most of the layouts completed after 1953 were done in association with his son.⁴³⁴

Gordon completed final plans and specifications for Fort Dupont's nine-hole course in July 1947. Clearing the nineteen acres proposed for course use cost a total of \$11,900.⁴³⁵ Work commenced in the summer of 1947, under the supervision of David W Gordon. The crew constructed a temporary road to bring equipment to the site. The greens averaged 6,500 square feet and the fairways and holes ranged from 150 to 370 yards long – with much of the course on very rough terrain.⁴³⁶ The contractor, H. P. Giddings, constructed the course for a sum of \$75,000.⁴³⁷ Completed in late 1947, the course did not open to the public until spring of 1948 when the greens were ready.⁴³⁸ (figures 31-33) The firm of Pielstick & Syme Associates designed the one-story, ranch-style clubhouse in 1948, and it was completed shortly thereafter prior to the 1950 season. The rates for the 1948 season were 50 cents for week days and \$1.00 for weekends and holidays.⁴³⁹ The NPS completed a planting plan for the clubhouse in 1951 and proposed alterations to it in 1952. On March 21, 1951, the NPS approved an entrance road and parking area for the clubhouse and golf course; the parking lot was located south of the clubhouse on the ridge overlooking the course, and was accessed by two entrances from Fort Dupont Drive to the south.⁴⁴⁰

Fort Dupont Golf Course attracted a white clientele while Langston Golf Course, in the Kingman Lake area of Anacostia Park at 2600 Benning Road, NE, served the community's African American golfers. The Langston Golf Course, constructed by CCC and WPA workers, opened June 11, 1939. The course was constructed after fifteen years of petitioning, meetings, and letter writing by the city's black community.⁴⁴¹

The National Park Service did not properly maintain the Langston course, and several black golfers decided in July 1941 to protest by playing a round at a segregated-yet-public East Potomac Park Golf Course. The National Park Service provided protection to the golfers, who were met with some violence and racial epithets from onlookers. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes commented on the black golfers' request that the course be desegregated by writing, "They are taxpayers, they are citizens, and they have a right to play on public courses on the same basis as whites. To be sure, we have maintained a golf course for negroes in Washington, but the

⁴³⁴ Geoffrey S. Cornish and Ronald E. Whitten, *The Architects of Golf* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 275-276.

⁴³⁵ George W. Harding, memorandum to Henry Thompson, July 30, 1947, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴³⁶ Irving Root, letter to S. A. Lauver, August 17, 1947, Federal Records Center, 79-64A-42, Box 23, Folder 40-25. Fort Dupont Golf Course.

⁴³⁷ Faragasso, 4.

⁴³⁸ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90-20. Field House.

⁴³⁹ Federal Records Center, 79-64A-42, Box 23, Folder 40-25. Fort Dupont Golf Course.

⁴⁴⁰ "Entrance Road and Parking Area," March 21, 1951, Drawing #883-41901, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁴¹ Calvin H. Sinnette, *Forbidden Fairways: African Americans and the Game of Golf* (Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 1998), 123.



Figure 31. 1949 view of the Fort Dupont Golf Course
(Historical Society of Washington, Weymer Photograph Collection).



Figure 32. 1949 view of the parking lot and the Fort Dupont Golf Course Clubhouse (Historical Society of Washington, Weymer Photograph Collection).

Insert Figure 33. Drawing of the "Fort Dupont Golf Course," July 21, 1950
(National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16.1-43).

cold fact is that we haven't kept it up and it is not surprising that Negroes do not care to play on it."⁴⁴² After World War II, "golf was growing in popularity in the black community and neither the segregated public golf courses nor the few black-owned private courses were adequate to satisfy the burgeoning demand."⁴⁴³ Many golf facilities, such as East Potomac and Rock Creek, were desegregated in the 1950s, yet Langston remained the predominant course for the city's African American population.

During 1948, 40,000 people played at the Fort Dupont Golf Course, which included a clubhouse and visitor parking.⁴⁴⁴ Fort Dupont was one of five courses owned by the Interior Department, the others being East Potomac, Rock Creek, Anacostia, and Langston. S. G. Leoffler Company operated all five golf courses. In 1951, when it became known that their books had not been audited regularly, a Congressional committee was formed to investigate the financing and operation of the courses. There was a call for the courses to be maintained and operated by the D.C. Recreation Board. These efforts proved fruitless but did prompt Leoffler to better maintain the courses and operate them without corruption.⁴⁴⁵

In June 1954, the Leoffler Company was granted an eight-year extension to its contract with the Department of Interior to operate the District's public golf courses in spite of its earlier financial problems. The contract called for the construction of nine new holes at the Langston course to make it an eighteen-hole course, while Fort Dupont remained nine holes.⁴⁴⁶ Fort Dupont received its long-needed expansion in 1957. The additional nine holes were again designed by the William Gordon Company, most likely by David Gordon. In order to arrange the additional holes, the police paddock and barn were relocated and hole number 5 was rearranged.⁴⁴⁷ Leoffler's courses were reputed to be the cheapest in the country.⁴⁴⁸ In 1967, the fee to play nine holes ranged from \$.70 during the week to \$1.00 on weekends and holidays, while eighteen holes cost \$1.00 on weekdays and \$1.75 on weekends and holidays.⁴⁴⁹

The NPS planned to close the Fort Dupont Park public golf course on December 1, 1971, due to community pressure and financial liability. They envisioned converting the land into a multipurpose recreation center. The NPS believed that the course had never been extremely popular with golfers because of its location and rugged terrain.⁴⁵⁰ In 1971, Layne Leoffler, president of the S. G. Leoffler Company, described the course: "When it was a nine-hole course, it was impossible to play – the terrain was just too rugged. You had to be a mountain goat to climb it. The fifth tee is [located at] the highest point in Washington."⁴⁵¹ Further, they stated that

⁴⁴² Ibid., 123-24.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 124.

⁴⁴⁴ National Park Service, *Master Plan: Fort Circle Parks* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, April 1968), 51.

⁴⁴⁵ Bill Gold, "No Relief in Sight for Publinx Golfers," *Washington Post* (June 6, 1951): n.p.

⁴⁴⁶ Whittlesey.

⁴⁴⁷ Harry T. Thompson, Associate Superintendent of National Capital Parks, letter to William F. Gordon, William F. Gordon Company, June 19, 1957, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁴⁸ Whittlesey.

⁴⁴⁹ National Park Service, *Master Plan: Fort Circle Parks*, 51.

⁴⁵⁰ Abbott Combes, "Fort Dupont Park to Close Golf Links," *Washington Post* (November 26, 1971): n.p.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

many residents of the area around the park believed the land “would better serve the community if it were integrated with the rest of Fort Dupont Park.”⁴⁵² Local residents also mounted pressure to incorporate the land into the rest of the park. S. G. Leoffler Company still operated the course for the NPS, as it had done since 1948, but in 1970 the facility lost \$19,000. The course was also criticized for almost daily cases of petty theft and crime on the course. The NPS closed the course in 1972. The golf course was replaced with a sports complex, located on Ely Place, which included tennis and basketball courts, athletic fields, a softball diamond, and an indoor skating rink.⁴⁵³

Immediately following the closure of the course, there were plans to convert the land into a zoo and theater, among other proposed uses. Some community members, however, were unhappy with the closure, and wished that it would be revived.⁴⁵⁴ Neither the new recreational facilities, such as the zoo, nor the revival of the course ever materialized, and the land was converted into a variety of uses in the decades following the closure of the course. These uses included community gardens, an amphitheater, and the Hiker-Biker Trail. The former fairways supported an unusual transitional habitat in the larger context of the mowed grass and wooded areas of other parts of the park. According to the NPS Natural Resource Specialist, the fairways provided the “shrubs and berries that offer food and winter cover for birds, butterflies, and other insects, and thus contribute to a more diverse natural habitat in the park.”⁴⁵⁵ By 1992, a portion of the old golf course was being used as a community garden by over 200 residents.⁴⁵⁶

A nonprofit organization, The First Tee of Greater Washington, contacted NCP-East in May 2000 to establish a one-year golf program on the former site of the Fort Dupont Park Golf Course.⁴⁵⁷ The program is a local chapter of First Tee (a national program sponsored by both the PGA and LPGA) which aims to “make the game of golf accessible and affordable to children, who heretofore have not had access to the game or to golf facilities.”⁴⁵⁸ The organization wished to run two six-week programs at the park, one in the summer and an after-school program in the fall. First Tee proposed to locate the classes on a portion of the former golf course in the area north of the Visitor Center across the bridge and then east toward the maintenance building. They wished to construct one putting green, develop an existing swale into a sand bunker, gradually mow the grass to approximately one inch in height, and clean out some of the vines and undergrowth in between the green and the amphitheater. It was emphasized that these alterations would be temporary and that the enhancements would be removed and returned to their original condition at the conclusion of the program. It is not known whether these alterations were implemented. Today, near the Summer Theater, there is evidence of a fairway.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ “Ft. Dupont Eyed for Theater, Zoo,” *Washington Daily News* (March 6, 1972): n.p.

⁴⁵⁵ Williams, 121-22.

⁴⁵⁶ Claudia Rosenbaum, “Garden’s a Fortress Against City Clamor,” *Washington Times* (June 4, 1992): n.p.

⁴⁵⁷ Henry D. Kerfoot, President of The First Tee of Greater Washington, letter to John Hale, Superintendent of National Capital Parks-East, May 16, 2000, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

Chapter Nine 1938 Through the 1970s: Continued Development of Fort Dupont Park

The Lanham House and Nursery

In 1938, Clifford Lanham, superintendent of District Trees and Plantings, still inhabited and farmed the nursery located near the Fort Dupont earthworks. By this time, the D.C. government rented the nursery and Lanham's house from the newly formed office of National Capital Parks. The nursery propagated oak, maple, and ginko trees in beds in the area around the fort and fort entrance on Alabama Avenue. The NCP envisioned the swift return of the nursery land to its intended use as parkland; a plan approved by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in December 1938. The plan called for the immediate construction of the golf course and improvements to the park's roads, originally constructed by CCC workers. Other improvements were proposed but were postponed until the area surrounding the park was more developed, which was not until the 1950s.

A *Development Plan* for Fort Dupont Park, completed by NPS on October 1, 1944, described the revised development of the park in text accompanying a drawing. (figure 34) The text updated various projects within the park, including the progress on constructing the golf course. By October 1944, the picnic areas were in use, but were overcrowded. The play meadow included in the original development plans for the park was graded, seeded, and in use. The development plan described the fort and the open area around it as a historic area, around which only limited development should be allowed. The plan also recommended the removal of all existing buildings surrounding the fort. In addition, the plan proposed that an amphitheater (similar to the one in Rock Creek Park) be erected in the park, and called for the construction of riding facilities at the intersection of Massachusetts and Alabama avenues. The Anacostia Connecting Drive was to be graded and surfaced with gravel, and portions of the drainage system were to be cobble-guttered in the winter of 1944. (figure 35) The report also updated the progress of Fort Drive construction, stating that the next portion to be developed was located between Porter Street and Benning Road, N.E.⁴⁵⁹ The drive would travel under both Ridge Road and Massachusetts Avenue according to the plan. The plan also showed the proposed school and playground at the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and Ely Place, on the former site of the CCC camp. The plan proposed a play area in a portion of the park north of Ridge Road. [The school and playgrounds are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.]

Irving Root further updated the development of the park in a letter dated May 14, 1947: "our objective in planning the development of the park is to obtain the maximum in recreational usage which the area affords and making these facilities available to the public at all times, and to preserve the important historic and natural features which contribute so much to the interest in the area and the beauty of the community. We continue to be handicapped by the unavailability of funds for the full execution of our plans, but will be able to take important steps in the improvement of the area adjacent to the old Fort during the coming season."⁴⁶⁰ Root envisioned

⁴⁵⁹ "Fort Dupont General Development," text accompanying Drawing 16-109, October 1, 1944, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

⁴⁶⁰ Irving Root, letter to Hugh DeFabio, May 14, 1947, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance & Protection.

Figure 34. General Development Plan for Fort Dupont Park, October 1, 1944 (National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-109).

Figure 35. Study for Fort Dupont Park connection with Anacostia Park, May 24, 1943
(National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-101).

the historic area with several picnic groves consisting of benches, tables, possibly several fireplaces, and a small playground. He advised that the Lanham House and its secondary buildings be razed to make way for this development in order to restore the fort area to public use.⁴⁶¹

The community support for closing the nursery and converting the land to park use gained momentum in 1942, following a 1941 citizen request to open the area around the fort to the public for picnics. The NPS denied the request since Lanham still lived on the property and the area was in use by the Department of Trees and Parking as a horticultural plantation. Requests to convert the area around the earthworks from a private nursery to a public picnic facility began as early as 1941. Momentum gained for this proposal in 1942, driven mostly by continued growth in the eastern part of the city and the community's desire for more access to their local park. On November 23, 1944, the NPS concluded that the time had come for the six-acre nursery site to be redeveloped and devoted to park uses.⁴⁶² There was, however, some opposition to removing the nursery – which was likened to Dumbarton Oaks Park as a place of natural beauty. The general public was allowed to use this area passively, but “by allowing the general public to use the area promiscuously for picnicking or ball playing” some felt it “certain we would destroy one of our local beauty spots.”⁴⁶³

The nursery still existed in 1946 when proposals the site were again debated by National Park Service officials and the public. A citizen's group believed the thirteen acres should be converted into a playground, while the NCP had already planned a picnic grove for the site. Root suggested, as a compromise, that a ball field be completed in the land north of Ridge Road. Citizens also wondered if the Lanham residence (see below) could be adapted as a community building and field house.⁴⁶⁴ On March 11, 1947, some nearby citizens suggested that the Lanham House be used as a public library.

The Lanham House, located at 4210 Alabama Avenue, was constructed between 1870 and 1885. The two-story frame structure, with a basement and attic, was set back from the avenue on a circular driveway off of the narrow entrance road which provided access to the earthworks. The house was surrounded by several outbuildings and facilities, including a swimming pool to the west of the fort, a fountain in front of the house, a playhouse, two-car garage, tool house, storage shed, stable/barn, and corral fences. The stable/barn was located immediately beside the fort, between the proposed circular road and the fort. Lanham kept several horses in the stable, and NCP housed some horses there in 1946. A second residence was situated down the hill from the fort. In the 1940s, a rock garden was between the Lanham House and Alabama Avenue.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Harry T. Thompson, letter to T. C. Vint, November 23, 1944, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

⁴⁶³ George W. Harding, memorandum to F. F. Gillen, June 11, 1941, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴⁶⁴ National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, Meeting Minutes, April 30, 1946, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴⁶⁵ Henry Thompson, letter to Mary S. Austin, January 22, 1957, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 50. Planting & Landscaping.

Landscape architect H. E. Van Gelder recommended that, when the land was converted to park use, several of the larger nursery trees in scattered locations should be left in place so that they would provide shade in the open meadow behind the fort.⁴⁶⁶ His plan also considered several plants for retention, such as boxwoods and hedges near the house. He recommended that plants around the house and on the adjacent terrace be salvaged prior to the demolition of the house, and a deadline for salvage of plant material was set for May 2, 1947.⁴⁶⁷ His plan deemed the old house structurally unsafe for use by the public, so proposals such as using it for the Children's Museum of Washington were abandoned.⁴⁶⁸ There was some discussion of keeping the stable/barn and the two residences located near the Lanham House (although the smaller of the two was in bad repair). In 1947, Government Services, Inc., operated a temporary riding academy in the lower portion of the park, so there was talk of retaining the stable to use in place of the temporary facility.⁴⁶⁹ The stable/barn was not saved since many critics felt the building "certainly would be an eyesore and detract from this historical feature [the fort]."⁴⁷⁰

The NPS requested that the nursery land be transferred on January 1, 1947, so that it could be put into public use in the spring of 1947.⁴⁷¹ A February 3, 1947, letter indicated that the D.C. government was prepared to transfer the nursery land back to the National Park Service, but they requested two years to remove any existing nursery stock that may be suitable for transfer to the Poplar Point Nursery or to the streets of the District.⁴⁷²

A contract for the demolition of the house, totaling \$527, was completed on May 29, 1947.⁴⁷³ In addition to the house, the contract included the demolition of the secondary structures, including the garage and barn/stable, and swimming pool. (figure 36) The fountain in front of the house, as well as the walks and steps were also to be removed. The existing roadway to the Lanham House was to be replaced with a proposed entrance and circular drive, with the old roadway not to be removed until the new drive was completed. By March 1950, the nursery land was in NPS possession and the new drive completed. A granite and sandstone bridge was constructed in the late 1940s to provide access to the earthworks over a swale located near the park's Alabama Avenue boundary. Also by March 1950, five picnic tables and benches had been installed near the fort in the area near Alabama Avenue, referred to as the Lanham Estates.⁴⁷⁴ The shelter near the fort was completed by 1954. An additional six picnic tables were installed in 1957.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁶⁶ H. E. Van Gelder, *Fort Dupont: District of Columbia Temporary Tree Nursery*, June 25, 1942, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

⁴⁶⁷ Merel Sager, memorandum to Harry T. Thompson, January 3, 1947, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance, and Protection.

⁴⁶⁸ U. S. Grant, 3rd, letter to Mrs. W. A. Sandberg, May 8, 1947, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance, and Protection.

⁴⁶⁹ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

⁴⁷⁰ Merel Sager, memorandum to Harry T. Thompson, January 3, 1947.

⁴⁷¹ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴⁷² Gordon R. Young, letter to Irving C. Root, February 3, 1947, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

⁴⁷³ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 95. Traffic & Park Facilities.

⁴⁷⁴ Irving Root, letter to S. Raymond Smith, March 1950, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance & Protection.

⁴⁷⁵ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance and Protection.

Figure 36. Proposed alterations to nursery and area surrounding earthworks, 1947 (National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-136).

The Kimball School

As early as 1940, two DC schools were planned for Fort Dupont Park land near Minnesota Avenue. The proposed schools were viewed favorably by nearby residents since they would provide playgrounds. The D.C. Bureau of the Budget considered estimates for an elementary school in February 1940. As originally proposed by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, a school was to be placed outside of the park, facing Minnesota Avenue between Ely Place and E Street on land to be acquired by the District. A playground for the school and general community was to be provided on a portion of Fort Dupont Park. The Bureau of Budget rejected the D.C. Commissioners' request for funds to buy the school site; as a result, the D.C. Commissioners proposed that the entire school site be relocated to park land. This interfered with the development of the golf course and would necessitate the early removal of the CCC camp from the area in which it was then located. The National Capital Parks believed that "every effort should be made to prevent the erection of public schools on park areas."⁴⁷⁶ However, the Bureau of Budget was looking for a site in the park to avoid the expenditure necessary for the purchase of the site selected by NCPPC. Kimball School opened on Fort Dupont Park land in 1942. The 1944 *Development Plan* for Fort Dupont Park updated the development of the playground for the Kimball School:

School Playground: We are committed to releasing the area adjacent to the school on Minnesota Avenue. Plans are completed and approved for development of the odd-shaped portion of the playground area in the southwest corner.⁴⁷⁷

In 1946, the National Park Service transferred jurisdiction of the Kimball School land to the D.C. Commissioners. The Kimball Elementary School still stands at the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and Ely Place.

Ridge Playground

As early as 1939, there were plans for a playground on the north side of Ridge Road on twelve acres set aside by NCPPC for recreational purposes.⁴⁷⁸ The neighborhood children were greatly in need of such a playground. (The closest playgrounds were over two miles away from the Bradbury Heights community.) Although the playground plans were ready, work was delayed due to a shortage of manpower.⁴⁷⁹ A development plan, including tennis courts and an athletic field, and grading plan were completed January 27, 1947, and the clearing and grading were completed by June 3, 1947. (figure 34) The playground was completed in December 1947. The District of Columbia Recreation Board was responsible for the establishment and supervision of playgrounds (including those on NPS land). The District prepared a contract for the construction of shelter houses at Ridge Playground, as well as others throughout the District, on December 20,

⁴⁷⁶ A. E. Demarary, memorandum, February 26, 1940, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 90. Structures.

⁴⁷⁷ "Fort Dupont General Development," text accompanying Drawing 16-109, October 1, 1944, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 35. Leases and Licenses.

⁴⁷⁸ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

Figure 37. Development Plan for Ridge Playground, 1947 (National Archives, Record Group 79, Drawing #16-133).

1948.⁴⁸⁰ A local citizen wrote to the National Park Service on March 23, 1953, to request the creation of a playground at 31st Street and Gorman Place in Fort Dupont Park. The NPS forwarded the request to the D.C. Recreation Board. The area was proposed for the golf course connection between the Fort Dupont Park course and the Anacostia Park course, but the NPS had no objection to the land being used for playground purposes on a temporary basis.⁴⁸¹ The NPS approved a design for toilets for Ridge Playground on January 19, 1949.⁴⁸² A swimming pool was constructed in the playground in the early 1970s; it included an outdoor swimming pool, wading pool, and bath house. Upon completion, the District of Columbia was responsible for management of the pool. The playground and pool facility are currently known as the Ridge Recreation Center and are still operated by the District of Columbia government.

Other Improvements and Facilities Constructed in Fort Dupont Park

As mentioned above, an amphitheater was planned for Fort Dupont Park, on a site southwest of Ridge Road, as early as 1944. The Carter Barron Amphitheatre was built in Rock Creek Park in 1950, at the same time as the development of the Summer Theater in Fort Dupont Park. The construction of amphitheaters in the city's parks was part of a National Park Service effort to bring entertainment to its parks.

In the early 1940s, picnic shelters consisting of a stone fireplace and open pavilion under a peaked roof were erected in the park.⁴⁸³ The Ridge and Pine Woods Picnic Areas were both completed by 1944.

On June 2, 1945, two designs for culvert bridges were approved.⁴⁸⁴ (figure 38) The designs match the culvert bridges still in place at Fort Dupont Park. One is located off of Alabama Avenue and carries the Fort Dupont Picnic Area Loop Road over a berm. The other is located on Minnesota Avenue where it crosses Dupont Creek; this was the proposed location of the overpass over the Anacostia Connecting Road. The arch culvert headwall was of plain concrete, while the box culvert headwall was of reinforced concrete. An as-built contract drawing of "Rock Paved Gutters" for the park was produced in 1946 and revised in 1948.⁴⁸⁵ Several roads in the park, including Ridge Road Picnic Loop and a portion of Fort Dupont Drive have stone gutters, which most likely date from this era. Additional paving and "other work" were proposed for the park's roads in 1950 and approved in 1951.⁴⁸⁶ Conrad L. Wirth approved other changes to the park's "Road System" on December 15, 1953. These plans proposed a minor relocation of Fort Davis Drive, a new road connecting the Fort Loop Road to Alabama Avenue, and a road connecting the Fort Loop Road to Fort Drive via Ridge Road. Wirth also approved the extension of Dupont

⁴⁸⁰ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 30. Ridge Playground.

⁴⁸¹ Harry Thompson, letter to Mrs. George A. Scott, March 23, 1953, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴⁸² Drawing #883-80147, January 19, 1949, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁸³ National Park Service, Drawing #16-73, NARA.

⁴⁸⁴ "Typical Culvert Headwalls," June 2, 1945, Drawing #883-41900, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁸⁵ "Benching, Special Ditches, and Paved Gutters," February 15, 1946, Drawing #883-41901, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁸⁶ "Paving and Other Work on Roads in Fort Dupont Park," April 1950, Drawing #883-80153A, NCP-East Files.

Figure 38. Typical Culvert Headwalls, June 2, 1945 (National Capital Parks-East, Drawing #883-41900).

Drive to Anacostia Drive and an underpass to carry Fort Drive under Massachusetts Avenue.⁴⁸⁷ None of the work proposed was implemented.

By 1950, the development plan for the park was undergoing revisions to take into account the rapid development of the eastern section of the city. As a result, the National Park Service proposed a large picnic development, with an improved circular road system planned to serve the installations and to connect with Ridge Road and the proposed Ridge Playground.⁴⁸⁸ The picnic area was completed in 1954.⁴⁸⁹

The first section of the Maintenance Headquarters was completed in 1940. A plaque at the entrance to the maintenance yard details the dedication of the building to Robert Fechner, the first director of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The building was expanded by 1952. The one-story concrete masonry unit building is utilitarian in its design. In 1952, the NPS completed a design for a stable for park police to be located four hundred feet east of W. P. Clark's office building in the utility area near the present site of the Maintenance Headquarters. The design showed a frame building with a gambrel roof on a cinder-block foundation.⁴⁹⁰ The stable was completed that year or soon thereafter. The completion of the stable was important since it created an improved facility for the park police. By 1946, the park was patrolled by a mounted policeman. Prior to this, the city's two mounted policemen both patrolled Rock Creek Park, but since horseback riding became so popular on Fort Dupont Park's trails, Pvt. David A. Gregory started to regularly patrol Fort Dupont Park.⁴⁹¹ The bridle paths were still in use in 1948, but many equestrian users felt strongly at this time that "since the construction of the golf course at Fort Dupont, the bridle paths have been inadequate."⁴⁹² The NPS carried out a survey of the paths to assess the renovation costs. Little is known about the bridle paths following this reference.

When the golf course expanded in 1957, a large portion of paddock was destroyed. The park's existing equipment storage shed was demolished before construction of the east section of the maintenance headquarters could commence in 1955. The contract to construct the headquarters was awarded to Avery Construction Company on June 22, 1955.⁴⁹³ The maintenance yard, access road, and parking lot were repaved in 1955. The NPS constructed the stables and maintenance yard in Rock Creek Park in 1958, a few years later than the Fort Dupont Park facilities.

Condition of the Fort Dupont Earthworks during the Twentieth Century

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Fort Dupont earthworks remained in good condition, but their condition deteriorated in the subsequent decades due to lack of maintenance and human intrusion. The breastworks, moat, bomb shelter (with its ceiling caved in), and the ammunition

⁴⁸⁷ "Road System," July 6, 1953, Drawing #883-20000, NCP-East Files.

⁴⁸⁸ Irving Root, letter to S. Raymond Smith, March 1950, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 5. Admin., Maintenance & Protection.

⁴⁸⁹ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 95. Traffic & Park Facilities.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ "Fort Dupont Park Gets Mounted Policeman," *Evening Star* (November 17, 1946): n.p.

⁴⁹² George W. Harding, memorandum to M. Sager, May 14, 1948, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 65. Rec. & Rec. Facilities.

⁴⁹³ Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 95. Traffic & Park Facilities.

dump could all clearly be seen in 1945.⁴⁹⁴ Stanley McClure of the NPS described Fort Dupont in 1954 as “finely preserved” in part due to the care which post-Civil War owners took of the earthworks.⁴⁹⁵

J. Glenn Little, III, was hired by the National Park Service in 1968 to carry out an extensive archeological investigation of Fort Davis, Fort Mahan, and Fort Dupont.⁴⁹⁶ At this time, there were plans to reconstruct the Fort Dupont earthworks. The National Park Service, in the April 1968, *Master Plan: Fort Circle Parks*, for example, recommended the restoration of Fort Dupont. The plan commented on the condition of the fort, stating that although all of the buildings and armaments were no longer standing, that the earthworks were still visible on the ground. Good vegetative cover effectively protected the slopes of the earthworks except along trails worn by repeated and heavy use. The plan noted that little maintenance or rehabilitation had been carried out on the fort itself up until that point in time. The plan recommended, for interpretive reasons, that the fort should be restored to its appearance during the Civil War.⁴⁹⁷ Some improvements were made to the earthworks, but they were not restored.

Alterations to the Park in the 1960s-80s

A 1967 *Washington Post* article, “Area Forts: The Ramparts Once Watched,” described Fort Dupont Park as follows: “The park here is really marvelous. There is a fine golf course, plenty of beautiful picnic areas, room to play or walk in as well as a well-preserved fort. Some archaeological digging is going to be done around the fort and then a 24-pounder smooth-bore gun and 6-pounder will be moved into place.”⁴⁹⁸

In 1968, the park contained no interpretive facilities except for the brief marker identifying the fort, its armament and date of construction. In the April 1968 *Master Plan: Fort Circle Parks*, the NPS recommended that a “major visitor center be located in Fort Dupont Park. The purpose of this facility would be to provide environmental education programs for the population in East Washington. Secondly, history programs will introduce the Civil War theme which will focus on the fort site. An important aspect will be to relate this fort to the defense of the Nation’s Capital, a symbol of the struggle for human rights in this period of history. It could be patterned along the lines of the existing Rock Creek Nature Center in its citywide appeal and in its focus on the educational use of the surrounding forest park and urban environment.”⁴⁹⁹ The visitor center was not completed until the early 1970s when the golf course clubhouse was adapted for this purpose.

⁴⁹⁴ Mildred J. Ericson, Memorandum to file about Historical Information on Fort Dupont Park, November 13, 1945, Federal Records Center, 79-66A-1097, Box 20, Folder 1460. Fort Dupont.

⁴⁹⁵ Stanley McClure, Assistant Chief, National Memorials and Historic Sites Section, National Capital Parks, memorandum to Kelly, Thompson, Gartside, Jett, and Sager (May 24, 1954), 2.

⁴⁹⁶ J. Glenn Little III, Archaeological Research Fort Earthworks: Fort Davis, Fort Mahan, Fort DuPont (National Park Service, 1968), n.p.

⁴⁹⁷ National Park Service, *Master Plan: Fort Circle Parks*, 72.

⁴⁹⁸ “Area Forts: The Ramparts Once Watched,” *Washington Post* (June 25, 1967): n.p.

⁴⁹⁹ National Park Service, April 1968, 39.

By 1968, the park totaled 393.31 acres, which included the area between Anacostia Freeway and Minnesota Avenue and the 9.92 acre Ridge Playground which had been assigned to the D.C. government.⁵⁰⁰ The NPS approved the design of a small, one-story, comfort station for the picnic area at the Randle Circle and Ridge Picnic areas in 1971. Called the picnic or campground type, the building, with its cinder-block walls, concrete foundation, and fixed awning windows with wood framing, was constructed as designed.

In the 1971 *Fort Circle Parks: Interpretive Prospectus*, the National Capital Parks proposed the creation of two new facilities in Fort Dupont Park: an activity and interpretive center with the proposed name Fort Dupont Natural and Community Center and the Fort Dupont Walking Trail. The activity center would serve as a major interpretive facility “east of the Anacostia River in the same way that the Rock Creek Center serves the city west of that river. Its facilities would not only tell the natural, historical, and environmental stories, but would also include features which would encourage community involvement; space would be provided for art exhibits, recreational activities, and community meetings.”⁵⁰¹ The prospectus described the Fort Dupont Walking Trail as follows: “This ½ mile trail will tell the natural story of the area for those [who live] east of the Anacostia River in the same manner as Battery Kemble, Rock Creek Park, and Glover Archibold do for those west of the river. The story of the woodland will be told by sign and booklet, and will be integrated with the nearby Dupont Center.”⁵⁰²

Following the closing of the Fort Dupont Park Golf Course, the National Park Service searched for a new use for the site. The NPS proposed the construction of “5,000 seat amphitheater, a skating rink, fishing lakes, a mini-train and a small zoo with cows, sheep and other such animals” for a 122-acre portion of the park, part of which formerly contained the golf course.⁵⁰³ NPS-NCP officials hoped the \$3 million project would be completed in time for the 1976 bicentennial celebrations. Some of the citizen groups in the neighborhood enthusiastically supported the proposal, while others felt the golf course should be revived. Groups were consulted by NCP for their ideas for the proposed plans for the new park. Representatives from the Area-18 Planning Commission, the Benning Ridge, Ft. Davis, Burville and Dupont Parks civic associations, the Far East Community Services, Inc., and the Far Northeast-Southeast Council, met with Abner Bradley, Superintendent of NCP East, and other NPS officials to discuss the plans. Some community members suggested an archery range, an indoor swimming pool, and a riding stable as possible amenities for the park. Other residents requested that the golf course clubhouse be converted into a day-care center. The NPS ultimately turned the building into the park’s headquarters and a nature center, and only created a few recreational facilities (including play fields, courts, and an ice rink on the former golf course site).

Other plans for uses of Fort Dupont Park land surfaced in the early 1970s. The District government wished to locate a high school on twenty acres of land. In 1974, the local government made an additional request to use a portion of the park for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Center for the Mentally Retarded and Physically Handicapped in the vicinity of 32nd and G streets, S.E. Both of these projects never materialized. Also in 1974,

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁵⁰¹ National Park Service - National Capital Parks, *Fort Circle Parks: Interpretive Prospectus* (1971), 11.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ “Ft. Dupont Eyed for Theater, Zoo.”

three miles of a hiker-biker trail were constructed along the alignment of Fort Davis Drive in accordance with its alignment in two plans completed in the 1960s.

The activity and interpretive center opened in the mid 1970s. The building had facilities for audiovisual programs, arts and crafts workshops, and a multipurpose area with a stage for meetings, and a kitchen. A small building located next door to the activities center was to be used as an “Animal House” with small animals native to the area on display. The center was designed to meet the needs of the community with various arts, crafts, cultural, and educational programs. A new asphalt shingle roof with new rain gutters and downspouts was installed on the Fort Dupont Activity Center in 1979.⁵⁰⁴ In 1994, the historian, park curator, and ranger for Fort Dupont Park wrote to the Superintendent of National Capital Parks-East to complain about the poor condition of the activities center and the inadequacy of its exhibit center for cultural and natural interpretation. There is no record of any improvement to the facility.

In 1979-80, a new stable was erected for the U.S. Park Police. The building, located adjacent to the maintenance headquarters near Ely Place, was two stories with a gambrel roof pierced by dormers and four cupolas.⁵⁰⁵ A topographic survey of the stable area, completed in 1981, showed a paddock, manure storage structure, and a gravel parking lot near the structure.⁵⁰⁶ A new theater replaced the park’s theater in 1980 (see Chapter Ten for additional information on the theater).

In the early 1980s, the D.C. Department of Environmental Services proposed Fort Dupont Park as a site for a new water tank. Mayor Marion Barry made the request for the two-million-gallon tower to the National Park Service. The department required that the optimal location of the tower would be the remnants of the Civil War fortifications. Jack Fish, Regional Director of the National Capital Region of the National Park Service wrote that the “placing of this 200-foot tower would introduce an intrusion in the topographic bowl surrounding the Nation’s Capital.”⁵⁰⁷ The National Park Service did not concur with the sites or designs proposed by the D.C. Department of Environmental Services and the tower was built elsewhere. A seven-mile-long hiker-biker trail, which runs from Fort Mahan to Fort Stanton, was completed in the 1980s. It was first proposed by Fred Tuemmler in his 1965 study and later in the 1968 master plan.

⁵⁰⁴ Burnice T. Kearney, Superintendent, *Annual Report, Calendar Year 1979*, Washington, D.C.: National Capital Parks-East, National Park Service (March 17, 1980), 12.

⁵⁰⁵ “U.S. Park Police Stable – Fort Dupont,” July 18, 1979, Drawing #883-80005, NCP-East Files.

⁵⁰⁶ “Topographic Survey – Park Police Horse Stable,” February 23, 1981, Drawing #883-80007, NCP-East Files.

⁵⁰⁷ Letter from Jack Fish, Regional Director of the National Capital Region, to William A. Garlow, D.C. Department of Environmental Services, April 27, 1981, NCP-East Files.

Chapter Ten Recreational, Cultural, and African-American Family Use of Fort Dupont Park

When Fort Dupont Park opened to the public in 1937, it had several recreational features available for its visitors' use. In the late 1930s, CCC workers had constructed a playfield for children near the earthworks of the old fort. The Play Meadow, adjacent to Fort Drive, today the site of the large community gardens, was the site of ballfields and open space. The park included bridle paths and picnic areas. The golf course was planned during the 1930s and completed in 1947. Primarily, however, and this remains true today, the park included a large amount of forested land. Today, Fort Dupont Park functions primarily as a neighborhood park, with recreational facilities, picnic areas, educational programs, community gardens, an amphitheater, and extensive trails. The park is comprised of a large open space of mixed forests, fields, and transition areas augmented by recreational and educational facilities. In addition, the park is known for its "diverse mix of habitats" which provide indigenous species of plants and animals, such as the pink lady slipper orchid, a home.⁵⁰⁸

Since World War II, Fort Dupont Park has served an important social role east of the river due to the activity center, the concert series, and its recreational facilities, community gardening, summer day camp, science programs, and other features. The Activity Center, for example, has housed an exhibition of uniforms and equipment used by African American soldiers in the Civil War. The various activities that take place in the park testify to its importance as a site for longstanding African American family and cultural events. The park is well known and remembered for its "gatherings, festivities, vigils, rallies, and radio broadcasts at the Randle Circle entrance to the park."⁵⁰⁹ The park appears to be the "best-known of the Civil War Defenses of Washington east of the Anacostia River" primarily due to its fame from the concert series.⁵¹⁰ It is through both family reunions and the concert series, featuring gospel, rhythm and blues, blues, jazz, and go-go music, that the park attracts a regional audience.⁵¹¹

"Summer in the Parks" Program

The National Park Service created the city-wide "Summer in the Parks" program after 1968. The program was one of several approaches techniques used by the local government to calm racial tensions in the years following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and the riots that followed. Al Dale, served as director of the Fort Dupont Summer Theater program in the early 1970s. The program was conceived as a series of free weekend theatrical and musical concerts, and it was noted for providing, not only entertainment, but also a meeting venue and source of pride for the low-income families in the surrounding community.⁵¹² The shows were intended for families who could not afford babysitting, individuals who could not afford tickets to the Kennedy Center or Capital Centre, and simply as topnotch entertainment for the city. The program was very well received – the only neighborhood issue was parking associated with the

⁵⁰⁸ Williams, 135.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., 137.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 132.

⁵¹¹ The widely popular go-go music genre is indigenous and unique to Washington, D.C.

⁵¹² Williams, 122.

influx of attendees. In the early years of the program, the NPS and the Far Northeast-Southeast Council of Civic Associations provided sponsorship.

The concerts were best known for jazz and blues, but other musical genres were included in the program as well, such as gospel and go-go music. These African-American musical traditions attracted a black audience from the local neighborhood and from a wider geographical area for better-known performers. The concerts also attracted a local audience of varied races from across the Anacostia River. Other genres included local and big-name performers of disco music, modern dance, children's theater, traditional and progressive jazz. Some performers during the 1975 season were the Cole Harrison Dancers, jazz pianist and singer Les McCann and Mike Malone's Dance Company. The series presented all attendees an opportunity to meet and talk with performers during before-concert workshops. The concerts were held on Saturday and Sunday nights at 8:30 p.m.

The first band shell was the former floating stage from the steps near the Lincoln Memorial, also known as the Watergate Barge.⁵¹³ This stage was relocated to Fort Dupont Park in the 1960s until it was replaced by a modern band shell in the early 1980s. A new wood-frame stage shell was designed in 1979 in its current location near the old golf course club house.⁵¹⁴ A 1980 plan for the new stage showed its location off of the service road leading from the Club House to the Maintenance Headquarters. A concurrent planting plan recommended the planting of five red oaks, five maples, and a variety of shrubs in front of and on either side of the stage.⁵¹⁵ The wood-frame theater consisted of an enclosed stage with dressing rooms and a small control booth behind the stage.

From its inception, the Summer in the Parks concerts were free, while by the 1980s Rock Creek Park's Carter Barron Amphitheatre charged \$5. The concerts in the 1980s featured mostly jazz artists and gospel music, which was added to the repertoire by the summer of 1980. During this period of the program's history, an average performance crowd totaled 20,000 to 25,000 viewers.⁵¹⁶ By 1981, the concert series was sponsored by the NPS and the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company.⁵¹⁷ The concert series continues to this day; in 2000, it was called the Fort Dupont Millennium Concert Series and since then has been known as the Fort Dupont Concert Series.

Other Cultural Uses and Programs of the Park

There are currently four designated picnic areas in the park: Lanham Estate Picnic Area at Alabama Avenue, Areas 47 and 47A at Randle Circle and Massachusetts Avenue (non-reserved picnic area), and the Ridge Picnic Area on Fort Dupont Drive (non-reserved picnic area). As described earlier, the Ridge Picnic Area was completed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the

⁵¹³ "Free Entertainment at Fort Dupont Park," *Washington Afro-American* (June 14, 1975): n.p.

⁵¹⁴ "Fort Dupont Summer Theatre – Phase I," February 1, 1979, Drawing #883-80003, NCP-East Files.

⁵¹⁵ "Fort Dupont Summer Theatre," May 1, 1980, Drawing #883-80006, NCP-East Files.

⁵¹⁶ "Weekends at Fort Dupont," *Washington Post* (June 21, 1980): n.p.

⁵¹⁷ Edward D. Sargent, "Fort Dupont Concerts," *Washington Post* (August 6, 1981): n.p.

1930s. During the 1960s, the picnic groves were in full use throughout the summer months.⁵¹⁸ On December 17, 1986, Burnice T. Kearney, the Superintendent of National Capital Parks-East, determined that the Fort Dupont picnic areas should be closed due to lack of use. The areas were inspected and it was observed that several groves had not been used during the past season. Picnic groves 3, 4, 7, 12, and 19 were removed from the reservation list until demand required their reopening.⁵¹⁹ Today, however, the picnic groves are again in popular demand in the summer months.

Fort Dupont Park has been a popular site for African American family reunions over the years, particularly in the area known as Lanham Estates, on Alabama Avenue. Some families have been holding family reunions at the park for as many as twenty-five years.⁵²⁰ Many families value the park's "shade, the ample picnic facilities, [cleanliness], and the play area for children."⁵²¹ The park's picnic areas include steel fire grates, so many families prepare barbeque or grilled foods.

Another important activity in the park is based at the park's community gardens. The gardens began operation in 1974 when Robert Pinchback, a volunteer, who asked the park for permission to use then-overgrown and unused land, a portion of which at the intersection of Fort Davis and Fort Dupont drives formerly was part of the golf course, to encourage community involvement.⁵²² The Dupont Park Civic Association was involved in the planning of the proposed garden site. The majority of gardeners are retired African Americans from the surrounding neighborhood.⁵²³ The gardens are free and the NPS provides users with some basics, such as mulch, sawdust, and wood chunks for the pathway.⁵²⁴ The gardens are viewed as a valuable resource since they "are of great historical and ethnographic value in expressing the role of the gardens in preserving cultural traditions, fostering creativity and innovation, and building community."⁵²⁵ In 1997, there were over three hundred garden allotments in three different locations; the demand for plots was so great that there was a waiting list.⁵²⁶

By 1961, the D.C. Recreation Department operated a well-attended day camp out of an area in Fort Dupont Park.⁵²⁷ Another popular program over the years has been the "Winter in the Parks" program, for which the NPS created a ski slope with machine-made snow on February 17, 1977. Two instructors from Pennsylvania helped neighborhood children learn the basics of downhill skiing.⁵²⁸

⁵¹⁸ Cornelius W. Heine, Chief, Division of Public Use and Interpretation, letter to George Ewing, April 17, 1961, NCP-East Files.

⁵¹⁹ Burnice T. Kearney, Superintendent of National Capital Parks-East, letter to Diane Nicolopolous, Department of Recreation, December 17, 1986, NCP-East.

⁵²⁰ Williams, 131.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵²² Millie Richmond, Urban Programs Coordinator, memorandum, May 1, 1973, NCP-East Files.

⁵²³ Williams, 124.

⁵²⁴ Claudia Rosenbaum, "Garden's a Fortress Against City Clamor," *Washington Times* (June 4, 1992): n.p.

⁵²⁵ Williams, 124.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵²⁷ Cornelius W. Heine, Chief, Division of Public Use and Interpretation, letter to George Ewing, April 17, 1961.

⁵²⁸ "Who Needs Real Snow?" *Washington Star* (February 18, 1977): n.p.

Various activities have been held in the park to highlight its involvement in the Civil War. On October 27, 1985, for example, National Capital Parks-East held a program and exhibition entitled "The Civil War Defenses of Washington, 1861-65." The informative lectures were held at the Fort Dupont Activity Center (FDAC). Other events held at the park in the 1980s included theater productions, cross-country races, the Boy Scout Jamboree, and the Soap Box Derby, church picnics and organized celebrations (including events organized by the Greater Southeast Community Seniors and the Macedonia Baptist Church). The Fort Dupont Activity Center has not been staffed and regular programs have not been offered there for the past three years. FDAC staff were reassigned to the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in May 2001.

As recently as the spring of 2002, various nature programs have been held at the park. On May 18, 2002, the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) and the D.C. Audubon Society held bird-watching tours and the NPS held walking tours of the park and the fort. At one point, the DC Audubon Society had proposed a nature center for the park.⁵²⁹

Recreational Uses in Fort Dupont Park

Since 1945, one of the primary purposes of the park has been recreational. Bridle paths, hiking trails, the golf course, and playing fields all served this purpose. A winter sports area, which was located near the Fort Davis Drive and included makeshift toboggan and ski slopes, was popular. A new swimming pool was proposed for the Ridge Playground in 1969, and extensive developments were proposed in 1971 for the golf course site to commemorate the Bicentennial. The plan [for more information see Chapter Nine] included the construction of a 5,100-seat circular amphitheater, several lakes for fishing and rowing, twelve day camps, a mini-train ride, an ice rink, playing fields, and other amusements. The focus was on active recreational uses, but the plan did include natural features. These included a pasture for sheep and calves, a woodland habitat, an environmental study area, an activity center, and several picnic areas. The golf course clubhouse was intended to become the activity and interpretive center, which would include offices, the Center for Environmental and Ecological Study, the Center for Historical Study of the Fort Circle, and an arts and crafts education center. Only the activity center and a nature trail portion of this scheme were completed in 1973. The plan included several game courts and fields, for activities including three basketball, four tennis, and four volleyball courts, and a baseball field, softball field, and football field.

The plan, however, was never fully implemented. The golf course was replaced in 1970 with a sports complex, located on Ely Place, which included tennis and basketball courts, athletic fields, and a softball diamond. The indoor ice skating rink opened in 1976 on Ely Place. The rink was administered by the NPS until 1995 when a nonprofit group, the Friends of Fort Dupont Ice Arena Incorporated, took over the rink's lease. The Fort Dupont Park rink houses the nation's only all-African American ice hockey team. The private partners who operate the ice rink in Fort Dupont Park want to expand and build a new rink on adjacent parkland.

The simple, steel-and-concrete ice rink was constructed in 1975-76. The rink was dedicated as part of the Nation's Capital Bicentennial Heritage for the City of Washington, D.C., program in

⁵²⁹ "Fort Dupont Park Spring Celebration, May 18," East of the River (April 2002): n.p.

June 1976. Government Services, Inc., the operator of the Sculpture Gardens Ice Rink on the Mall, agreed to act as concessioner of the Fort Dupont Ice Rink until a minority entrepreneur could be found. The National Park Service decided to absorb the building use fee and the huge electric bills in order to attract a minority concessioner.⁵³⁰ The rink opened to the public in 1977 for family and youth skating. In 1978, Neal Henderson, a former professional hockey player, introduced ice hockey to Fort Dupont-area youth. In 1979, the Fort Dupont Ice Hockey Program was incorporated as a nonprofit entity dedicated to offering professional ice hockey training for at-risk youth. They formed one of the only all-black ice hockey teams in the country.⁵³¹ By 1994, forty to fifty children between the ages of seven and fifteen practiced at the rink every week from October to March.⁵³² The team is strongly connected to the rink and the surrounding neighborhood. Team members have gone on to play college hockey in Massachusetts and Minnesota. The team shares the ice with hockey teams from private schools and universities, including Gonzaga, St. Albans, and Georgetown University. When the NPS planned to close the arena at the end of the 1995-96 season, community volunteers formed the Friends of Fort Dupont Ice Arena, Inc., to continue the rink's important role in the community while also improving the facilities and raising more operating funds. Their mission was to "bring to the young people of Washington, DC, particularly those from the neighborhoods nearby the Fort Dupont Ice Arena, increased opportunity, education, and inspiration, through ice skating and related activities."⁵³³ The organization planned to incorporate tutoring, mentoring, and counseling into their skating programs.

The Visitor Services Complex, which included tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball diamonds, and related game fields, was dedicated in 1976 at the same time as the Dupont Park Ice Skating Rink. All the outdoor fields and courts were lit to allow maximum usage.

Racial Issues Associated with Fort Dupont Park

From the literature describing the park during its construction and early years, it appears that the park was intended to serve the Washington region. Its location, however, meant that its primary users would come from East of the River. The creation of Fort Dupont and Anacostia parks were important since they provided recreational activities and green space to a portion of the city which was underserved by such amenities. The clientele of the park was mixed when the park first opened since Anacostia was a mixed neighborhood at that time. The "white flight," which took place in the city during the 1950s and 1960s, changed the racial character of southeast Washington so that white and mixed neighborhoods became predominantly African American in their demographics.

In the *Rapid Ethnographic Assessment: Park Uses and Neighbors Civil War Defenses of Washington and Anacostia Park*, completed by Brett Williams for the NPS, Fort Dupont Park is classified as a "multiple use park" since it offers a variety of activities and attracts people of

⁵³⁰ John Townsley, Acting Superintendent, National Capital Parks-East, Memorandum (September 16, 1977), NCP-East Files.

⁵³¹ Williams, 130.

⁵³² Ibid., 123.

⁵³³ Ibid., 130.

various ethnic groups who live in different parts of the city and region.⁵³⁴ This is in part because the park is most often used for concerts, recreation, and reunions by the entire city. The local clientele from the Anacostia neighborhoods surrounding the park, however, is primarily African American. The park is surrounded by predominantly African American neighborhoods, including Greenway, Benning Terrace, Dupont Park, Randle Highlands, Hillcrest Heights, Penn Branch, Bradbury Heights, and Benning Heights. These communities consist of a range of dwelling types, from large single-family homes to public housing developments.

The communities east of the river have played a long role in the history of African Americans in the nation's capital. Freedmen camped at many of the Civil War forts following the war. St. Elizabeths Hospital, located near Anacostia, was one of the first insane asylums to treat black patients, both male and female. Woodlawn Cemetery was developed in 1895 to provide burials for the city's black residents since most of the cemeteries in Washington refused African American burials. The cemetery was located north of the fort, isolated in woodlands and fields until the 1920s when development reached the area.

Benning Heights and Randle Highlands were developed as early suburbs in the 1920s when automobiles made that area accessible to the middle class. Benning Heights was the first major suburb east of the river.⁵³⁵ The New Deal and World War II brought tremendous change to Washington, change that also manifested itself in the area surrounding Fort Dupont Park. Many African Americans came to Washington during this period to seek work. At the same time, the New Dealers led by Eleanor Roosevelt rallied for the replacement of Washington's alley dwellings with public housing. The Alley Dwelling Association, the first public housing authority in the country, "instituted large-scale urban renewal and the construction of public housing developments which were segregated in deference to real estate interests, restrictive covenants, and [white] citizens' sentiments."⁵³⁶ Most public housing developments were constructed in Southwest Washington and east of the Anacostia River, resulting in a large relocation of low-income African American citizens to those areas. One development opened on Ridge Road in 1940 across from Fort Dupont Park, and 326 families moved in.

As a result of the Alley Dwelling Association development and others, the area around Fort Dupont Park changed dramatically. Between 1950 and 1958, the population in the area bounded by the Anacostia marshes, the District of Columbia line, and Pennsylvania Avenue grew from 66,169 to 90,000.⁵³⁷ In addition, the proportion of black residents had increased to three times that of white residents. The tensions caused by this rapid change in racial and class levels were illustrated in a near riot that took place in Fort Dupont on Easter Monday of 1958. Some 2,500 youth were involved, "wounding a park policeman and showered dozens of patrolmen with a barrage of Easter eggs, stones, and additional objects that became missiles."⁵³⁸

⁵³⁴ The four types of parks identified by Williams were: multiple use parks, neighborhood parks, serendipitous parks which are discovered by chance (of which Fort Davis Park is an example), and orphan parks that receive little or no care.

⁵³⁵ Williams, 119-120.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

Today, Fort Dupont Park is located in Ward 7 in Southeast Washington. In 1990, the median household income in the ward was \$25,556, which was seventeen percent lower than the District median. The incomes of eighteen percent of the households fell below the poverty level, twenty percent above the District average. The racial breakdown of the ward in 1990 was as follows: ninety-seven percent African American, two percent white, and one percent other races.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁹ National Park Service, *Fort Circle Parks: Draft Management Plan, Environmental Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, May 2002), 60.

Chapter Eleven Proposals for the Fort Circle Parks

Three Washington-area parks – Rock Creek Park, National Capital Parks-East, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway – contain the Civil War earthworks, land, and trails comprising the “Fort Circle Parks.” Since the Fort Drive, first proposed in the 1901-02 Senate Park Commission (McMillan) Plan, was never completed except for the portion from Fort Dupont Park to Fort Davis Park, there has long been a desire to link all of the forts. Recently, hiker-biker trails have linked several forts, but the entire greenbelt of forts has not yet been comprehensively connected. The operation and maintenance of the forts by three separate units of the National Park Service has complicated such efforts in the past.

In their 2002 report, *Fort Circle Parks: Draft Management Plan, Environmental Assessment*, the National Park Service recommended against the completion of the hiker-biker trail for several reasons. Some portions of the land, such as Palisades Park, Glover Archibold Park, and Rock Creek Park, were deemed too wild and contain paths too intimate in scale to accommodate the ten-foot-wide path recommended by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials as the minimum width for shared-use trails.⁵⁴⁰ In addition, the plan was not advised since it would remove trees, construct new bridges, and excavate valley slopes. The report advised that the forts be restored but that there was no need to reconstruct them.⁵⁴¹ The NPS considered establishing a separate national park system unit for the Fort Circle Parks, but it was decided against since there was no present threat to the sites as part of their current park affiliations and interpretation could easily be coordinated among the three NPS units.

The forts were listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 15, 1974, for their “local” significance rather than the “national” significance needed in order to become a freestanding NPS park unit. The National Register boundary was expanded on September 13, 1978. In 2002, the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer (DCHPO) considered the greenbelt corridor connecting the eighteen fort sites as eligible for the National Register in its own right for its role in twentieth-century urban planning. The 2002 NPS report also recommended that a cultural landscape report be written for the Fort Drive system to “clarify questions about the context and history of the connecting greenbelt corridor and the evolution of Washington’s Civil War defenses during the twentieth century.”⁵⁴²

In early 2003, the NPS still wished to create a circle around the city connected by trails and paths to be called the “Fort Circle Parks.” As a result, the NPS created a new draft management plan with a comprehensive strategy to preserve the existing forts. The *Draft Management Plan for the Fort Circle Parks* improves upon the 1968 *Fort Circle Parks: Master Plan*. The draft plan proposed three alternatives for treatment of the Fort Circle Parks and how best to preserve the eighteen forts that still remain in the NPS jurisdiction:

- 1) “Maintain Current Management” which included no major changes.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 61.

- 2) “Reconnecting the Forts” which would create a trail to emphasize both recreational uses as well as the protection of the historical and natural resources.
- 3) “Civil War Defenses of Washington” which would focus on the preservation and interpretation of the forts. This proposal would change the name of the system from Fort Circle Parks to the Civil War Defenses of Washington.

Three forts were called out for in-depth interpretation – Fort Stevens on 13th Street, Fort Dupont in Southeast, and Fort Marcy in Arlington. There would be no continuous footpath, but brochures would map out an auto tour route, according to the draft plan. The NPS named an alternative in September 2003. The alternative would augment the existing hiker/biker trail which connects several forts east of the Anacostia – Fort Mahan, Fort Chaplin, Fort Dupont, Fort Davis, and Fort Stanton, and the existing portions of the Fort Drive between Fort Dupont and Fort Davis and the segment existing near Tenleytown.⁵⁴³ Following agency and public review of the NPS draft plan, a determination was made to combine the recreational goals of alternative 2 with the interpretive and preservation guidelines of alternative 3 to form a preferred alternative.⁵⁴⁴

The plan proposed that the activity center at Fort Dupont Park become an education center focusing on school and community groups by offering cultural, historical, natural, and environmental programming. The earthworks at Fort Dupont Park, as well as other NPS reservations, would be stabilized and preserved in accordance with NPS preservation standards. On a more general level, the National Park Service planned to place more emphasis upon the important Civil War associations of the forts by suggesting that the parks be renamed the “Civil War Defenses of Washington” or the “Civil War Fort Circle Parks.”

In addition, the plan acknowledged that further studies were needed, such as a comprehensive preservation plan for all the sites, completion and publication of a historic resource study, completion of a cultural landscape report, and an archaeological inventory and evaluation among other studies. The plan also proposed a linkage of the Fort Circle Trail with the C&O Canal and Capital Crescent Trail. The final management, by the NPS, is being reviewed for printing as of May 2004.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City, a citizens’ planning organization established in 1923, commented on the draft. The committee found that today the parks are “largely unknown and generally neglected.”⁵⁴⁵ They also called the draft a “necessary first step in heightening awareness of these great, untapped resources, both with the general public and also within the National Park Service itself.”⁵⁴⁶ To familiarize itself and the interested public in the conditions and issues faced by the stewards of the Civil War Defenses, the Committee organized several bus tours of the key forts and connecting lands. The Committee supported and encouraged the

⁵⁴³ Elizabeth Wiener, “Agency Looks to Preserve Civil War Legacy,” *The Northwest Current* 36.18 (April 30, 2003): 33.

⁵⁴⁴ “Finding of No Significant Impact,” http://planning.nps.gov/document/foci_fonsi.pdf, (no date), 11.

⁵⁴⁵ The Committee of 100 on the Federal City, “A Call to Action on the Fort Circle Parks Draft Management Plan,” August 15, 2003.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

Congress and President to approve future legislation to establish the Fort Circle Parks as a separate unit under the National Park Service and appropriately recognized for its significance.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Twelve

Description of Fort Dupont Park Landscape Characteristics, Buildings, and Structures

Fort Dupont Park is located on the eastern side of the Anacostia River in the Southeast quadrant of Washington, D.C. (figures 1, 2) It is bounded by Minnesota Avenue on the west, Massachusetts Avenue on the south, Burns Street and Alabama Avenue on the east, Ridge Road and Ely Place on the north. Randle Circle abuts the park at the intersection of Minnesota and Massachusetts avenues. Single-family houses, garden-style apartment buildings, and institutions such as schools surround the park.

The park itself consists of a variety of designed landscapes and natural terrain. The park remains mostly a nature reserve of woods, nature trails, and streams.⁵⁴⁸ Fort Dupont Creek, a tributary of the Anacostia River watershed, extends east through the central valley portion of the park where the elevation is close to fifty feet. Fort Dupont Creek empties to the west into the Anacostia River. Land on either side of the creek connects to Anacostia Park; however, the road which was originally planned to connect the park with Anacostia Park was never constructed. Along the edges of Fort Dupont Park, the land is one hundred feet higher in elevation, and the earthwork construction of the fort itself is logically sited in the far southeast corner at the highest point of the park and surrounding area. There is no boundary marker, such as a fence or hedge around the park. Instead, dense woodland serves as the perimeter for the majority of the park's border. The Massachusetts Avenue frontage, for example, is particularly dense with trees and groundcover. At Randle Circle, the wooded frontage is replaced with open lawn. Along Ely Place, there are fewer trees along the border of the park and fences are used in parts to enclose athletic facilities. Apart from the hiker-biker trail, the area east of Fort Davis Drive is primarily left wild. The only landscaped, open area is the lawn surrounding the earthworks and picnic area.

Fort Dupont Park's two primary features are the Civil War earthworks and Fort Davis Drive. (figure 3) The Fort Dupont earthworks are located in the eastern end of the park on Alabama Avenue. They are sited on a large lawn adjacent to a picnic area.

The original structure of the Civil War fort is described in Chapter Two (figure 7). As stated previously, deterioration of the earthworks began as early as the 1890s and has continued to the present. Currently, the structural form of the earthworks is visible but much of its original mass and detail is no longer extant. Specifically, the steep eight-foot-wide dry moat that surrounded the earthworks basically survives in the form of a steep slope and moat. There is no evidence of the abatis, the defense of outward-angled sharp stakes, sixteen to twenty feet long, which surrounded the fort. All trees and shrubs were cleared from the perimeter of the fort during the Civil War, and lawn surrounding the fort is still primarily free of trees and shrubs. (figure 39) There are no remains of the barracks, mess house, and guard house dating from the Civil War era, and no evidence of the Lanham house and its auxiliary structures. The lawn is dotted with trees, including a large oak near the earthworks, a large evergreen near the picnic area, and several hollies and birch. Some trees remain in this area from its former use as a tree nursery. A dense tree line of quite large deciduous trees and some evergreens surrounds the lawn and fort.

⁵⁴⁸Walling.

An unmarked path provides access into the earthworks. (figure 40) The earthworks are largely overgrown with groundcover, including ivy, and some trees. Erosion and vegetation have caused the disappearance of many of the fort's original features. There is still, however, an overall evocation of the original structure in the remaining land masses. Fort Dupont was hexagonal in plan with a perimeter of 200 yards; each side was 100 feet long, and it still resembles this basic shape. The fort was constructed of packed earth revetted with wooden planks and poles, a type of construction that is susceptible to damage by weather and pedestrian traffic.⁵⁴⁹ Within the fort stood a deep well, a flagstaff, and a bombproof magazine. Currently, an open space in the center of the earthworks is covered with grass and shrubs, yet gradations indicate that rammed earth structures were once present. (figure 41) The entrance to the magazine faced the sallyport, which is no longer visible.

A granite and sandstone bridge provides access to Fort Dupont and the Lanham Estate Picnic Area from Alabama Avenue. (figure 42) Constructed in the late 1940s, the bridge crosses a swale of low, marshy land. A one-way asphalt loop road extends from the bridge and circles the earthworks; logs mark the outline of the road. (figure 43) Gravel parking spaces are provided near the picnic area. A small metal plaque attached to a boulder is visible from the loop road. (figure 44) It commemorates the construction, history, and protective role of the earthworks. The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America presented the plaque to the National Park Service (date unknown). A picnic area comprised of several metal-and-wood picnic tables and benches and metal garbage cans – all of unknown recent date – stands west of the fort. (figure 45) The picnic area was named Lanham Estates Picnic Area by local residents after Clifford Lanham, who lived in the former house by the fort and oversaw the operation of the tree nursery. An early 1950s comfort station, constructed out of brick and wood siding, provides public restroom services to picnickers. (figure 46) This structure is currently being rehabilitated. Perpendicular to the restrooms, there is an open pavilion under a gable roof, enclosed at one end by a stone fireplace.

Vehicles can access the park by five routes – Fort Dupont Drive which connects Randle Circle with Fort Davis Drive (figure 47), the service road which provides access to the maintenance yard and stable off of Minnesota Avenue, the parking lot for the skating rink on Ely Place, Fort Davis Drive which connects Ridge Road to Massachusetts Avenue (figure 48, 49), and both of the roads to the earthworks and picnic area off of Alabama Avenue. Fort Dupont Drive and Fort Davis Drive curve as they follow the contours of the park. Fort Dupont Drive curves to the north above Randle Circle. The Fort Dupont Park Activity Center and Summer Theater are located near a parking lot off of the drive. As Fort Dupont Drive curves back to the south just before it connects with Fort Davis Drive, an auxiliary road branches to the south before returning to the drive to the east. (This gravel road serves the Ridge Picnic Area.) Fort Davis Drive is the only portion of the important Fort Drive which was completed. It stretches south of the park to Pennsylvania Avenue. At Pennsylvania Avenue, a hiker-biker trail follows the intended path of Fort Davis Drive southward. (figure 50) The two drives and the Ridge Picnic Area road were graded and constructed as gravel roads by CCC workers in 1934-35. Fort Davis Drive has been newly resurfaced and is flanked by lawn on both sides. Ground cover and trees are located beyond the

⁵⁴⁹ Richard M. Lee, *Mr. Lincoln's City: An Illustrated Guide to the Civil War Sites of Washington* (McLean, VA: EPM Publications, Inc., 1981), 168.



Figure 39. Lawn and wooded area surrounding earthworks
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 40. Unmarked path providing access to earthworks
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 41. Open area inside the earthworks
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 42. Entrance road and bridge providing access to earthworks and Lanham Estate
Picnic Area from Alabama Avenue (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 43. Loop road which circles the earthworks
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 44. Commemorative plaque located near the earthworks
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 45. Lanham Estate Picnic Area
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 46. Early 1950s comfort station which serves the Lanham Estate Picnic Area
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 47. Fort Dupont Drive, looking west from intersection with Fort Davis Drive (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 48. Fort Davis Drive, looking north from intersection with Pennsylvania Avenue (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 49. Fort Davis Drive, looking west toward wooded area, near intersection with Massachusetts Avenue (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 50. Entrance to Hiker-Biker Trail off of Fort Davis Drive (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).

lawn on both sides of the road – with the east side hilly in parts, especially at the intersection with Pennsylvania Avenue.

The hiker-biker trail, completed in the 1980s, runs from Fort Mahan to Fort Stanton. It runs parallel to Fort Davis Drive from Pennsylvania Avenue to Massachusetts Avenue, but when it enters Fort Dupont Park, the trail follows a winding alignment to the east near the earthworks; it next heads west and connects again with Fort Davis Drive, which it follows past Ridge Road to connect to other Civil War Defenses. Foot trails connect the earthworks with the hiker-biker trail east of Fort Davis Drive. Two paths lead west of Fort Davis Drive and branch out to form three routes to the former golf course. Two of the paths span the creek with small bridges. The paths then join and connect to the Activity Center and Summer Theater parking lot. A nature trail with descriptive signage extends west of the Activity Center. A final footpath leads west from the Ridge Picnic Area to both Fort Dupont Drive and the Randle Circle picnic area, crossing an additional small creek.

The Ridge Picnic Area, as mentioned above, is located south of Fort Dupont Drive. (figure 51) CCC workers constructed dozens of table-and-bench combinations for the Ridge Picnic Area. The picnic tables, all still present, were constructed of hand-hewn timber structural members and plank tops. Half logs on timber supports, constructed by the CCC, serve as benches. CCC-constructed rectangular stone hearths are located near each picnic site. (figure 52) Stone gutters, rhododendrons, and other plantings carried out by CCC workers remain along portions of the gravel road through the picnic area. (figures 53, 54) Log guard rails, located along the edges of the road, were installed by the CCC by 1942. Another comfort station, which was constructed in the early 1970s, is located near one of the picnic sites. (figure 55) The one-story structure is constructed out of cinder blocks. A continuous band of small horizontal windows provides light and ventilation to the interior. The building, surmounted by a shallow gable roof, contains two public restrooms.

Four community gardens are located in Fort Dupont Park. (figure 56) The smaller of the two, Community Garden A is located at the intersection of Fort Davis Drive and Ridge Road. Community Gardens Areas B, C, and D are located on the northwest corner of Fort Davis Drive and Dupont Drive intersection. These are divided into allotments in which fruits, vegetables, and flowers are grown and maintained by local residents.

The traffic circle, Randle Circle, cuts into the southwest corner of Fort Dupont Park. It is at the circle that vehicular traffic can enter the park by way of Fort Davis Drive. A large lawn flanks the road near the circle. Scattered throughout the open space are large deciduous trees and picnic tables. (figure 57) A path, which has a rail along one side, provides access to a comfort station. (figure 58) The one-story structure, completed in the early 1970s, is similar to the comfort station at the Ridge Picnic area, with which it is contemporary. Simple metal and wood picnic tables and garbage receptacles are located along the Randle Circle Picnic Area's Minnesota Avenue frontage.



Figure 51. Typical example of a picnic site in the Ridge Picnic Area
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 52. Stone hearth in the Ridge Picnic Area
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 53. Stone gutters lining the gravel roadway in the Ridge Picnic Area (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 54. Rhododendrons and the wood rail posts lining the road through Ridge Picnic Area (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 55. Early 1970s comfort station in the Ridge Picnic Area
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 56. Community Gardens located at the intersection of Fort Davis and Fort Dupont Drives
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 57. View of Randle Circle Picnic Area from Minnesota Avenue
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 58. View of early 1970s comfort station and accessible path at Randle Circle Picnic Area
(Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).

A parking lot to the north of Fort Dupont Drive provides access for the Activity Center and Summer Theater. (figure 59) A service road continues down the hill from the lot to the theater. Two roads extend from the theater; one provides access to the maintenance yard while the other winds through the former golf course and terminates at a dead-end.

The park's Activity and Interpretive Center is located to the northwest of the parking lot, occupying a ridge overlooking the theater and the former golf course. (figure 60) A paved patio skirts the west and north sides of the building. The one-story, post-war rambler was originally constructed in 1948 as the clubhouse for the Fort Dupont Golf Course and was converted into the park's Activity Center in 1973. The exterior walls are sheathed in siding, which ends just below the windows. The building is surmounted by a hipped roof. The center contains a multipurpose room, office, kitchen, audiovisual room, and craft room. Two double doors on the north façade provide access to the patio overlooking the theater and park. A half-mile nature trail, through the woodland to the southwest of the activity center, also opened in 1973. (figure 61) The trail features small wood interpretive signs.

A small log building is located immediately to the southwest of the Activity Center. (figure 62) It was constructed or relocated to the site by 1973. The one-story building performs an auxiliary role to the Activity Center. The building is surmounted by a gable roof, and several windows pierce each façade. The log construction gives the building a rustic appearance.

The Summer Theater is located down a steep grade and to the east of the Activity Center. (figures 63, 64) The wood-frame stage shell was designed in 1979 and replaced an older structure. The enclosed stage has dressing rooms and a small control booth behind the stage. A chain-link fence and hedge surround the theater. A flat lawn extends east from the theater, along a former golf course fairway, providing a large viewing area for performances. A narrow service road, which is no longer maintained, runs along the southern edge of the lawn. (figure 65)

The park's Maintenance Headquarters, which serves the National Capital Parks-East Region, is located adjacent to the public school site on Ely Place. (figure 66) A road provides access for the maintenance vehicles into the yard. A commemorative plaque sits beside the road immediately in front of the gate to the yard. (figure 67) The plaque states that the maintenance building was erected "In Memory of Robert Fechner, First Director, Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-39. Dedicated April 5, 1940, by C.C.C. Co. 2351." The drive passes the stone and then opens into a courtyard surrounded on all four sides. (figure 68) The headquarters, completed ca. 1940, is of concrete-block construction under a gable roof. It consists of a one-story office with chimney, utilitarian fenestration, and two doors. It adjoins the garage structure which encloses the courtyard. This building, on all four elevations facing the courtyard, is comprised of vehicle doors separated by brick piers. Gasoline pumps with a canopy stand in the center of the courtyard.



Figure 59. View of the parking lot for the Activity Center and Summer Theater, looking southeast (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 60. The Activity Center (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 61. Nature trail, located southwest of the Activity Center (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 62. Log structure adjacent to the Activity Center (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 63. View of the Summer Theater and audience area (former golf course fairway) from the parking lot (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 64. The Summer Theater (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 65. The service road which extends beyond the Summer Theater (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 66. Entrance to the Maintenance Headquarters (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 67. Commemorative plaque located at the entrance to the Maintenance Headquarters (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 68. Courtyard of the Maintenance Headquarters (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).

A U.S. Park Police stable, constructed in 1979-80, is located adjacent to the Maintenance Headquarters near Ely Place. (figure 69) The building is two stories with a gambrel roof pierced by dormers and four cupolas. A paddock, a concrete-block storage structure, and a gravel parking lot are located near the stable. (figures 70, 71)

The recreational facilities, which front Ely Place near the ice rink and the stable, opened in 1976 as the Visitor Services Complex. The facilities consist of tennis and basketball courts, baseball diamonds, and fields. (figure 72) The ice rink opened in 1976 as part of this country's Bicentennial celebration. (figure 73) The simple, two-story, steel-and-concrete building sits on a sloping site adjacent to Ely Place. A staircase provides access to the arena's entrance. Large windows and glass block define a projecting bay adjacent to the entrance, and large windows also pierce the building's west façade overlooking the parking lot and the city.

A stone bridge, similar in construction and appearance to the bridge providing access to the earthworks, is located on Minnesota Avenue where the road crosses over Fort Dupont Creek near F Street. (figure 74) This bridge is not officially located within the boundaries of the park.



Figure 69. View of the Stables, looking south (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 70. View of the paddock located adjacent to the stables (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 71. Concrete-block storage structure located near the stables (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 72. Athletic fields located west of the Ice Rink along Ely Place (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 73. The Fort Dupont Ice Rink, looking east (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).



Figure 74. The stone bridge crossing Fort Dupont Creek on Minnesota Avenue near its intersection with F Street (Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 2003).

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