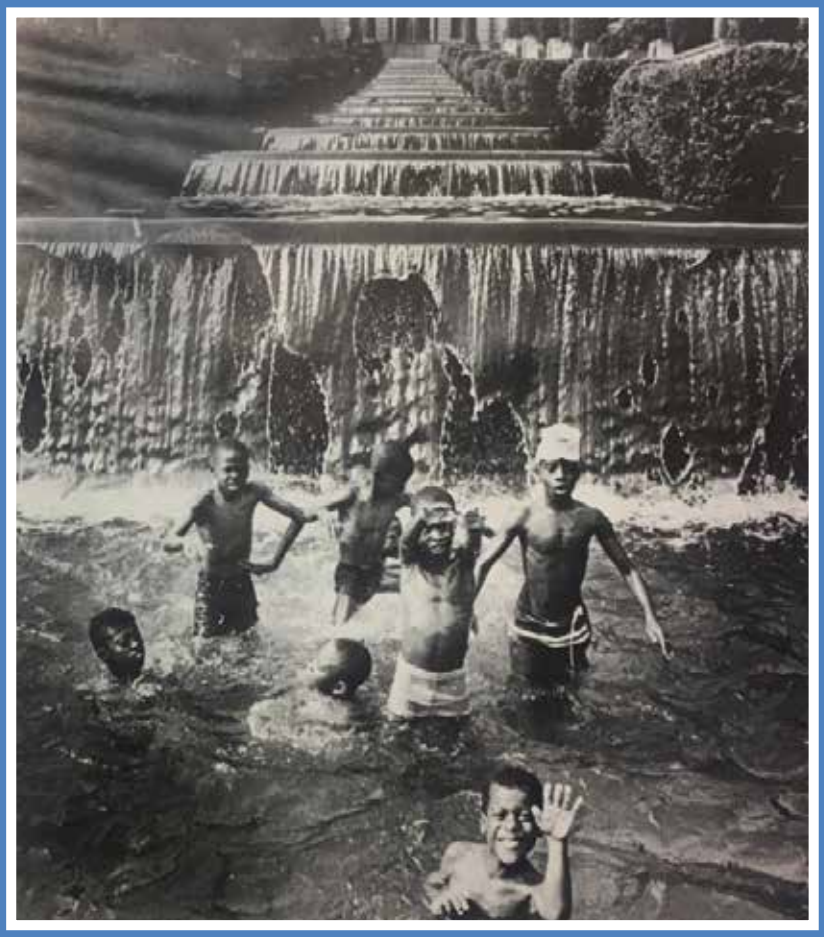
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Capital Region
Washington, D.C.

Meridian Hill Park

African American Experiences Since the Civil War: A Special Resource Study



Elise Elder

In Partnership with the Organization of American Historians

September 2019

Meridian Hill Park

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the Organization of American Historians

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
2019

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Cover Image: Summer in the Parks. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1970

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Elise Elder
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List of Abbreviations

A-APRP	All-African People's Revolutionary Party
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
ALD	African Liberation Day
ALSC	African Liberation Support Committee
AMO	Adams Morgan Association
BLA	Black Liberation Army
BUF	Black United Front
CARF	Coalition against Racism and Fascism
CFA	Commission of Fine Arts
HABS	Historic American Buildings Survey of Meridian Hill Park, # DC-532
MHP	Meridian Hill Park
MRCE	Museum Resource Center (formerly MARS)
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NCP	National Capital Parks
NCCF	National Committee to Combat Fascism
NCR	National Capital Region
NPS	National Park Service
PB&G	Office of Public Buildings and Grounds
PB&PPNC	Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital
RCP-CRF	Rock Creek Park, Cultural Resource Files
ROCR	Rock Creek Park management jurisdiction, which includes Meridian Hill Park and incorporates most of the park properties formerly under the jurisdiction of National Capital Parks–North
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
UPO	United Planning Organization
WNRC	Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD

Executive Summary

The historical development and use of Meridian Hill Park has been documented by the National Park Service in several reports, such as the Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report. This document, however, does not address the relationship of the surrounding African American community to Meridian Hill and the park. The Meridian Hill Park Special Resource Study will rectify this gap in National Park Service documentation and provide critical information on the African American experience from the late 18th century to the present day. This special resource study will also provide contextual background on the social and political developments of the District—and more narrowly Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan—because social and racial demographics influenced park development and use. In addition, the research will address the park's function as a space for social contestation, free speech, and resistance. Thereby, the Meridian Hill Park Special Resource Study will provide context on the use of the park in the broader civil rights and social justice movements. This information will be used by the National Park Service to inform resource management and interpretation.

Meridian Hill Park, colloquially referred to as Malcolm X Park, is a federally owned park under the management jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS), Rock Creek Park (ROCR) in Washington, D.C. The 11.88-acre park is located one and one-half miles north of the White House in the Meridian Hill Historic District and is bordered by the culturally and racially diverse neighborhoods of Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan.[1] The idea for a park at this location originated with Senate Report No. 166 on "The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia," also known as the McMillian Commission Report, in 1902.[2] Mary Foote Henderson, a property owner on Meridian Hill, a woman of acute business acumen, and the wife of former Missouri Senator John Henderson, petitioned for the development of this proposed park as she had grand plans to transform 16th Street into the District's "Avenue of Presidents."[3] In 1910, legislation was passed for the acquisition of the land and the development of Meridian Hill Park.[4]

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[1] National Park Service, National Capital Region, Architrave P.C. Architects, *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Volume I* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2001), 1.

[2] Ibid., 34; Thomas W. Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," (Graduate Thesis, University of Virginia, School of Architecture, 1983), 9; Washington's Italianate Park on Meridian Hill, Undated, Meridian Hill Park Files, National Capital Region Museum Resource Center, Landover, MD.

[3] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 41-42; Stephen R. McKevitt, *Meridian Hill: A History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014), 48.

[4] *Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers 1913*, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1, 37.*

The land that encompasses Meridian Hill Park, the area bounded by 16th Street to the west, 15th Street to the east, Euclid Street to the north, and W Street to the south, has long been home to an African American community. During the American Civil War, the land was acquisitioned by the Union army for use as a Civil War encampment. Camp Cameron, similar to other Union camps, offered food, shelter, and work to freedmen and escaped enslaved African Americans from the South.[5] After the war, an African American community developed along Columbia Avenue (modern-day 15th Street) between Chapin and Euclid Streets in the Hall and Elvans' subdivision (est. 1867).[6] By the 1880s, there were a significant number of frame dwellings, small stores, and a school for African Americans in the subdivision.[7] Furthermore, by the early 1900s, there were at least thirty-five residences in the area. These residences were predominantly occupied by African American renters who worked a variety of skilled and unskilled jobs including, cook, dressmaker, laundress, servant, schoolteacher, day laborer, letter carrier, and Bureau of Engraving employee.[8]

Mary Foote Henderson, whose goal was to develop the area into a white, wealthy, and politically elite community, constructed several mansions and embassies in the western section of the subdivision.[9] The "dilapidated dwellings" and "unsightly messes" that the African American community occupied on Meridian Hill, however, did not fit her vision.[10] In her booklet entitled *Remarks about Management of Washington in General*, Henderson described her vision for 16th Street, writing that "each section of the thoroughfare will be a dream of beauty; long, impressive vistas; beautiful villas, artistic homes, not only for American citizens, but diplomats of foreign countries. *Whatever there is of present civic incongruities will be wiped out.* It will be called Presidents Avenue."[11] Therefore, when the federal government

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[5] *Ibid., 30; Kim Prothro Williams, Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources (Washington, D.C.: DC Historic Preservation Office, 2015).*

[6] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill,* 44; National Park Service, "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2014), Sec. 8, p. 31 (https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000211.pdf).

[7] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 48.

[8] Ancestry.com, 1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004); Nine families owned their home while other families took in boarders and doubled up, "The Displacement of Meridian Hill's African American Community," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC*, accessed January 2020, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=825617c96aff4db59f2f216e83b9d713#.

[9] Ibid.; McKevitt, *Meridian Hill,* 48; Olivia Cadaval, "Adams Morgan: Diversity with a Latin Beat," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 437.

[10] "Meridian Hill Is Finally Completed after 26 Years of Hard Work, Petty Strife," *Washington Post*, Oct. 3, 1936, p. X5; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 56.

[11] Emphasis added. Henderson, *Remarks about Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular*, 21–22, as cited in Laura V. Trieschmann, "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2006), Section 8, p. 24 (https://catalog.archives.gov/id/117692476).

acquired the land for Meridian Hill Park, Henderson's vision was partly fulfilled. The homes occupied were primarily condemned and by 1912 all had been forced to move out of the area, several moving to the western area of the Hall and Elvans' subdivision.[12] Ironically, African American laborers were hired to construct Meridian Hill Park.[13]

Although the park was not completed until 1936, the upper portion was open to public use by 1923. At this time, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (PB&G), under the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers, oversaw all federally owned reservations in the District including Meridian Hill Park.[14] The Office of PB&G enforced segregation through administrative design and de facto segregation.[15] However, written and photographic evidence indicates that African Americans frequented Meridian Hill Park. Many historic documents suggest that African Americans primarily appropriated the park at night, particularly during the summer months when it was too hot to sleep inside. Some white residents, however, were unwilling to share the park and wrote to the Office of PB&G and later the National Park Service about this "undesirable element."[16] Despite complaints, the National Park Service, which assumed management jurisdiction of the park in 1933, operated Meridian Hill Park under its "non-segregated, non-discriminatory" policy.[17] The Starlight Chamber Music series (1941–1945) and the Washington Theatre Festival (est. 1949) were two large nonsegregated events held in the park that proved to many the possibility of desegregation.[18]

Over the years, the population on Meridian Hill has shifted. After the decision of the Supreme Court ruling against racially restrictive covenants in 1948 (*Hurd v. Hodge*) and segregation in public schools in 1954 (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*), whites

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[12] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill* 48; Olivia Cadaval, "Adams Morgan: Diversity with a Latin Beat," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 437.

[13] Refer to Figures 22-24.

[14] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 37; Ethan Carr, "Meridian Hill Park," *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1993), 6.

[15] Martha H. Verbrugge, "Exercising Civil Rights: Public Recreation and Racial Segregation in Washington, DC 1909–1949," in *DC Sports: The Nation's Capital at Play*, ed. Chris Elzey and David K Wiggins (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 109. See also Babin, *Links to the Past: A Historic Resource Study of National Park Service Golf Courses in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2017), 93.

[16] Ernest A. Lotito, "Meridian Hill Concerts Halted by Lack of Funds," *Washington Post*, Aug. 13, 1965, p. C1.

[17] Martha H. Verbrugge and Drew Yingling, "The Politics of Play," *Washington History,* 27 (Fall 2015): 57–58; Cornelius W. Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1953), 36, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 15.

[18] "Starlight Concert Ticket Sale Starts Tomorrow," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1941, p. 27; Refer to Figure 30; Richard L. Coe, "One on the Aisle: Bergner to Open Outdoor Theater," *Washington Post,* June 8, 1949, p. 14; Mary McLeod Bethune, "Meridian Hill Park Is Move toward Democracy in Capital," *Chicago Defender*, July 9, 1949, p. 6.

fled to the suburbs.[19] By the 1960s, Meridian Hill and the surrounding neighborhoods of Columbia Heights, Shaw/Greater U Street, Reed-Cooke, and Adams Morgan had developed into predominately African American communities.[20] In these neighborhoods, black activist groups, such as the Black United Front (BUF) and the Black Panther Party, established their headquarters.[21] Meridian Hill Park, located only a few blocks away, was reclaimed by these black activist and nationalist groups for rallies and demonstrations.[22] After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, a group of black Washingtonians also formed a drumming circle in the park to commemorate Malcolm X and to express their African heritage. The drumming circle was "an expression of black consciousness during the height of the civil rights movement" and has since been a weekend fixture in the park.[23]

Unfortunately, common to other densely populated inner cities at the time, the residential area began to increasingly suffer from the social challenges of crime and poverty.[24] This influenced park use and by 1967 Meridian Hill Park was largely abandoned and considered by the U.S. Park Police the second most dangerous park in the District in terms of crime.[25] The National Park Service initiated the Summer in the Parks Program in 1968, several months after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., to "get people back into the parks" and to help ease racial tension. The program, which took place at Meridian Hill Park and several other federally owned parks in the National Capital Region, offered regularly planned activities including concerts, community sings, dance contests, puppet shows, daily art lessons from artmobiles, and clay and pottery instructions.[26] The Summer in the Parks Program was cognizant of demographic differences and designed the programs to be inclusive. This

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[19] "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Hurd v. Hodge," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC*; Brian Kraft, "Columbia Heights: Passageway for Urban Change," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital* (2nd Edition), ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 251; "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

[20] "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

[21] John Preusser, "The Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party: From Revolutionary Militants to Community Activists" (Masters Thesis, University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2006).

[22] "1,700 Attend Black Panther Rallies Here," *Washington Evening Star*, Sept. 13, 1969, p. A22.

[23] Sylvia Moreno, "By the Beat Divided; D.C. Drumming a Spiritual Joy for Some, Noise for Others," *Washington Post*, Sept. 17, 2000, C1.

[24] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 251.

[25] National Park Service, *Summer in the Parks Booklet* (Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 1969), 5; Untitled Typed Document, Undated, Folder "Summer In The Parks 8/1/68 part 2," Box 10, Accession no 72A-6215, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

[26] "Summer in the Parks," Undated, Meridian Hill Park Files, National Capital Region Museum Resource Center, Landover, MD; Wright, "Summer in the Parks–1968," 8; Summer in the Parks Program- Meridian Hill Park, July and August 1968, Folder "Summer In The Parks 8/1/68 part 2," Box 10, Accession no 72A-6215, RG 79, WNRC.

brought Meridian Hill Park "into the good graces of many of the Black Militants"[27] and a year later Meridian Hill Park was symbolically liberated by the BUF, who unofficially renamed it Malcolm X Park.[28]

Today, Meridian Hill Park is used as Rock Creek Park's First Amendment space, maintaining the ideals of resistance and free speech that were born in the park during the civil rights movement.[29] The rapid gentrification of the surrounding neighborhoods, however, has impacted some aspects of park use. The small, once-sacred drumming circle has undergone a drastic transformation as new members from all nationalities and backgrounds bring in competing drumming styles. Longtime circle members have been forced to adapt, combining drumming styles and passing down traditions. The drumming circle also draws hundreds of people—capoeiristas, yogis, dog walkers, dancers, hula-hoopers, and slackliners—and has become a sort of "safety valve for the mental health of the city."[30] Despite these changes, the history of the African American struggle in the District is memorialized through the double naming of the park and the continued appropriation of the park for rallies and demonstrations.

Newspaper articles and other documents provide insight into African American park use, oral history interviews may provide a more personal account. Topics and questions that could be explored with black activists active during the civil rights movement include: (1) were there other reasons that black activists appropriated Meridian Hill Park during the civil rights era; (2) was there a sense that African Americans had reclaimed the park since the land was once home to an African American community; (3) what other rallies, demonstrations, and events took place in the park that are important to the African Americans community; and (4) what important African Americans figures visited the park and for what reasons. It would also be interesting to conduct oral history interviews with young African Americans living in the district. Topics to explore include (1) their knowledge of the history of Meridian Hill Park and its importance to the African American community and (2) if this history influences their perception of the park and how it is used.

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[27] National Park Service, *Summer in the Parks Booklet*, 23.

[28] Carl Bernstein, "2nd Bel Air Car Bomb Victim Identified as SNCC Worker," *Washington Post,* March 12, 1970, p. A12. Some sources speculate that Angela Davis suggested the name Malcolm X Park, but no documentary evidence has been located to date.

[29] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2013/06/24/2013-15005/general-regulations-national-park-system-demonstrations-sale-or-distribution-of-printed-matter.

[30] Heather Murphy, "Drawn Into a Circle of Drum-Driven Rhythms," *Washington Post*, Sept. 22, 2005, p. T56.

Introduction

Resource Overview

Meridian Hill Park, colloquially referred to as Malcolm X Park, is located in Washington, D.C., one and one-half miles north of the White House. The federally owned park, bounded by 16th Street to the west, 15th Street to the east, Euclid Street to the north, and W Street to the south, forms the core of the Meridian Hill Historic District and is bordered by the culturally and racially diverse neighborhoods of Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan. These neighborhoods have undergone significant social and racial demographic changes since the development of the park, thereby influencing its physical and social landscape.[31] The park's design and location has also contributed to both its cultural and local significance, earning it a place on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and its designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1994.[32]

Management Overview

Meridian Hill Park was under the supervision of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (PB&G), which was under the exclusive control of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, from 1910 to 1933.[33] Although the Office of PB&G managed the park, the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) guided all matters concerning design and construction. Sue A. Kohler, former Historian of the Commission, writes in *The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History, 1910–1984* (1985) that the CFA was established on May 17, 1910, "to guide the architectural development of Washington so that the capital city would reflect, in stateliness and grandeur, the emergence of the United States as a world power."[34]

In 1925, the Office of PB&G was renamed the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital (PB&PPNC). The Office of PB&PPNC was an independent office and not under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army; rather, the office reported directly to the President of the United States.[35] Lieutenant Colonel C.O. Sherrill was the first Director of

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[31] National Park Service, National Capital Region, Architrave P.C. Architects, *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Volume I* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2001), 1.

[32] Fiona J. Clem, *Images of America: Meridian Hill Park* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2017), 7.

[33] Cornelius W. Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1953), p. 10, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, 15*.

[34] Commission of Fine Arts, *The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History, 1910–1984* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985).

[35] Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks*, p. 27, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, 15*.

the Office of PB&PPNC and was appointed on February 26, 1925. Sherrill's successor, Lt. Col. Ulysses S. Grant III, played an instrumental role in the development of Meridian Hill Park.

The Office of the PB&PPNC was absorbed into the newly designated office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, Department of the Interior in 1933.[36] A year later, the office was renamed the National Park Service. The office of National Capital Parks (NCP), a local division of the National Park Service, was established that same year. The NCP office, writes Cornelius W. Heine in *A History of National Capital Parks* (1953), was given the responsibilities of "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] cooperation with the National Capital Park Planning Commission."[37]

These changes in structure and authority are significant because they influenced the process of obtaining money for the development and maintenance of Meridian Hill Park. Appropriations under the U.S. Army ranged around $700,000 from 1910 to 1921. From 1921 to 1924, general appropriations increased to around $3 million.[38] Architrave P.C. Architects documents in the first volume of *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report* (2001) that "appeals for appropriations [under the Office of PB&G] were made Directly to Congress, and were at times dependent on specific design decisions requested by members of Congress."[39] Under the independent Office of PB&PPNC, appropriations increased and ranged between $6 and $9 million a year. However, when the park came under the auspices of the National Park Service, appropriations decreased to around $3 million a year. This decrease occurred because appropriations for the park became part of the overall budget for the National Capital Parks (now the National Capital Region). Today, Meridian Hill Park is under the management jurisdiction of the National Park Service, Rock Creek Park (ROCR).

Historical Context and Themes

The land that encompasses the 11.88-acre park has a long history of changing ownership. This significant rise of land in the northwest sector of the city passed from James Langsworth to Thomas Fletchall to John Bradford and numerous other landholders beginning in the early 1700s. In 1816, Cmdre. David Porter acquired the land, naming it Meridian Hill because 16th Street was, at the time, the proposed official Prime Meridian of the United States.[40] Porter's Meridian Hill estate was later requisitioned by the Union Army for use as a Civil War encampment. Camp Cameron, similar to other Union camps, offered food, shelter,

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[36] Ibid., p. 36, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, 15*.

[37] Ibid., p. 38, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, 15*.

[38] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, 15*.

[39] Ibid., 16.

[40] Stephen R. McKevitt, *Meridian Hill: A History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014), 17–18; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 28.

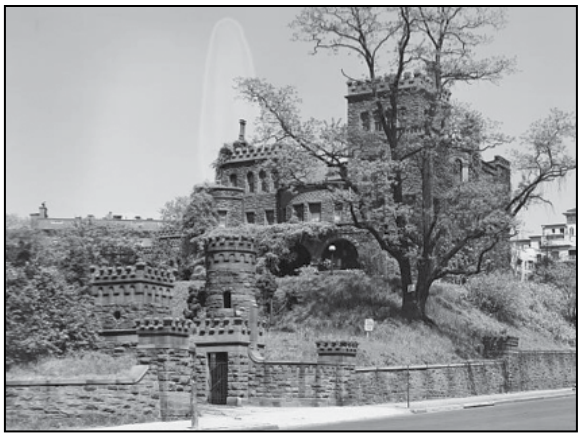




Figure 1 (left): Photograph of Henderson's Castle in 1920 (Library of Congress)
Figure 2 (right): Camp Cameron on Meridian Hill during the American Civil War (Library of Congress)

and work to freedmen and escaped enslaved African Americans from the South.[41] By the end of the war, a black community had formed on Meridian Hill along Columbia Avenue (modern-day 15th Street) in the Hall & Elvans' subdivision.[42]

At the turn of the century, Mary Foote Henderson, the wife of former Senator John Brooks Henderson, began purchasing lots in the Hall and Elvans' subdivision with the intention of fostering the development of a white, politically elite community on Meridian Hill. To attract foreign legations and the district's elite, Henderson constructed mansions and embassies along 16th Street. Henderson also lobbied Congress for the proposed park outlined in the 1901 McMillan Plan. By 1910, Congress had approved legislation for the acquisition of the land by purchase or condemnation. The Chief of Engineers were granted permission to remove the homes fronting 15th and Euclid Streets in 1912. The residents of these homes, who were primarily working-class African American renters, were forced to relocate to other neighborhoods in the District.[43]

George Burnap, a landscape architect employed with the Office of PB&G, developed the original plans for Meridian Hill Park. In accordance with the Beaux Arts tradition of the time, Burnap's plans were inspired by Italian Renaissance landscape design and included a water cascade terminating in a reflecting pool, a great terrace, and formal gardens. The CFA, the unofficial guardian of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, approved Burnap's design and the Office of PB&G commenced construction in 1914. Much of this early work, such as wall construction, was completed by African American laborers. In 1917, Burnap was replaced by

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[41] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Volume I*, 30; Kim Prothro Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources* (Washington, D.C.: DC Historic Preservation Office, 2015).

[42] The Hall and Elvans' Subdivision was established in 1867. See McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 48.

[43] Ibid., 48; Olivia Cadaval, "Adams Morgan: Diversity with a Latin Beat," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital,* ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 437.

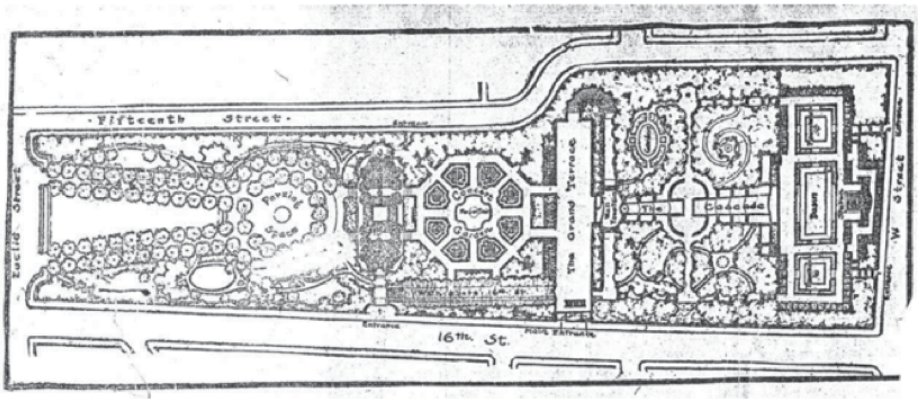


Figure 3: Photograph of the plan for Meridian Hill Park circa 1914 that appeared in the November 7, 1915, *Washington Star*. (National Park Service)

landscape architect Horace W. Peaslee, a former student of Burnap's at Cornell University. Peaslee stayed true to much of Burnap's design but made modifications due to uncertain and incremental funding. After twenty-six years of labor and $1.5 million worth of expenses, Meridian Hill Park was officially opened to the public on September 26, 1936.[44]

Since its opening, Meridian Hill Park has been used for a variety of events, activities, and rallies. From 1941 to 1945, the Starlight Chamber Music series offered non-segregated summertime concerts in the park.[45] The Washington Theatre Festival was another non-segregated event held in the park in 1949. Mary McLeod Bethune, an important black educator, civil rights and women's rights activist, and advisor to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, wrote in the *Chicago Defender* that the Washington Theater Festival was a successful step in the capital's "move toward democracy" as it was a "pleasant gathering held without fanfare."[46] Although African Americans were permitted to frequent Meridian Hill Park during the district's era of segregation, numerous white residents wrote to the Office of PB&G and later the National Park Service about this "undesirable" element. One resident even urged for the establishment of a separate park.[47]

However, after the Supreme Court ruled against racially restrictive covenants in 1948 (*Hurd v. Hodge*) and segregation in public schools in 1954 (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*), whites fled to the suburbs. The neighborhoods surrounding Meridian Hill Park—Columbia Heights, Adams Morgan, Shaw/Greater U Street—transformed into predominately African American communities. The headquarters of Black United Front (BUF) and other black activist groups were established in these neighborhoods; and,

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[44] Clem, *Images of America,* 7–8.

[45] Ibid., 106.

[46] Mary McLeod Bethune, "Meridian Hill Park Is Move toward Democracy in Capital," *Chicago Defender*, July 9, 1949, 6.

[47] Mrs. D.A. Sills, 2307 15th Street, N.W. to U.S. Park Police, 28 June 1940, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

because Meridian Hill Park was located several blocks away, the park was appropriated for rallies and demonstrations during the civil rights movement. In 1965, after the assassination of Malcolm X, a group of black Washingtonians also formed a drumming circle in the park to commemorate their fallen leader and to express their African heritage. The drumming circle became a weekend fixture and, writes *The Washington Post* reporter Sylvia Moreno, it was "an expression of black consciousness during the height of the civil rights movement."[48] In the 1980s, when the park was a den for drug dealers, the drummers continued to meet in the park. One longtime drummer recollected in an interview with the *Washington Post* that, at that time, "This park was for black people… we were here when no white would have ever come in here."[49]

Common to other densely populated inner cities at the time, the residential area began to suffer from the social challenges of crime and poverty. By the mid-1960s, University Place, located one block to the east of the park, led the city in crime.[50] Furthermore, by 1967, Meridian Hill Park was largely abandoned as it was considered by the U.S. Park Police the second-most-dangerous park in the district in terms of crime.[51] To get people back into National Capital Region parks, and to help ease racial tension, the Summer in the Parks Program was initiated in 1968, several months after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. The program, operated in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution, offered regularly planned activities at several National Capital Region parks including Meridian Hill Park.[52] Many young African American children participated in the scheduled program activities, which included concerts, community sings, dance contests, and daily art lessons from artmobiles. Some claim that black nationalist and black activist groups began to appropriate the park for rallies and demonstrations because the Summer in the Parks brought Meridian Hill Park "into the good graces of many of the Black Militants."[53] It is more likely, however, that the park was appropriated because it was in close proximity to several largely African American neighborhoods and was near the headquarters of several black nationalist groups, such as the BUF.

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[48] Sylvia Moreno, "By the Beat Divided; D.C. Drumming a Spiritual Joy for Some, Noise for Others," *Washington Post*, Sept. 17, 2000, C1.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 251.

[51] National Park Service, *Summer in the Parks Booklet* (Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 1969), 5; Untitled, undated typed document, folder A8227, box 10, acc A227: Summer in the Parks 8.1.68 pt. 2, rg 79.

[52] "Summer in the Parks," Undated, Meridian Hill Park Files, National Capital Region Museum Resource Center, Landover, MD; Wright, "Summer in the Parks–1968," 8; Summer in the Parks Program- Meridian Hill Park, July and August 1968, Folder "Summer In The Parks 8/1/68 part 2," Box 10, Accession no 72A-6215, RG 79, WNRC.

[53] National Park Service, *Summer in the Parks Booklet*, 23.

Whatever the case, black nationalist groups began to regularly appropriate the park. In 1969, BUF symbolically liberated Meridian Hill Park during a rally, renaming it Malcolm X Park.[54]

Crime and poverty continued to plague the district. In the mid-1980s, the District's crack market exploded with drugs being sold to the south of Meridian Hill Park at 14th and U Streets and to the east at 14th and Euclid Streets and 14th and Clifton Streets.[55] The thriving drug market near the park caused park use to severely decrease, and the condition of the park worsened. The Friends of Meridian Hill group, formed in 1991, actively worked with the National Park Service and the U.S. Park Police to revitalize Meridian Hill Park. Their combined efforts resulted in a decrease in crime and over time the condition of the park improved.[56] The Friends of Meridian Hill, made up of a diverse group of neighborhood residents, exemplifies shifting demographics and social attitudes. After years of racial unrest and segregationist policies, neighborhood residents united to bring life back to the park for the enjoyment of all.

The transformation of Meridian Hill Park from a white elite space to a public forum for black activists to a shared space for all suggests that in addition to the landscape architect, the community plays a significant role in defining the park. Today, the multiethnic, multiracial community surrounding the park brings new attitudes and ideas while also maintaining the ideals of resistance and free speech that were born in the park during the civil rights movement.[57] However, due to the rapid gentrification of the area, a growing perception has emerged that the park has been "yuppified," documents *The Washington Post*.[58] The drumming circle, for instance, has new members from all nationalities and backgrounds who bring in competing drumming styles.[59] This has caused some friction, but longtime members have adapted, combining drumming styles and passing down traditions. The once-small, sacred

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[54] Carl Bernstein, "2d Bel Air Car Bomb Victim Identified as SNCC Worker," *Washington Post,* March 12, 1970, p. A12. Some sources speculate that Angela Davis suggested the name Malcolm X Park, but no documentary evidence has been located to date.

[55] Marisa M. Kashino, "The Reinvention of 14th Street: A History," *Washingtonian*, April 4, 2018, https://www.washingtonian.com/2018/04/04/how-14th-street-came-back-reinvention-a-history/.

[56] Linda Wheeler, "Meridian Hill Park Wrestled Away From D.C. Drug Dealers," *Washington Post*, March 15, 1993, p. B6.

[57] "Freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly are rights protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. People may exercise these rights in national parks, but the National Park Service (NPS) still retains its responsibility to protect park resources and prevent conflict among park visitors. Therefore, the NPS establishes guidelines for setting the time, place, and manner (number of participants, use of facilities, and type of equipment) for the events to occur. By law, the NPS has established places in parks where First Amendment activities can be accommodated. These areas are visible to the general visiting public without interfering with the public's enjoyment of the park." See "Special Use Permit-First Amendment Activities," *National Park Service*, accessed Nov. 2017, https://www.nps.gov/calo/planyourvisit/sup-1st.htm.

[58] John Woodrow Cox, "In a changing D.C., a 12-acre, people-watching paradise could be in peril," *Washington Post*, accessed Aug. 17, 2015, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1704738380?accountid=46320.

[59] Moreno, "By the Beat Divided," C1.

drumming circle also draws hundreds of people—capoeiristas, yogis, dog walkers, dancers, hula-hoopers, and slackliners.[60] These people, documents *The Washington Post* in the article "Drawn Into a Circle of Drum-Driven Rhythms" (2005), have transformed the drumming circle into a "safety valve for the mental health of the city."[61] This adaptability, writes reporter David Montgomery in *The Washington Post* article "A Walk in the Park with a Past" (2002), is evidence of the park's continued ability to "[seduce] visitors into blending and improvising and making something new out of disparate ingredients."[62]

Scope and Purpose of the Special Resource Study

In 2001, Architrave P.C. Architects completed the *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report*. A cultural landscape report "is the principal treatment document for cultural landscapes and the primary tool for long-term management of those landscapes. A CLR guides management and treatment decisions about a landscape's physical attributes, biotic systems, and use when that use contributes to historical significance. [The overriding purpose of the report is to] establish preservation goals for a cultural landscape… [which] provides the basis for making sound decisions about management, treatment, and use."[63] Although the cultural landscape report covers Meridian Hill Park's historical developments and use, it does not address the African American community's relationship to the park. The Meridian Hill Park Special Resource Study will rectify this gap in National Park Service documentation, providing critical information on the African American experience from the late eighteenth century to the present day. In addition, the Meridian Hill Park Special Resource Study will provide contextual background on the social and political development of the District—and more narrowly Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan—because social and racial demographics influenced park development and use. While the emphasis will be on the African American experience and related history, the research will also address the park's function as a space for social contestation, free speech, and resistance for a variety of other social, ethnic, and political groups. The Meridian Hill Park Special Resource Study will thereby provide context on the use of the park in the broader civil rights and social justice movements. This information will be used by the National Park Service to inform resource management and interpretation.

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[60] Cox, "In a changing D.C., a 12-acre, people-watching paradise could be in peril;" Heather Murphy, "Drawn Into a Circle of Drum-Driven Rhythms," *Washington Post*, Sept. 22, 2005, p. T56.

[61] Murphy, "Drawn Into a Circle of Drum-Driven Rhythms," p. T56.

[62] David Montgomery, "A Walk in the Park with a Past; Why One 11-Foot Air Conditioner Has Stirred Passions and Protests," *Washington Post*, June 3, 2002, p. F1.

[63] Robert R. Page et al., *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques (Washington, D.C: Department of the Interior, 1998),* 3-4.

Methodology

Primary research on the history of Meridian Hill Park was conducted at several repositories, including the Washington National Records Center (WNRC) in Suitland, Maryland. The files on Meridian Hill Park contained letters, memorandum, permit applications, and other document types. Several boxes of material could not be located in the Center, however, and consequently some information on BUF and Black Panther rallies at Meridian Hill Park are missing from this document.

Primary research was also conducted at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. The textual records of Record Group 79 were referenced, specifically Record Group 79, Entry 10 - Central Classified Files 1907-49, Box 2826, Stack 150 - Row 34/Compartment 26/Shelf 3. Additional textual records referenced were 1st segment- Central Classified Files, 1907-36 (Section 12, Parks, Reservations, and Antiquities, boxes 1966-2020), Box 2020, Stack 150- Row 10/Compartment 27/Shelf 7 and 2nd segment-Central Classified Files, 1937 (Section 12, Parks, Reservations, Antiquities, boxes 3774-3877), Box 3838, Stack 150-Row 11/Compartment 30/Shelf 4. The Washingtoniana Vertical File Collection at the Martin Luther King Memorial Library in Washington, D.C., and the files at the National Capital Region Museum Resource Center (MRCE) were referenced and included newspaper clippings, brochures, and pamphlets.

The majority of maps referenced in this document were available at the Library of Congress Geography and Map Reading Room, Geography and Map Division, as well as online through the Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. Additional photographs were provided by Rock Creek Park and the National Capital Region Office in Washington, D.C. Extensive research was also conducted using historic newspaper digital archives including, the *Evening Star*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American*. These newspaper articles were accessed through the District of Columbia Library. Secondary resources, including books, contemporary technical reports, and web resources, were utilized and are listed in the bibliography.

Part I

Pre-Park History

Chapter 1

Early History

The Establishment of a Permanent Capital

In 1788, Congress ratified the United States Constitution, including Article 1, Section 8, a provision giving Congress the authority to establish a ten-square-mile "Seat of Government" over which it could "exercise exclusive Legislation."[64] However, as Congress was unable to settle on a site, the location of the nation's capital became a "bargaining chip" between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. After much debate, the Founding Fathers reached a compromise: the northern delegates would agree to a southerly Potomac River site for the nation's capital provided that the federal government liquidated the debts accumulated by the northern states during the American Revolutionary War. With this agreement in place, Congress passed the Residence Act on July 16, 1790. This act not only gave President George Washington the authority to select the exact location of the new national capital, but also charged Washington with appointing a three-member board of commissioners to oversee the construction of the federal city.[65]

By 1791, President Washington had selected his three-member commission and the exact location of the nation's capital. The Territory of Columbia, which included the City of Washington and Washington County, was to be half in Virginia and half in Maryland at the confluence of the Potomac and Eastern Branch Rivers.[66] Washington then appointed

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[64] Steve Mount, "U.S. Constitution - Article 1 Section 8," USConstitution.net, last modified Aug. 16, 2010, https://www.usconstitution.net/xconst_A1Sec8.html; Randi Minetor. *Historical Tours Washington, DC: Trace the Path of America's Heritage* (Guilford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 1.

[65] Minetor, *Historical Tours Washington, DC*, 1–3; Mark S. Greek, *Washington, D.C. Protests: Scenes from Home Rule to the Civil Rights Movement* (Charleston: The History Press, 2009), 13–14.

[66] Ibid., 1–3; Before the arrival of European colonizers, a group of Native Americans known as the "Nacotchtanks" inhabited the area near the river's mouth. In 1608, Captain John Smith mapped both the river and the native village along it. By 1634, Catholic dissidents from England had established permanent settlements in the area. These settlers referred to the Native Americans along the river as "Anacostines." The river became known as the Eastern Branch of the Potomac and by around 1680 the Nacotchtanks had been expelled from the area. Then, when the Potomac River site was selected for the new District of Columbia in 1790, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson asked Major Andrew Ellicott to rediscover the Native American name for the Eastern Branch River in 1793. Ellicott found that old surveys of the area marked the river as "Anna Kastia." Jefferson asked Ellicott to consult with the District commissioners about adding "Eastern Branch or Annakastia" to his maps. By the time Congress had moved into the capital in 1800, the old name for the river had begun showing up on maps. See "The Anacostia in History," *Anacostia Waterfront Trust*, accessed 2018, https://www.anacostiatrust.org/anacostia-trust/2015/10/15/the-anacostia-in-history.

Andrew Ellicott as surveyor. Ellicott, along with Benjamin Banneker, a free African American astronomer, laid forty stones to mark the boundaries of the ten-square-mile diamond-shaped capital.[67] Pierre Charles L'Enfant, an architect, artist, and Washington's captain of engineers during the American Revolutionary War, conceived the Plan of the City of Washington.[68] The 1791 L'Enfant Plan was Baroque in design with a grid of orthogonal streets superimposed by diagonal radiating arteries.[69] These arteries respected the natural contours of the land and radiated from the Capitol and the White House.[70] L'Enfant's Plan also provided for fifteen parks, or reservations, at the convergence of the diagonal and orthogonal thoroughfares.[71] These parks were to feature statues and memorials in honor of "worthy citizens."[72] Later observers remarked that these parks were also to "serve as an antidote to the oppressive and psychological conditions of city life."[73]

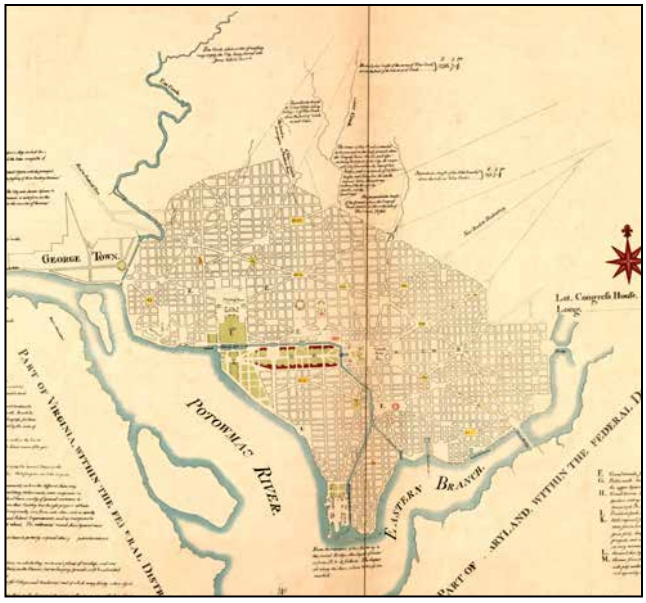


Figure 4: The 1791 L'Enfant Plan. The future site of Meridian Hill Park was outside of the city limits, beyond Boundary Street, or modern-day Florida Avenue, in line with 16th Street and the White House (Library of Congress)

Freedmen & Enslaved African Americans in the New Capital

Slavery is deeply rooted in the history of the national capital. The Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and the Center for African American History and Culture document in *The Black Washingtonians: The Anacostia Museum Illustrated Chronology* (2005) that

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[67] Minetor, *Historical Tours Washington, DC*, 4; "L'Enfant & McMillan Plans," Washington, DC: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary, NPS.gov, accessed Oct. 2017, https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/lenfant.htm.

[68] Minetor, *Historical Tours Washington, DC*, 1–4; Ibid.

[69] "L'Enfant Plan," *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*, accessed Oct. 2017, https://tclf.org/landscapes/lenfant-plan.

[70] "L'Enfant & McMillan Plans."

[71] "L'Enfant Plan."

[72] "L'Enfant & McMillan Plans."

[73] Stephen Carr, Mark Francis, Leanne G. Rivlin, and Andrew M. Stone, *Public Space* (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10, as cited in Amber Nicole Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park: The Life and Struggle of an Urban Cultural Landscape" (Bachelor's Thesis, Yale University, 2003), 7.

Congressmen from slaveholding states sought a location for the new capital that was "favorable to slavery—somewhere under the influence of wealthy plantation owners and out of the hands of eastern capitalists."[74] The location specified in the Residence Act "fit the bill,"[75] with Maryland and Virginia combined containing half the population of free and enslaved African Americans in the United States. Thus, when the City of Washington was established in 1791, free and enslaved African Americans made up one-quarter of the city's population.[76]

The laws of Maryland and Virginia were upheld in the Territory of Columbia until the federal government moved in. Because slavery was legal, an open slave market developed in the City of Washington, and enslaved African Americans were used to fell trees, quarry stone, and construct both public and federal buildings, including the Capitol.[77] Black Washingtonians also worked as hackney coachmen, carpenters, bricklayers, and painters, while others worked as cooks, stewards, caterers, and porters. African American Women, both free and hired-out, washed clothes and sold produce, poultry, and other goods at the city's markets.[78] By 1800, the federal government had moved in, and Congress agreed to enforce Maryland's laws in the Territory of Columbia, making slavery legal. Abigail Adams documented the prevalence of slavery in the capital, writing: "the effects of slavery were visible everywhere." [79] Thirty percent of Washington's population was African American, up 5 percent from 1791, but less than one-fifth of the total African American population was free.[80]

Slavery flourished in the national capital. In 1808, the domestic slave trade expanded exponentially due to the outlawing of the international slave trade in the United States. The City of Washington became a major slave market with enslaved African Americans from Maryland and Virginia being sold to southern traders in private taverns downtown. [81] In the D.C. Emancipation Day booklet "Ending Slavery in the District of Columbia," the author

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[74] The Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *The Black Washingtonians: The Anacostia Museum Illustrated Chronology* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 3.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., vii–viii.

[77] Kenneth J. Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia," Interpretations, Civil War Washington, accessed October 2017, http://civilwardc.org/interpretations/narrative/emancipation.php. See also Kenneth J. Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia," in *Civil War Washington: History, Place, and Digital Scholarship*, ed. Susan C. Lawrence (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

[78] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 3.

[79] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[80] Ibid., quote from the writings of Abigail Adams. In 1800, there were 3,200 enslaved African Americans in the City of Washington. See Sandra Fitzpatrick and Maria R. Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington: Places and Events of Historical and Cultural Significance in the Nation's Capital (Revised Illustrated Edition)* (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 2001), 16.

[81] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 5, 16.

documents that to solidify slavery as an institution and to strengthen the concept of racial segregation in the city,"[82] the mayor and the board of aldermen also passed the first Black Codes in 1808. These codes placed a curfew on both free and enslaved African Americans, requiring them to be off the streets before 10 p.m. If a free African American was caught outside after curfew, they were fined $5. Or, if they were unable to pay the fine, they were whipped. The Black Codes passed in 1812 were even stricter. Free African Americans out after curfew were fined $20, and if the fine was left unpaid the individual was jailed for six months. Enslaved African Americans were fined $20 (to be paid by their owners) and if the fine was left unpaid, they were given forty lashes. In 1821, a new set of Black Codes was passed. These codes, as documented in the D.C. Emancipation Day booklet, required all free African Americans to appear before the mayor "with documents signed by three white people vouching for their good character, proving their free status. They also had to pay a peace bond of $20 to a "respected white man" as a commitment to good behavior."[83] After meeting with the city authorities and paying the peace bond, all free African Americans were required to carry a pass to prove their freedom. Without passes, they were at risk of being kidnapped and sold back into slavery.[84]

In 1830, slavery peaked in the City of Washington, with enslaved African Americans representing 12 percent of the city's 19,000 person population.[85] As recorded in the 1830 Census, there were 6,152 free African Americans and 6,119 enslaved African Americans in the city.[86] Also, in 1830, the City of Washington replaced Baltimore as the center of the slave trade for the states of Maryland and Virginia. In both states, writes Kenneth J. Winkle in *Emancipation in the District of Columbia* (2015), "plantation slavery [had] entered a slow but permanent decline . . . as tobacco prices fell and planters shifted their land to wheat production."[87] Wheat farming, explains Winkle, was "more seasonal and less labor-intensive, so planters in Maryland and Virginia began selling many of their slaves westward" to the Gulf Coast.[88] Interregional dealers of enslaved African Americans exploited this decline and established slave pens in the national capital. Joseph Sturge, the English Quaker who founded the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, called the City of Washington "the chief seat of the American slave-trade" in the 1830s and further noted that "Washington [was] one of the best

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[82] The board of aldermen was the precursor to the Council of the District of Columbia. See DC Emancipation Day: Ending Slavery in the District of Columbia," *DC.gov*, accessed 2018, https://emancipation.dc.gov/page/ending-slavery-district-columbia.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 5–6, 19.

[85] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[86] Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, *Guide to Black Washington*, 23.

[87] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[88] Ibid.

supplied and most frequented slave marts in the world."[89] *The Black Washingtonians* (2005) documents that after 1830, the "number of slaves [in the national capital] and their percentage relative to free blacks began to decline."[90]

The abolitionist movement also grew in the 1830s. In 1835, the American Antislavery Society sent Congress over 400,000 petitions, resolutions, and memorials calling for the emancipation of enslaved African Americans. Southern congressmen from both parties responded by "closing ranks" and imposing a "gag rule" on the House, halting further Congressional discussion on the topic. In response to the abolitionist movement, anti-abolition mobs developed in antebellum cities across the United States and a series of race riots ensued.[91] One of the most notorious riots in the City of Washington took place in 1835 after a slave attacked the widow of the architect of the Capitol, Mrs. William Thornton. The attack prompted prominent white Washingtonians to launch a race riot known as the Snow Riot or Snow Storm. Black homes, schools, and businesses were burned. The restaurant of Beverly Snow, a free African American, was one of the black businesses that was targeted, and gave this weeklong riot its name.[92] After the Snow Riot, additional Black Codes were passed which further limited the civil liberties of black Washingtonians.[93] However, enslaved and free African Americans in the national capital were generally seen as "better off"[94] because they were not working on plantations. As a result, runaway enslaved African Americans from the South often fled north to join Washington's growing black community.[95]

By 1840, the majority of African Americans in the national capital were free.[96] Farmers in Maryland and Virginia hired out their "excess" enslaved African Americans as term slaves to bureaucrats in the city, allowing them to earn their freedom.[97] Enslaved African Americans were also being manumitted, or freed upon their owner's death by last will and testament, and others were deeded their freedom by their owners.[98] In 1844, additional progress was made when Congress repealed the gag order on antislavery petitions.[99]

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[89] Joseph Sturge, *Visit to the United States in 1841* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1842), 74–75, as cited in "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[90] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 5.

[91] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[92] Ibid.; Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 39.

[93] Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, *Guide to Black Washington*, 17.

[94] Ibid., 23.

[95] Ibid., 17.

[96] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 5.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid., 5.

[99] Ibid., 48.

Abraham Lincoln, a representative from Illinois, subsequently introduced a plan in 1849 to end slavery in the national capital through a system of voluntary compensated emancipation. Although Lincoln's plan failed to gain Congressional support, the Compromise of 1850 outlawed the domestic slave trade in the City of Washington.[100] By 1850, there were 11,131 free African Americans and 3,185 enslaved African Americans in the city.[101] The free African American population continued to grow. Lucinda Prout Janke documents in *A Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.: The Capital of the Union* (2013) that by 1860, "among Washington City's 61,000 residents, there were 9,200 free blacks, about 15 percent of the population, and fewer than 1,800 slaves, less than 3 percent of the total."[102] Enslaved African Americans, about one-fourth of whom were owned by the city's elite, lived in sheds, shacks, or stables in the alleys behind their owners' home.[103] *The Black Washingtonians* (2005) documents that free American Americans were unable to afford houses in the center of the city around Capitol Hill. Therefore, they "concentrated north of the central city, southwest of the central core—in an area known as 'the Island,' because the Tiber River cut it off from the rest of the city—and in Foggy Bottom." On "the Island," free Africans could purchase or rent homes fronting the street. The majority of free Africans, however, lived in alley housing or "black alleys."[104]

The Development of Washington County

The colonization of the future Washington County began in 1632 when King Charles I of England granted Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, an expansive tract of land. This tract, named the Province of Maryland, included the land of the future Territory of Columbia.[105] In the latter half of the 17th century, James Langworth received a land grant for modern-day Ward 1, naming the over six-hundred acre tract Widow's Mite.[106] The Langworths passed on this tract of land, which they had never occupied or exploited,

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[100] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[101] Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, *Guide to Black Washington*, 23.

[102] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia;" Lucinda Prout Janke, *A Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.: The Capital of the Union* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2013), 91.

[103] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[104] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 8.

[105] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 12.

[106] Ibid.; Ward 1 is bounded by S Street to the south, Spring and Rock Creek Church Road to the north, the Old Soldiers Home and 1st and 2nd Streets to the east, and Rock Creek Park to the west, see Kim Prothro Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources* (Washington, D.C.: DC Historic Preservation Office, 2015). The tract included the land of the future Meridian Hill Historic District, which is bounded by V Street to the south, Irving Street to the north, the rear of the properties fronting 15th Street to the east, and 17th Street to the west, see "Meridian Hill Historic District," **National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**, Sec. 8, p. 4.

through the English land grant system. In 1714, the granddaughters of James Langworth, Elizabeth and Mary, sold the Widow's Mite tract to Thomas Fletchall. Fletchall's son, also named Thomas, sold 206 acres of the larger tract to James Holmead in 1722. This smaller tract, which Holmead named Pleasant Plains, included the land on the east side of Rock Creek and south of Piney Branch.[107]

Thomas Fletchall Jr. also sold sixty-two acres of the Widow's Mite tract to John Bradford in 1725. This land included the future Meridian Hill, located north of Boundary Street (modern-day Florida Avenue) on a land rise geologically classified as the Wicomico-Sunderland escarpment.[108] Bradford sold the tract to John Flint, a yeoman/mid-level farmer, in 1730. Flint expanded the tract, which he named Flint's Discovery, in 1735. The tract was a few hundred acres in size with the future Meridian Hill Park in its northern section and S Street in its southern section.[109] Robert Peter, a Scottish tobacco merchant and the first mayor of Georgetown, purchased Flint's Discovery in 1760. Peter's landholding, named Mount Pleasant, totaled 1,000 acres. The section located on the prominent hill overlooking the city, modern-day Meridian Hill, was named Peter's Hill.[110]

In 1790, the new national capital was established at the confluence of the Potomac and Eastern Branch Rivers.[111] Following the original 1791 L'Enfant Plan and the 1801 Organic Act, Peter's Hill was located in Washington County, not Washington City.[112] In 1790, there were few differences between the City of Washington and Washington County. Both, writes Kim Prothro Williams in "Rural Remnants of Washington County: An Architectural Survey of Washington's Historic Farms and Estates" (2013), were imposed on a landscape "covered with tobacco and cornfields, orchards and woods" and the farms were a

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[107] It is important to note that before the arrival of European settlers in the early 17th century, Native Americans inhabited the land. By the end of the 1600s, however, most Native Americans had moved away while others had succumbed to diseases introduced by the early European settlers, see Stephen R. McKevitt, *Meridian Hill: A History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2014), 12–16.

[108] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, Sec. 8, p. 4.

[109] Ibid.; McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 13.

[110] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 16–18. The Mount Pleasant tract also included the future site of Columbian College, a 46.5-acre tract of land located between 14th and 15th Streets and north of Boundary Street (Figure 7). In 1820, the tract was purchased for a sum of $7,000 and in 1821 Columbian College was chartered by Congress, fulfilling George Washington's idea for a national university. The former president was a proponent for a national university and had willed fifty shares of the *Potowmac Company* for the endowment of such an institution. Ibid., 34. The area came to be known as College Hill and during its first fifty years of operation the school averaged only twenty-four graduates a year. All graduates were male until the university moved downtown in 1882. In 1912, the university moved to Foggy Bottom and was renamed George Washington University. See Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 242. Today, the memory of Columbian College is preserved in the street name "University Place," which is located east of 15th Street in Columbia Heights. See Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 14.

[111] Minetor, *Historical Tours Washington, DC*, 3.

[112] Kim Prothro Williams, "Rural Remnants of Washington County: An Architectural Survey of Washington's Historic Farms and Estates" (Washington, D.C.: DC Historic Preservation Office, 2013).

combination of large landholdings worked by enslaved laborers, small freeholds, and tenant farms.[113] Williams elaborates on the landscape, writing:

> the built environment of the County included dwellings (primarily of wood), kitchens, meat houses, stables, slaves and servants quarters, and corn and tobacco 'houses.' The eighteenth-century dwellings varied in grandeur depending on the wealth of the owner. At one end of the spectrum were the country estates and plantation houses . . . at the other end were the 'cabins,' rented with a 'spot of land.'[114]



Figure 5: A portion of the 1861 Topographical Map of the District of Columbia by A. Boschke. At this time, Washington County was still outside of the limits of the City of Washington (Library of Congress)

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Washington County remained rural while the City of Washington was developed into the national capital and saw a gradual increase in population. Furthermore, while the free African American population grew in the city, only six percent of the District's free population lived in Washington County. As documented in the 1850 Census, there were 3,320 free and enslaved African Americans in Washington County. Those who were free owned farmland or worked as tenant farmers.[115] Wealthy Washingtonians also began to build large estates or "gentleman farms" on the outskirts of the city, "essentially forming a ring around the northern edge of the original

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[113] Laura Henley, "The Past before Us: An Examination of the Pre-1800 Cultural and Natural Landscape of Washington County, District of Columbia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1993), p. 322, as cited in Williams, "Rural Remnants of Washington County."

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

city limits," during the first half of the nineteenth century. [116] Exclusively agricultural, these "gentleman farms" provided respite from the city and, in Jeffersonian fashion, the owners cultivated the landscape, experimenting with new agricultural techniques and plant types.[117] One of these gentleman farms was Commodore Porter's Meridian Hill estate. Porter, a successful navigator who had acquired a significant amount of "prize money" during the War of 1812, purchased 110 acres of Thomas Peter's larger landholding in 1816.[118]

The name Meridian Hill was selected by Porter as it was commonly believed that 16th Street was "the location where the 'central meridian of the District [of Columbia] passed.'"[119] Furthermore, in the 19th century, the city's 16th Street Prime Meridian was proposed as the official Prime Meridian of the United States making 16th Street the "longitudinal base point for navigational purposes, map making, and scientific works."[120] The 16th Street meridian would separate the United States from England as it "was still necessary to make base calculations on celestial measurements taken from the established meridian at Greenwich, England."[121] John Clagett Proctor in 1928 wrote of how Commodore Porter

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Williams, "Rural Remnants of Washington County."

[118] John Clagett Proctor, "Meridian Hill Once a Farm Tilled by Nautical Hero," *Sunday Star*, July 28, 1935, p. F-2.; McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 22.
Similar to other 19th-century estates, the Peter estate decreased in size through land sales and inheritance divisions. In 1811, a portion of the Mount Pleasant tract, including Peter's Hill, was deeded to Robert Peter's son, Thomas Peter. Thomas Peter sold the tract to Washington Bowie, who subsequently sold the 110-acre tract to Commodore David Porter in 1816. A secondary source documents that Porter's son, Admiral Dixon Porter, recounts in his "Memoire of Commodore Porter of the United States Navy (1875) that the tract was 157 acres. Proctor maintained that 110 acres was the correct amount, John Clagett Proctor, "City's Early Progress Reflected in Meridian Hill," Sunday Star (Washington, D.C.), July 5, 1942, B-4, and cited in "Meridian Hill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Sec. 8, p. 29.
In an 1829 issue of the National Intelligencer, a portion of George Peter's Mount Pleasant estate was advertised for sale. This particular tract, located to the east of 14th Street and Columbian College, included "the FARM of George Peter [the son of Robert Peter], containing about eighty-seven acres... on which there is a two-story brick dwelling House, and a large thriving orchard and various fruits." William J. Stone, an English sculptor and engraver, purchased the tract and established his residence in Peter's Federal-style house located on the corner of modern-day 13th and Clifton Streets. The 1850 Census records indicate that fourteen enslaved African Americans resided on Stone's property, see Brian Kraft, "Columbia Heights: Passageway for Urban Change," in Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital (2nd Edition), ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 242-243.

[119] Historic American Buildings Survey, "Meridian Hill Park, HABS No., DC-532" (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985); and *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 29; As documented in "Meridian Hill Park, HABS No., DC-532" and "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 28, D.C. Surveyor Nicholas King reported that the First Meridian of the United States intersected with the president's House, passing through its north and south doors. The Jefferson Obelisk was consequently erected on the Mall in line with 16th Street to mark the line. However, in the 1792 L'Enfant Plan, Andrew Ellicott had actually drawn the First Prime Meridian through the Capitol.

[120] "Meridian Hill Park, HABS No., DC-532," as cited in ibid.

[121] "Meridian Hill Park, HABS No., DC-532" as quoted in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 9.

hoped to capitalize on this proposed plan by building his mansion on Meridian Hill with "the entrance door. . . directly north of the center door of the President's House."[122] "On the edge of the south lawn," Proctor continued, "in close proximity to the house, . . . [Porter] placed the meridian stone,"[123] which "was wrought and near two feet across and of the same height. The north edge of it was circular and upon it was afterward placed a brass sundial."[124] Circa 1900, when 16th Street was widened and straightened beyond Boundary Street, the stone was removed and placed at 14th and R Streets for use as a carriage step. The location of the stone is currently unknown.[125]

While residing in his Meridian Hill mansion, Commodore Porter attempted to farm. His efforts were documented by his friend, Secretary of the Navy James K. Spaulding, in the book *John Bull in America* (1825):

> He had a kitchen garden of five acres, and had to buy vegetables for winter; he had a hundred acres of corn, oats, and wheat, and was obliged to purchase grain for his stock… Thousands of carloads of manure were hauled upon the farm, only to be washed away by spring rains; the place was in beautiful order, highly satisfactory to the casual observer, but it yielded absolutely nothing… On the whole, Capt. Porter found that he had been more successful in ploughing [sic] the seas than he was likely to be ploughing terra firma.[126]

By 1820, Commodore Porter was severely in debt and he mortgaged the property to his fellow commander, John Rodgers.[127] In March 1829, Rodgers leased the Meridian Hill mansion to John Quincy Adams, who had lost his reelection bid to Andrew Jackson. On March 3, 1829, Adams wrote in his diary that at "about 9 in the evening I left the President's house, with my son John and T. B. Adams Jr., came out and joined my family at Meridian Hill. Dined. Received and accepted the resignations of Richard Rush, P. B. Porter, E. L. Southard,

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[122] John Clagett Proctor, "Commander Porter was a Dirt Farmer in Meridian Hill," *Sunday Star* (Washington, D.C.), September 3, 1928, as cited in "Meridian Hill Park, HABS No., DC-532"; and *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 30.

[123] Ibid.

[124] As quoted in Proctor, "City's Early Progress,", B-4, and cited in "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 29; *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 30.

[125] In 1923, the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a brass plaque with the inscription "formerly located 52 feet 9 inches west of this tablet" on the 16th-Street side of the Meridian Hill Park, see "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, pp. 28–29; and *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 30.

[126] The *National Intelligencer* described the mansion as "constructed of brick, stuccoed, and 90 feet wide and 54 feet deep . . . 1 ½ stories tall with a portico 54 feet by 12 feet," *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 30, as quoted in "Meridian Hill Park, HABS No., DC-532", pg. 6.; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 28, as quoted in Proctor, "City's Early Progress", B-4; See also Charles O. Paullin, Washington the Old Navy, Columbia Historical Society Records 33-34:176; and McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 26.

[127] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 30.

and William Wirt."[128] Adam's wife, Louisa, primarily resided at Meridian Hill. She wrote to Adams on July 12, stating that "The property here is sold and I received a notice on the 9th to remove on the 1st of August."[129] On August 1, the new owner, J. Florentius Cox, moved in. As documented in the *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report Vol. 1* (2001), the estate was "deeded to Phillip Landscape for life with a remainder to Eliza Cox."[130]

In 1856, the Cox family sold the Meridian Hill estate to Colonel Gilbert L. Thompson and William Dorsey. Thompson and Dorsey sold the estate to Josiah Sturges that same year. In 1858, Sturges sold the land to Oliver Pettit of New York. Although Pettit owned the land, "Col. Thompson" was indicated as the property owner on the 1861 Boschke map of the District of Columbia.[131] Thompson reportedly had enslaved laborers farming the land.[132] However, a *Washington Evening Star* advertisement from 1860 reported that a man named Henry Welden leased the property and operated the Porter mansion as a pleasure park.[133] The article states:

> Having leased for a term of years this beautiful and romantic spot (Meridian Hill) I will open it for the accommodation of the public on the 23d day of June, 1960. For beauty of scenery, delightful promenades and so forth, it is unsurpassed by any in this vicinity. The house is large and commodious having two large dancing rooms for both ladies and gentlemen. In addition I have erected a large pavilion for picnic parties…
>
> Parties, families and individuals will find it a most desirable place to pass the sultry days of summer, particularly as the strictest order will be guaranteed by the proprietors. The larder will be found to contain all the delicacies of the season at all times.
>
> The bar will be furnished with the choicest liquors and wines and the finest cigars. Societies, Sunday schools, clubs and military companies will find this a most delightful resort for spending an orderly day. Henry Welden.[134]

In comparison, other gentleman farms had significantly decreased in size by 1850 through the process of inheritance divisions and land sales.[135] The cultivation of tobacco had also all but ceased in Washington County with agricultural production shifting to the cultivation of grains, fruits, and vegetables. This produce was either sold at the city's markets or kept

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[128] Fiona J. Clem, *Images of America: Meridian Hill Park* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2017), 13.

[129] Ibid.

[130] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 30; See also McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 30-33; Phillip Landscape (referred to as Lansdale in McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 31) was the brother of Eliza Cox and co-purchaser of Meridian Hill, see ibid., 31.

[131] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 32–33.

[132] Ibid., 48.

[133] The Rambler, "Meridian Hill Memories," *The Sunday Star*, May 2, 1915—Part 4, p. 6.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Later farms averaged about thirty-nine acres, Williams, "Rural Remnants of Washington County."

for home use.[136] As evidenced on the 1861 Boschke map of the District of Columbia, the landscape remained heavily wooded with a scattering of landholdings. These landholdings were not spatially segregated as wealthy landholders lived next to Washington County's poor residents, including enslaved African Americans.[137] By 1860, of the 5,200 residents in Washington County, 800 were enslaved African Americans.[138]

[136] The cultivation of tobacco "had all but disappeared" in Washington County by the mid-19th century, see Timothy Dennee, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form - The Scheele-Brown Farmhouse*" (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2013), as cited in Ibid. To access the city's markets where they could sell their produce, 7th and 14th Street were extended north of Boundary Street (present-day Florida Avenue) as unpaved, tree-lined country roads. While these streets provided suburban farmers with access to the city, the unpaved Rock Creek Church and Pierce Mill Roads served as cross-County access routes. See Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources*.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Janke, *Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.*, 91.

Chapter 2

Civil War Era Washington City & Washington County

The City of Washington during the Civil War

On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as president of the United States. Lucinda Janke Prout writes in *A Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.* (2013) that the election of Lincoln "proved to be the catalyst that turned a decades-old dispute over the issue of slavery and states' rights into a war."[139] The first shots of the American Civil War were fired by the Confederates on April 12, 1861, at Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. After this first attack, the war quickly unfolded with the capture of Washington, the capital of the Union, being one of the primary goals of the Confederacy. The threat of the capital's seizure by Confederate forces was a great source of concern for Lincoln's administration as Washington was located between Maryland and Virginia, two of the largest slaveholding states.[140]

Although the abolition of slavery was not the initial reason for the outbreak of the American Civil War, the war presented President Abraham Lincoln with the opportunity to end slavery. In December 1861, Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts introduced a bill in Congress calling for the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the national capital. In an effort to win the vote of both Democrats and conservative Republicans, Senator Wilson's bill provided for the compensation of the owners and a voluntary colonization program for former enslaved African Americans.[141] On April 16, 1862, Lincoln signed the D.C. Compensation Emancipation Act, immediately freeing Washington's 3,100 enslaved African Americans.[142] Washington's Black Codes were repealed a few weeks later and in May a bill was passed, requiring separate black schools to be established in Washington, Georgetown, and Washington County.[143]

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[139] Janke, *Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.: The Capital of the Union*, 27.

[140] Ibid., 13, 41.

[141] Winkle, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia."

[142] For slaveholders to receive compensation, applicants had to submit a claim to city hall. These claims were reviewed by three appointed commissioners and the slave's value was appraised by a slave dealer in Baltimore, Maryland. In total, nearly 1,000 claims were received and 909 were approved, providing payment for 2,989 former slaves. See Janke, *A Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.*, 93.

[143] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 79.

While black Washingtonians had gained their freedom, enslaved African Americans from the south fled north in search of freedom and protection. However, as the Union had no set policy for runaways, commanders either returned fugitive enslaved African Americans to their plantation owners in the south or put them to work for the Union troops. Major General Benjamin Butler at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia chose to treat runaways as "contraband" or "war loot."[144] Although Butler did not use this terminology, the federal government chose to institute a similar policy, passing the Confiscation Act on August 6, 1861.[145] This act classified runaway enslaved African Americans as "contraband" if they had been put to work to aid the Confederate cause. Those classified as "contraband" were freed and sent to live in government-organized housing locations. A row of houses on Capitol Hill, known as Carroll's and Duff Green's Row, housed several hundred formerly enslaved African Americans.[146]

On September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln announced that on January 1, 1863, enslaved African Americans in Confederate states would be considered freed.[147] Although the Emancipation Proclamation itself did not free any slaves in Confederate-held territory, many local enslaved African Americans felt emboldened to seek refuge in Washington. By early 1863, there were approximately 10,000 refugees in the national capital, "destitute, devoid of survival skills for city living and in desperate need of assistance."[148] Both black and white churches and organizations, including the Contraband Relief Association, worked to provide food, water, and shelter for the refugees.[149] Due to an outbreak of smallpox at Duff Green's Row, refugees were moved to camps in Washington County.[150] In May 1863, the government also established "Freedman's Village" on the grounds of General Robert E. Lee's estate in Arlington, Virginia.[151] *The Black Washingtonians* (2005) documents that these refugee housing sites were "often swampy and malarial, with no sewage systems."[152]

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144 "Living Contraband- Former Slaves in the Nation's Capital During the Civil War," Civil War Defenses of Washington, *NPS*, accessed Oct. 2017, https://www.nps.gov/articles/living-contraband-former-slaves-in-the-nation-s-capital-during-the-civil-war.htm.; Alcione M. Amos, "'Contraband' Camps and Lives," (presentation, D.C. Historical Studies Conference, Nov. 14–17, 2013).

145 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 65; Amos, "'Contraband' Camps and Lives."

146 "Living Contraband- Former Slaves in the Nation's Capital During the Civil War;" "'Contraband' Camps and Lives."

147 However, slaves in Maryland, Delaware, Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee were not included, nor were slaves in Union-held Virginia and Louisiana. See *Black Washingtonians*, 82–83.

148 Janke, *A Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.*, 95.

149 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 70–71.

150 Amos, "'Contraband' Camps and Lives."

151 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 85; Janke, *A Guide to Civil War Washington, D.C.*, 96.

152 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 70.

Black abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, also began to encourage African American men to enlist in the Union Army. It was their hope that by showing their loyalty and value to the Union, they would eventually help end slavery and racial subjugation.[153] On May 8, 1863, a recruitment rally was held at Israel Bethel A.M.E. Church and eight hundred black Washingtonians signed up for service, forming the city's first black regiment (the 1st U.S. Colored Troops). Additional units were formed, including the Union's first official black regiment (54th Massachusetts Volunteers). These all-black regiments distinguished themselves in battle and by the end of the American Civil War almost 3,500 black men from across the country had aided in the war effort.[154]

Meanwhile, enslaved African Americans from the south continued to flee north and by 1864 there were approximately 40,000 refugees in Washington. By the end of the war, the city's African American population had more than quadrupled.[155] The city's overall population also increased from 75,000 in 1860 to 131,000 in 1865. This increase can be attributed to the arrival of refugees from the south and the influx of new government workers and others aiding the war efforts. The City of Washington was not prepared for this influx and in the years following additional housing, better transportation, and improved sewage systems would be needed to support the growing population.[156]

Washington County

Washington County was rural in character at the start of the American Civil War as there were farms and frame dwellings, nurseries, and burial grounds scattered across the wooded landscape. Once the war began, the Union Army requisitioned many of these farmsteads, as well as other buildings and structures, for use as hospitals, headquarters, fortifications, batteries, and camps.[157] In particular, the Campbell Hospital was established at Boundary and 6th Streets and William J. Stone's home at 13th and Clifton Streets was used as a hospital.[158] The grounds of the Columbian College were also appropriated for the Carver Barracks and Carver General Hospital. These barracks, a collection of simple frame buildings and tents, housed Union regiments and served as a staging area for passing troops.

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[153] Ibid., 69.

[154] Ibid., 84–85.

[155] James A. Miller, "Greater Shaw: A Gathering Place for Black Washingtonians," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital (2nd Edition)*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 199.

[156] National Archives, rg 29, "Records of the United States Census," (Washington, D.C., 1860-1865), as seen in "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, p. 19.

[157] Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage*.

[158] James A. Miller, "Greater Shaw: A Gathering Place for Black Washingtonians," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital (2nd Edition)*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith, 198; Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 243.

The barracks also offered safety and employment to enslaved African Americans fleeing the south.[159]



Figure 6: The grounds of the Columbian College were appropriated for the Carver Barracks and Carver General Hospital by the Union Army during the American Civil War. The site of the future Meridian Hill Park was adjacent to this property (Library of Congress)



Figure 7: The Carver Barracks (Library of Congress)

Meridian Hill during the American Civil War

On Meridian Hill, the Union Army established Camp Cameron and utilized the Porter Mansion as a temporary hospital.[160] The Union regiments that encamped on Meridian Hill were the 3rd New York, 1st New Jersey, 8th Michigan, 2nd Vermont, and 19th Massachusetts infantries as well as the 8th Illinois Cavalry.[161] Robert Gould Shaw, serving with the 7th New York Militia, stayed at Camp Cameron in 1861. In 1862, Shaw accepted command of the all-African American 54th Massachusetts Regiment, which was never stationed at Camp Cameron.[162] Similar to other Union camps, freedmen and escaped enslaved African Americans from the South sought food, shelter, and work at Camp Cameron. Several photographs dated to 1861 document the presence of young black men at Camp Cameron.

While encamped at Camp Cameron, numerous Union soldiers documented their stay. Surgeon George T. Stevens of the NY 77th Regiment chronicled his wartime experience, describing the Porter estate as follows:

> We encamped on Meridian Hill December 1, 1861. Meridian Hill is the most delightful locality in the city of Washington. The plain on which the city stands extends back some two miles from the river and its terminated by a line of hills. Along the margin of these hills were some fine old suburban mansions. . . The

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159 Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources*.

160 *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Volume I*, 30.

161 Ron Harvey, email to Perry Wheelock, Feb. 28, 2001.

162 *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Volume I*, 31-32; Clem, *Images of America*, 19.

Porter mansion became our hospital and also for some time served as headquarters...The ground had been elegantly laid out with box juniper, while the adjoining groves of oak and chestnut lent additional charm to the locality… In addition to the mansion, a commodious farm house and a large barn, both of brick, were on the place, and there was a fine open wood of large growth near the mansion, covering about 15 acres.[163]



Figure 8: Photograph of Camp Cameron during the American Civil War. Young African American boy shown sitting in front of the soldiers holding a pan. (Library of Congress)

The beauty of the Federal City and the idyllic nature of the landscape was also noted by Theodore Winthrop of the 7th New York Regiment. Winthrop wrote: "Our capital seems arranged by nature to be protected by fortified camps on the circuit of its hills. . . . Our brother regiments have posts nearly as charming as our own, in these fair groves and on these fair slopes on either side of us."[164] Although Meridian Hill was "delightful," the marshy lands south of Boundary Street, referred to as the Slashes, made for unhealthy conditions. In the 1935 *Sunday Star* article "Meridian Hill Once a Farm Tilled by Nautical Hero," John Clagett

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[163] Proctor, "Transformation," C-2.

[164] "Theodore Winthrop Recalls A Typical Day at Camp Cameron," *Shotgun's Home of the American Civil War*, http://www.civilwarhome.com/typicalday.htm, as seen in Henry Steele Commager, *The Blue and the Gray* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950).

Proctor writes that the stream causing these conditions, known as Slash Run, "entered the estate from a point a little to the east of Sixteenth street and Columbia road and flowed south for several blocks until it reached a point a little north of where the standpipe stood, when it took a southwesterly course along the line of Kalorama road."[165]

[165] Proctor, "Meridian Hill Once a Farm," F-2.

Chapter 3

Post-Civil War Washington

Washington D.C.: From Freedom to Jim Crow

After the American Civil War, in what is called the Reconstruction Era (1865–1876), the federal government attempted "to build a nation of free and equal citizens."[166] Historians often portray this period in American history as an era of failures, but there were actually many triumphs for African Americans.[167] In particular, the Reconstruction Era brought increased economic opportunities, freedom of movement, and freedom of job control for black Washingtonians, at least for a time.[168] Educated, middle-class African Americans took positions in federal agencies as clerks, were hired as teachers, and started businesses.[169] Black Washingtonians also built institutions such as schools, churches, businesses, and community organizations to nurture a self-reliant community.[170] Howard University, explains Kimberly Protho Williams in "Greater U Street Historic District" (2003), is an example of such an institution as it was created in 1867 by a special Act of Congress "for the training of preachers (colored) with a view to service among freedmen."[171]

An additional triumph for African Americans was the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, an act that recognized African Americans citizenship and the "full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property."[172] In December 1866, Congress also passed a bill for universal male suffrage in the District of Columbia. President Andrew Johnson vetoed the bill, but Congress mustered enough votes to override the presidential veto. Thus, with the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment on July 9, 1868, the

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166 Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861–1900: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2017), 2.

167 Ibid.

168 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 71.

169 Ibid., 7.

170 Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861–1900*, 24; Miller, "Greater Shaw," 199.

171 Kimberly Prothro Williams, EHT Traceries, *Greater U Street Historic District* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Preservation League, 2003). See also Kathryn Schneider Smith, "Introduction," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital (2nd Edition)*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 10.

172 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 95.

principles of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 were made permanent.[173] This amendment, documents *The Black Washingtonians* (2005), "confer[ed] citizenship on ex-slaves, in an effort to support their basic political rights and to undercut the black codes and antiblack laws being established in the southern states. The amendment also penalize[ed] states for denying suffrage to black men."[174]

Following the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, African Americans were elected to the U.S. Senate, the House of Representatives, and citywide positions for the first time.[175] Seven African American men were elected to the Washington City Council in 1869 and six were elected in 1870. In 1870, Hiram Revels also became the first African American to be elected to the Senate. The following year, the City of Washington, Washington County, and Georgetown were combined under one Territorial Government. The rationale behind this decision was the belief "that a single government would more effectively resolve the city's growing problems."[176] This new government replaced the mayor and board of aldermen with a presidentially appointed governor and eleven-member Governor's Council. It also replaced the City Council with a twenty-two-member House of Delegates, thereby creating more political opportunities for African American men. Three African American men, including Frederick Douglass, were appointed to the Council and two African American men were elected to the House of Delegates during the three-year Territorial Government. By the end of the Reconstruction Era, a total of five African American men had been appointed to positions in the Territorial government, a total of twenty African American men had been elected to the House of Representatives, and one African American man had been elected to the Senate.[177]

In addition to the establishment of the Territorial Government in 1871, a Board of Public Works was also created "to direct and oversee city improvements."[178] Under Comm. Alexander Boss Shepherd, the streets were graded and paved, trees were planted, and sewer, water, and gas lines were added. A total of $20,000,000 was expended toward city improvements, which put the city in debt.[179] In an attempt to resolve this issue, the Territorial

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[173] Downs and Masur, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861–1900*, 147, 149.

[174] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 98.

[175] Ibid.

[176] "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, p. 20.

[177] Other positions traditionally appointed to black men were Marshall of the District, District Recorder of Deeds, and Register of the Treasury. Later, African American men were commonly appointed the positions of Assistant District Attorney for the District, Auditor of the Navy, Collector of Customs, and Assistant U.S. Attorney General. See Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 72, 105.

[178] "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, p. 20.

[179] Williams, *Greater U Street Historic District.*

Government was abolished in 1874.[180] Sterling A. Brown, a native black Washingtonian, an English Professor at Howard University, and a leading figure in both the New Negro Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement, wrote in "The Negro in Washington" that "the newly acquired suffrage of African Americans [was] swept away by the disfranchisement of the District in 1874, an act which was definitely influenced by the fact that [African Americans] compromised one-fourth of the population."[181] Thus, in the view of Brown, the abolition of the Territorial Government had racial motives and was evidence of a growing fear of black political power.

The racial climate continued to spiral after the political compromises made after the contested Presidential election of 1876, which mandated the removal of federal troops from the south and allowed Southern congressmen to regain their voice in Congress. In retaliation against rising black political power, Southern congressmen began to promulgate more restrictive racial attitudes and practices.[182] Previous civil rights rulings were overturned and in October 1883 the Supreme Court ruled that it was a violation of the right of private property to require places of public accommodation to provide service to African Americans. This ruling not only undermined the Fourteenth Amendment, but also allowed de facto segregation to permeate throughout the District.[183] The 1896 ruling of the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* further tightened racial restrictions and established the "separate but equal" principle.[184]

African Americans in the District

After the American Civil War, African American communities developed around the former Civil War camps and hospitals. In particular, an African American community developed around the Wisewell Barracks (7th and P Street), Campbell Hospital (Florida Avenue and 6th Street), and Camp Barker (13th Street between R and S Streets) in the modern-day neighborhood of Shaw. The establishment of Howard University in 1867, the relocation of the

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[180] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 108.

[181] Sterling A. Brown, "The Negro in Washington," in Federal Writers' Project, *Washington, City, and Capital* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1937), 78, as cited in Miller, "Greater Shaw," 200.

[182] The Hayes Compromise specified that Rutherford B. Hayes would be given victory in the presidential election if the remaining federal troops were withdrawn from the South and a more "conciliatory policy" was adopted toward the south, see *Black Washingtonians*, 110; Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *On the Road to Freedom: A Guided Tour of the Civil Rights Trail* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2008), 11.

[183] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 117.

[184] Ibid., 127; Miller, "Greater Shaw," 200.

Freedman's Hospital in 1868/69, and the construction of streetcar lines along 7th and 14th Street, also attracted African Americans to this burgeoning neighborhood.[185]

The Shaw neighborhood further developed due to the drastic increase in population during the four-year American Civil War. This influx of new residents necessitated a "reimaging and reconfiguring of the nation's housing, transport, and waste disposal," according to one historian.[186] Real estate developers began to speculate the land on either side of the 7th and 14th Street streetcar lines and subdivide the land into urban-sized lots.[187] On these lots brick row houses were constructed in a variety of Victorian Era styles, and alongside those houses were smaller and poorly built domiciles. This mix of housing resulted in a neighborhood that attracted a wide range of residents from across racial and economic lines.[188]

Although the racial composition of the neighborhood was mixed, there were distinct clusters by race. Whites generally lived near the streetcar lines while African Americans "clustered along the streets at the center of the neighborhood."[189] This segregation increased during the 1890s as racial hostility increased. African Americans of all socioeconomic levels began to coalesce in the neighborhoods made available to them, including the Shaw/Greater U Street area and the adjoining Striver's section.[190]

The Subdivision of the Former Washington County

Meanwhile, the farms and gentlemen estates beyond the original city limits were returned to their owners, oftentimes in disarray and even ruin, after the American Civil War.[191] As a result, many of the original landowners in the area moved to the city or out of the region altogether. One historian has noted that this change in landownership, "the labor shortage induced by the end of slavery, and the expanding urban center, all served as an impetus for the transformation of the County."[192] Land and real estate developers began to speculate the area north of Boundary Street in the late 1860s. Samuel P. Brown, a naval procurement agent, developed one of the earliest subdivisions in the former Washington County. In 1866, Brown

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[185] The Freedman's Hospital was moved to Florida Avenue and 7th Street, see Williams, *Greater U Street Historic District*.

[186] Susan C. Lawrence, Elizabeth Lorang, Brett Barney, and Kenneth M. Price, "The City and the Site," Interpretations, Civil War Washington, accessed Oct. 2017, http://civilwardc.org/interpretations/narrative/intro.php; also published in print as Susan C. Lawrence et. al, "The City and the Cite," in *Civil War Washington: History, Place, and Digital Scholarship*, ed. Susan C. Lawrence (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

[187] Kim Prothro Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources* (Washington, D.C.: DC Historic Preservation Office, 2015).

[188] Ibid.

[189] Williams, *Greater U Street Historic District*.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Williams, "Rural Remnants of Washington County."

[192] Ibid.

subdivided a portion of his Ingleside estate and purchased additional land between 14th and 17th Streets to create the "Mount Pleasant Village." This subdivision was laid out in one-acre lots and was home primarily to white residents.[193]



Figure 9: Segment of a map of the District of Columbia showing the development of subdivisions beyond the city limits (Library of Congress)

Additional subdivisions were established, including Washington Heights, Kalorama Triangle, Lanier Heights, and Reed-Cooke, in modern-day Adams Morgan.[194] The subdivision of Washington Heights was developed in 1872 by William M. and W.W. Corcoran. This subdivision was laid out west of 18th Street and east along Columbia Road.[195] Private developers built dwellings along the street grids, attracting white, upper-middle-class buyers and renters.[196] The Lanier Heights subdivision, located north of the juncture at Columbia and Adams

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[193] Brown owned the property of the former Ingleside estate, located on the southeast corner of Mount Pleasant and Newton Streets, which he renamed Mount Pleasant, see Linda Low and Mara Cherkasy, "Mount Pleasant: An Urban Village," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital (2nd Edition)*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 217–18; Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources*.

[194] Olivia Cadaval, "Adams Morgan: Diversity with a Latin Beat," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital (2nd Edition)*, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 433.

[195] National Park Service, "Washington Heights Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 27.

[196] Williams, *Ward 1 Heritage Guide: A Discussion of Ward 1 Cultural and Heritage Resources*.

Mill Roads, was laid out sometime in the 1800s by Archibald McLachlen, a real estate developer, and George Brown Goode, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum.[197] Many of the early residents in Lanier Heights were white intellectuals because Goode had encouraged his colleagues to buy lots.[198]

In 1881 former Ohio Senator John Sherman bought 121 acres between 11th and 14th Street for $200,000.[199] Sherman subdivided this land, which he named "Columbia Heights" after the nearby Columbian College, and extended 13th Street north of Boundary Street (Appendix B. 1). Sherman placed covenants in the property deeds, requiring that all buildings "shall not be within thirty feet of the street line, nor shall [they] be used for manufacturing or mechanical purposes, nor shall spirituous liquor be sold therein."[200] The construction of buildings thirty feet from the street line allowed for "a gracious and inviting streetscape"[201] and provided space for greenery. Kraft (2010), notes that "Sherman's covenants made no mention of a prospective owner's race."[202] However, as the District grew in the early twentieth century, racially restrictive covenants became commonplace.[203]

The real estate firm A. L. Barber & Co. managed the sale of Sherman's lots and advertised in the 1882 city directory that "this property will soon become the most desirable and fashionable part of the city."[204] Improved city services in the 1890s, such as the addition of water and sewer lines, made Columbia Heights an attractive place to settle. The paving of 14th Street by private asphalt companies, the shift from horse-drawn omnibuses to cable streetcar lines in 1892, and the adoption of electric streetcar lines in 1898 further opened up the neighborhood to rapid development.[205] Between 1893 and 1897, 254 row houses, "strictly three-story," were constructed in the Columbia Heights subdivision in the Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival, and Colonial Revival styles. These architectural features were indicative of the prestigious status of the neighborhood, which was white and upper-class. Many of

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197 Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 437.

198 Ibid.; Jane Freundel Levey et al., *Roads to Diversity: Adams Morgan Heritage Trail* (Washington, D.C.: Cultural Tourism DC, 2005).

199 Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 243.

200 D.C. Land Records, Liber 1058, Folio 123, D.C. Recorder of Deeds, as cited in Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 245.

201 Brian D. Kraft et al., *Cultural Convergence: Columbia Heights Heritage* Trail (Washington, D.C.: Cultural Tourism DC, 2009).

202 Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 245.

203 "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Racially Restrictive Covenants," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC, Prologue DC*, accessed November 2017, http://jmt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=061d0da22587475fb969483653179091.

204 Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 243–44.

205 Ibid., 244.

the residents held prominent positions in Washington, serving as Senators, Supreme Court justices, and directors of government agencies.[206]

The subdivisions of the former Washington County did not conform to the city's 1791 L'Enfant Plan nor to the plans of adjoining subdivisions. These "misfit subdivisions," writes Kim Protho Williams, enraged city planners and politicians, causing the 1887 moratorium on the development of new subdivisions that did not conform to the city's plan.[207] In 1893, the Permanent Highway Act was passed by Congress, creating a street plan for the former Washington County. Williams wrote of this plan in "Rural Remnants of Washington County" (2013):

> The maps for this street plan, prepared in sections and finalized in 1897, established the basis for the transformation of rural Washington County. Although the plan was progressive in its planning principles (i.e. followed natural terrain, respected landscape features, and existing subdivisions and institutional complexes), the plan straightened existing roads and established new ones with little consideration for the cultural landscape and its built environment.[208]

The Subdivision of Meridian Hill

Meridian Hill was in a depressed condition after the American Civil War due to heavy usage. As a result, Oliver Pettit sold his property to Col. Isaac E. Messmore in 1867. This change of ownership was recorded on Nathaniel Michler's 1867 map, titled "Survey of Locality for Public Park and Site for a Presidential Mansion."[209]

In 1867, Messmore also sought the assistance of local real estate men, Richard M. Hall and John R. Elvans, to develop the "Hall & Elvans' Subdivision of Meridian Hill." This subdivision consisted of twenty-two squares between Boundary Street, Columbia Road, 15th Street, and 18th Street. The squares were divided into building lots averaging 50 feet by 150 feet, and each square contained 7,500 square feet. Furthermore, all the squares were laid out in a grid pattern except for Prospect (modern-day Belmont) and Crescent Streets which curved west of 16th Street (then Meridian Avenue). Similar to the Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan subdivisions, the development of the "Hall & Elvans' Subdivision of Meridian Hill" was slow but picked up in the 1890s.[210]

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206 Ibid., 244; Kraft et al., *Cultural Convergence*.

207 Williams, "Rural Remnants of Washington County."

208 Ibid.

209 McKevitt, *Meridian Hill,* 44; Nathaniel Michler, *Survey of Locality for Public Park and Site for a Presidential Mansion*, Map, Washington, D.C.: United States Senate, Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, 1867, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, accessed Dec. 2017, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3852r.ct001303.

210 Ibid.; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 30.

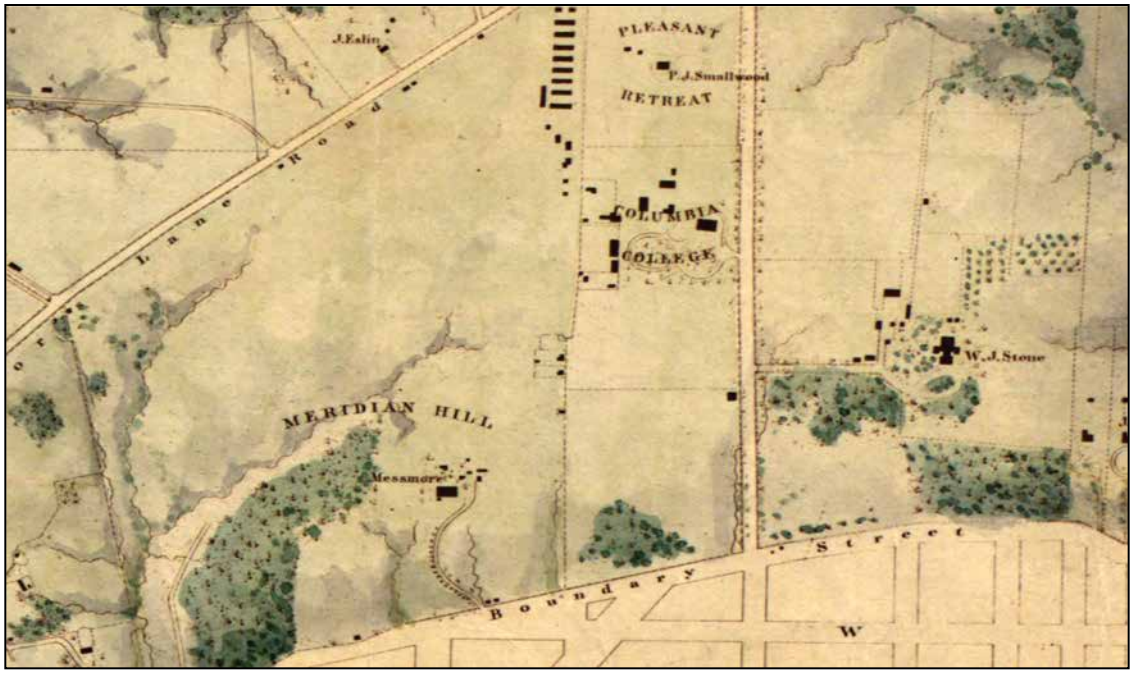


Figure 10: Topographical sketch of the environs of Washington, D.C.: Survey of locality for public park & site for a presidential mansion (Library of Congress)

However, prior to the development of the Hall & Elvans' Subdivision, an African American community had already developed on Meridian Hill. During the American Civil War, African Americans, both freed and escaped, sought employment and protection at Camp Cameron and the Carver Barracks. By the end of the war, these refugees had established a small community east of Thompson's farm. Interestingly, after the establishment of the Hall & Elvans' Subdivision, African Americans remained in the area, residing in frame dwellings and operating a grocery store along Columbia Avenue (modern-day 15th Street). By the 1870s, the African American community on Meridian Hill was primarily clustered in the northeast section of modern-day Meridian Hill Park along Columbia Avenue.[211] As recorded in the 1870 U.S. Census, these individuals worked as unskilled laborers, housekeepers, and cooks.[212]

In 1873, Meridian Avenue was paved north of Boundary Street to Columbia Road. This opened Meridian Hill to development. By the 1880s, a significant number of frame dwellings, small stores, and a school for African Americans (Public School No. 10 at 16th and Columbia Road) were in the Hall and Elvans' Subdivision. As evidenced on the 1887 G. M. Hopkins Atlas (Plate 40), the subdivision development was concentrated along Columbia Avenue between Euclid and Chapin Streets on the land of modern-day Meridian Hill Park (Figure 12). The *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* for the Meridian Hill Historic District

[211] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 48; "The Displacement of Meridian Hill's African American Community," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC*, accessed January 2020, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=825617c96aff4db59f2f216e83b9d713#.

[212] Ancestry.com, *1870 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009).



Figure 11: Hall and Elvans' subdivision on Meridian Hill (Library of Congress)

(2014) documents that these homes, which were "two-story, two-bay, weatherboard-clad, flat-fronted dwellings with architectural ornamentation relegated to bracketed cornices and door hood molds," were almost exclusively occupied by working-class African Americans. Additional dwellings are found on the 1887 map. These homes, which were isolated or in clusters, were occupied by both white and black residents. The white residences, however, were primarily located along the periphery of Meridian Hill along Boundary Street and on the east side of Columbia Road. There were also pockets of white residences on Prospect Street, Crescent Place, and the 1500 block of Huron Street (modern-day Fuller Street).[213]

[213] *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 31.



Figure 12: Section of the G. M. Hopkins Atlas (plate 40) showing how development in the Hall and Elvans' Subdivision was clustered along the two-block stretch of 15th Street between Chapin and Euclid Streets. The future Meridian Hill Park consists of the land bounded by Erie Street to the north, Boundary Street to the south, Meridian Avenue to the west, and Columbia Avenue to the east. (DC Library).

Other Developments on Meridian Hill: Wayland Seminary

The *Sunday Star* article "City's Early Progress Reflected in Meridian Hill" (1942) documents that in 1873–1874 the Wayland Seminary, a 3 and ½–story Second-Empire brick structure, was constructed by "colored labor"[214] at modern-day 15th and Euclid Streets.[215]

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[214] Proctor, "City's Early Progress," B-4.

[215] The Wayland Seminary was organized in 1865/66. See "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p 30. The Wayland Seminary opened at its Meridian Hill location in 1875. See McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 48.

The seminary was established "by the Baptist Church for the education of colored preachers and teachers"[216] and was named after Dr. Francis Wayland, former Brown University president and leader in the abolitionist movement.[217] In addition to educating African American ministers, the Wayland Seminary also assisted those formerly enslaved with no education, job skills, or job opportunities.[218] The Seminary quickly gained a positive reputation and was recognized, along with the Richmond Theological Seminary, as one of the best theological institutions in the ministry. Its reputation attracted future leaders, including, Dr. Adam Clayton Powell Sr. and Dr. Booker T. Washington.[219] Frederick Douglass even addressed the school's three-hundred-person student body during a commencement ceremony in 1888.[220] In 1897, the Baptist Church voted to move the Wayland Seminary to Richmond, Virginia, and merge it with the Richmond Theological Seminary to form the Virginia Union University.[221] By 1903, the seminary was no longer evidenced on historical maps.[222]

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[216] Proctor, "City's Early Progress," B-4.

[217] Dr. Raymond P. Hylton, "About VUU: University History," *Virginia Union University,* accessed Nov. 2017, https://www.vuu.edu/about-vuu/history, as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 13.

[218] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 48.

[219] Raymond P. Hylton, "About VUU: University History," as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 13.

[220] "The Meetings in Washington," *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (Vol. X, July 1888):158; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 31.

[221] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 48.

[222] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 31.

Part II

The Development and Early Years of Meridian Hill Park

Chapter 4

A New Era of Segregation

By 1901 Congress had codified the district's laws. These laws did not include the civil rights provisions of the late 1860s, in part because of the post-Reconstruction backlash against black political power.[223] As a result, discriminatory practices spread across the district in public spaces, such as restaurants, hotels, theaters, and places of employment. Some federal offices, such as the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, created segregated working environments as early as 1904.[224] The inauguration of Woodrow Wilson in 1913 "usher[ed] in a new era of segregation in federal agencies."[225] During the first few years of his presidency, Wilson ordered that screens be erected in government offices so that African Americans were separated from their white coworkers. He also ordered that Jim Crow restrooms and lunchrooms be established and that positions previously reserved for African Americans be appointed to whites.[226]

In the district, the Washington branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) organized mass meetings and press campaigns to challenge segregation in the federal workplace.[227] Some black political leaders even urged African Americans to withhold their support at the onset of World War I. Despite the irony of fighting for a country that denied them equal rights, many African Americans enlisted. Howard University students served in French regiments and numerous African Americans were appointed to wartime positions. Emmett Scott, a close associate of Booker T. Washington, was appointed to advise on "Negro affairs" to the Secretary of War, making him the highest-ranking African American in the Wilson administration.[228]

Although African Americans fought alongside whites for the same cause, racial tensions were heightened after World War I. In "Greater Shaw: A Gathering Place for Black Washingtonians," (2010) James A. Miller lists the following as reasons for the heightening of racial tensions: "the hardening of racial barriers during Woodrow Wilson's administration, the Red Scare nationwide, and growing hysteria over a crime wave in Washington that the

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[223] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians,* 134.

[224] Ibid., 74.

[225] Ibid., 146.

[226] Ibid., 75, 146.

[227] Ibid., 146.

[228] Ibid., 75; Booker T. Washington was an educator, civil rights leader, and advisor to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.

white press explicitly blamed on black residents."[229] Several press reports fanned the flames of racism.[230] The idea of black men being violent toward white women was often fabricated and used to incite anger in the white community during the Jim Crow era. The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia explains this phenomenon, writing:

> There were black rapists with white victims, but they were relatively rare; most white rape victims were raped by white men. The brute caricature was a red herring, a myth used to justify lynching, which in turn was used as a social control mechanism to instill fear in black communities. Each lynching sent messages to blacks: Do not register to vote. Do not apply for a white man's job. Do not complain publicly. Do not organize. Do not talk to white women. The brute caricature gained in popularity whenever blacks pushed for social equality. According to Allen D. Grimshaw (1969), a sociologist, the most savage oppression of blacks by whites, whether expressed in rural lynchings or urban race riots, has taken place when blacks have refused or been perceived by whites as refusing to accept a subordinate or oppressed status.[231]

Growing racial tensions came to a head in the summer of 1919 and race riots ensued in twenty-five cities across the country.[232] Eric Arnesan, a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, wrote of some of the riots documented by Cameron McWhirter in the book *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (2012). In Elaine, Arkansas, black sharecroppers meeting to organize for fairer treatment in the cotton market were attacked by whites. More than two hundred African American men, women, and children were killed.[233] In Chicago, massive violence "followed the stoning [to] death of a young black swimmer who crossed an invisible line separating whites from blacks in Lake Michigan. Whites in Omaha, Nebraska, physically attacked their mayor before destroying the local courthouse to seize and then lynch a black man accused of assaulting a white woman."[234] In the district, race riots ensued on July 19. On the fourth day of the rioting, more than two thousand armed African Americans, many

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[229] Miller, "Greater Shaw," 209.

[230] "Screams Save Girl From 2 Negro Thugs," *Washington Times*, July 19, 1919, Final Edition, sec. Two, Image 11.

[231] "JCM: The Brute Caricature," *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, accessed May 2019, https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/brute/.

[232] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 158.

[233] Robert Whitaker, *On the Laps of Gods: The Red Summer of 1919 and the Struggle for Justice that Remade a Nation* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008), as cited in "Red Summer of 1919," *EIJ (Equal Justice Initiative)*, accessed 2019, https://eji.org/reports/online/lynching-in-america-targeting-black-veterans/red-summer.

[234] Eric Arnesen, "'Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America' by Cameron McWhirter," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 18, 2011, https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/books/ct-xpm-2011-11-18-sc-ent-books-red-summer-mcwhirter-20111118-story.html. See also Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black American* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2012).

World War I veterans, organized into bands along 7th and U Streets to patrol their neighborhoods.[235] McWhirter writes in *Red Summer* (2012) that although "no complete and accurate records on the eight months of violence were [ever] compiled… at least 52 black people were lynched [across America]. . . . Millions of Americans had their lives disrupted. Hundreds of people—most of them black—were killed and thousands more were injured. Tens of thousands were forced to flee their homes."[236]

In response to this increase in racial hostility, black Washingtonians of all socioeconomic levels began to coalesce in the neighborhood of Shaw/Greater U Street. Kathryn S. Smith writes in "Remembering U Street" (1997–1998) that African Americans were attracted to this neighborhood because it is adjacent to Howard University, an "African-American polestar."[237] This influx of African Americans, however, led to the exodus of many whites, as well as the transformation of the neighborhood into a homogenous black one between the years 1900 and 1920.[238] The racial climate of the district also inspired the development of new black ideologies. Kim Protho Williams documents in the "Ward 1 Heritage Guide" (2015) that "a group of rising middle-class entrepreneurs rejected the traditional approach of gaining equality through civil rights advocacy, and proposed instead the idea of racial solidarity and self-sufficiency... primarily through economic development."[239] Calvin Chase (editor of the *Washington Bee*), Andrew Hilyer (founder of the Union League of the District of Columbia), and organizations such as the NAACP and the United Order of the True Reformers promulgated these ideas and encouraged the development of black businesses.[240] Between 1910 and 1920, the majority of African American-owned and operated businesses opened in the Shaw/Greater U Street area. The opening of these businesses, which included hotels, restaurants, theaters, banks, churches, fraternal organizations, and jazz clubs, stimulated the transformation of the neighborhood into "a self-sufficient community and the center for African American life."[241] No longer reliant on white Washingtonians for services, African Americans were able to break away from traditional employment roles and obtain work in fields requiring a higher level of education. By 1930, U Street had become the community's main corridor, known nationally as "Black Broadway."[242]

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[235] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*.; Miller, "Greater Shaw," 209.

[236] McWhirter, *Red Summer,* as cited in Arnesen, "Red Summer," *The Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 2011, https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/books/ct-xpm-2011-11-18-sc-ent-books-red-summer-mcwhirter-20111118-story.html.

[237] Kathryn S. Smith, "Remembering U Street," *Washington History, Magazine of The Historical Society of Washington,* vol. 9, no. 2 (Fall 1997–Winter 1998), 29.

[238] Williams, *Greater U Street Historic District.*

[239] Williams, W*ard 1 Heritage Guide*.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Williams, *Greater U Street Historic District.*

[242] Ibid.

Although the Shaw/Greater U Street area had developed into a self-reliant community, African Americans continued to protest segregation and discrimination in the District. The National Theatre, which operated on a policy of segregation until the early 1950s, was one center of this struggle.[243] In 1931, the theatre hosted the musical play *Porgy and Bess*. Black Washingtonians successfully protested the theatre and were able to sit in the main gallery during the show's running.[244] The Hamburger Grill was also boycotted in 1933 after its all-black staff was fired. The success of this boycott led to the creation of the New Negro Alliance, an organization with the goal of improving "the economic and civic station of the Negro through the securing of more and better jobs, increasing earning power, and the stimulation of Negro Business."[245] The Alliance hoped to accomplish this by boycotting retail shops and grocery stores.[246]

In 1939, demonstrations against racial discrimination reached a national audience when the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) denied to Marian Anderson, the famed black contralto, permission to sing at Constitution Hall.[247] After Anderson was also denied permission to use the auditorium at the all-white Central High School (the future Cardozo High School), the NAACP and other religious and civil rights leaders formed the Marian Anderson Citizens Committee and bombarded the Board of Education with letters and petitions. The Committee and the Board of Education were unable to reach a compromise, so Eleanor Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes proposed that the Lincoln Memorial be used as an alternative venue. On April 9, 1939, Anderson gave her Easter Sunday performance in front of a diverse audience of over 75,000 and the entire nation.[248] On this day, Secretary Ickes declared: "In this great auditorium under the sky, all of us are free. Genius, like justice, is blind. Genius draws no color lines."[249]

Black Washingtonians continued to fight racial discrimination, and by the 1940 and 1950s, many members of the New Negro Alliance had become leaders in the movement toward non-discrimination.[250] In 1941, A. Philip Randolph organized a March on Washington to protest discrimination in the defense industry as well as segregation in the military.[251]

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[243] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 160.

[244] Ibid., 187.

[245] Ibid., 189–90.

[246] Ibid., 190.

[247] Cobb Jr., *On the Road to Freedom*, 2–3.

[248] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 198–99.

[249] Babin, *Links to the Past: A Historic Resource Study of National Park Service Golf Courses in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2017), 120.

[250] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 219–20.

[251] William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2013), xv.

Approximately 50,000 people were expected to participate, but less than a week before the march President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802. This order instructed "all government agencies involved with 'vocational and training programs for defense production' to 'assure that such programs are administered without discrimination' and to include in all defense contracts 'a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker.'"[252] Although Executive Order 8802 did not address every demand of the march's organizers, the 1941 March on Washington was called off. On two nationwide broadcasts Randolph stated, "This is the first executive order issued by the president of the United States on behalf of Negroes since the immortal Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863."[253]

Although Executive Order 8802 was a victory for African Americans, black Washingtonians continued to face segregation and discrimination in a variety of forms. In the following chapter, housing discrimination in the national capital will be discussed. This type of segregation, enforced through restrictive deeds and petition covenants, created racial barriers across the city. Meridian Hill Park was located between two of these barriers, which influenced the park's development and use.

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[252] Ibid., 38.

[253] Ibid., 39; "Roosevelt also created the Fair Employment Practices Committee to enforce the executive order. However, these measures did not address segregation in the military. The legal ban on discrimination in the armed forces would not occur until 1948 under Executive Order 9981, signed by President Truman." See Kilolo Kijakazi et al. *The Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital: A Joint Publication of the Urban Institute, Duke University, The New School, and the Insight Center for Community Economic Development,* Nov. 2016, p. 22, https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/85341/2000986-the-color-of-wealth-in-the-nations-capital.pdf.

CHAPTER 5

HOUSING SEGREGATION IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

HOUSING SEGREGATION IN COLUMBIA HEIGHTS AND A HISTORY OF RESTRICTIVE DEEDS AND PETITION COVENANTS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

The Columbia Heights subdivision continued to expand in the early twentieth century (Appendix B. 2). New residential developers constructed small shops, markets, and other businesses along the 14th Street corridor north of Columbia Road, turning the street into a large-scale business district.[254] Meanwhile, a boom in the construction of row houses occurred, particularly between the years 1906 and 1912.[255] Row houses in the Columbia Heights subdivision were predominantly owned by white, upper-class residents.[256]

The wealth of these early residents, as well as their attitude toward African Americans, was documented in the Columbia Heights Citizens' Association's pamphlet "A Statement of Some of the Advantages of Beautiful Columbia Heights" (1904). The pamphlet highlighted how the elevation, temperature, and the building restrictions put in place by the developer had allowed for the rapid "growth of Columbia Heights in population and material wealth."[257] The pamphlet also touted how "nowhere else in the District do so large a portion of the inhabitants own the buildings in which they live."[258] These facts were published to inform "home-seekers of the desired class [presumably the white and elite]… of the facts commending the 'Heights' to favorable consideration."[259] Those of the "desired class" were also informed that "Nowhere within the District of Columbia can be found a community freer from the objectionable classes than that on the "Heights" ; and there is every assurance that present conditions in this regard will continue in the further development and building up of this section."[260]

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254 Kraft et al., *Cultural Convergence*.

255 Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 245.

256 Kraft et al., *Cultural Convergence*.

257 Columbia Heights Citizens' Association, *A Statement of Some of the Advantages of Beautiful Columbia Heights: A Neighborhood of Homes* (Washington, D.C. Columbia Heights Citizens' Association, 1904), 15.

258 Ibid., 17.

259 Ibid., 3.

260 Ibid., 17.

The Columbia Heights Citizens' Association made "every assurance" by gathering signatures on petitions that put restrictive covenants on the properties of each signer, which effectively restricted entire blocks from black Washingtonians.[261] These petitions, filed with the Recorder of Deeds as legal contracts, typically read: "said lots shall never be rented, leased, sold, transferred, or conveyed unto any Negro or colored person under the penalty of two thousand dollars" (Appendix C. 1).[262] By 1910, African Americans were restricted by petition covenant to the area east of 13th Street in Columbia Heights. This made 13th Street the dividing line between white and mixed-race Columbia Heights.[263] Brian Kraft, a historian and the author of the "Columbia Heights Heritage Trail Guide" (2010), documented this division, writing: "the African Americans who moved westward into Columbia Heights brought with them the all-black Pleasant Plains Civic Association," and the name Pleasant Plains came to be associated with the mixed-race section to the east of 13th Street. The Pleasant Plains Civic Association saw to the needs of the black community to the east of 13th Street and also reached across white Columbia Heights to include the African American neighborhood on Meridian Hill between 15th and 16th Streets.[264]

Despite the efforts of the Association, the social and racial composition of the neighborhood began to shift. During World War I, white middle-class government workers moved into the neighborhood while the white, upper-class families in the area moved to the suburbs.[265] African Americans were also able to move into the neighborhood because not all homes included restrictive covenants in their deeds. The *Washington Evening Star* documents in the article "Segregation of Races Indorsed By Citizens" (1914) that during a subcommittee meeting of the Columbia Heights Citizens' Association, members expressed that "colored people seem to have an irresistible impulse to encroach on white localities and that whites, instead of resisting, have a tendency to move farther toward the outskirts of the city."[266] The association attempted to combat this perceived issue by endorsing a resolution "asking for congressional legislation to insure separate residential districts for white and colored people."[267] If passed, the *Washington Evening Star* article documents, "no negro shall be permitted to move into any block entirely inhabited by white persons, and... no white person shall be permitted to take up his abode in any block entirely occupied by negroes."[268]

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[261] "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Racially Restrictive Covenants," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC, Prologue DC*, accessed Nov. 2017, http://jmt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=061d0da22587475fb969483653179091.

[262] Ibid.; "Segregation in the Capital Upheld," *Washington Evening Star*, Jan. 7, 1914, 5.

[263] For a map of homes in Washington D.C. that were restricted by deed or petition, see ibid. Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 247–49; Kraft et al., *Cultural Convergence*.

[264] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 249–50.

[265] Williams, W*ard 1 Heritage Guide*.

[266] "Segregation of Races Indorsed By Citizens," *Washington Evening Star*, Jan. 7, 1914, 5.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Ibid.

The proposed legislation was not passed, but racially restrictive covenants became legally enforceable after the 1926 landmark case of *Corrigan v. Buckley*.[269] The *Baltimore Afro-American* article "Bennett and Johns'n 'Mum' at Meeting" (1928) documents that the Columbia Heights Citizens Association continued to seek signatures and meet monthly to discuss "ways and means of preventing colored persons from buying and living in homes in Columbia Heights."[270] The association had organized itself so that:

> Each block in the Columbia Heights neighborhood has a captain and a corps of workers making efforts to secure the signatures of the five percent of property owners who have refused to sign restrictive covenants... In twenty-five blocks all property owners have signed these agreements except seventy. An agreement covering a block is not binding until every property owner in that block has signed the covenant.[271]

To get the remaining signatures, the members of the association debated publishing the names of those who had refused to sign the covenants. Other more radical members reportedly suggested that "such persons should be tarred and feathered."[272] In another article entitled "Cannot Sell To Whites; Won't To Negroes," the *Baltimore Afro-American* documents that the chairman of the real estate committee of the Columbia Heights Citizens Association discussed the difficulties they faced "convincing property owners that residential segregation is public-spirited."[273]

By the 1930s, restrictive covenants were seen as effective barriers. The prevalence and efficacy of these barriers can be seen on several maps created by Prologue DC for a public history project called "Mapping Segregation." One map illustrates that by 1934 restrictive covenants in Columbia Heights had effectively restricted African Americans east of 13th Street (81 to 100 percent non-white). These restrictive covenants, which were primarily in place northeast of Meridian Hill Park in Columbia Heights, resulted in the neighborhoods to the north and east of the park being predominately white (0 to 20 percent non-white). However, despite there being few to none in place to the west and south of the park, the immediate area

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[269] The 1926 landmark case of *Corrigan v. Buckley* set the precedent for the legal enforcement of petition covenants in District. This case originated in 1921 when one absentee landowner attempted to sell their home to a prominent African American doctor and his wife. The homeowner, who had signed a petition covenant prohibiting African Americans from buying or renting homes on the 1700 block of S Street, NW, was taken to the lower court in 1922 by a neighbor. In 1924, the case went to the appeals court and in 1926 the D.C. Supreme Court upheld the petition covenant, "citing the legal segregation of DC schools and recreation facilities as precedent." Following this ruling, the number of petition covenants rapidly increased and neighborhood associations began to enforce existing deed covenants, particularly on blocks where African American families were already living. See "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Corrigan v. Buckley, 1926," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

[270] "Bennett and Johns'n 'Mum' at Meeting," *Baltimore Afro-American*, March 17, 1928, 3.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid.

[273] "Cannot Sell To Whites; Won't To Negroes," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Oct. 5, 1929, 1.

surrounding Meridian Hill Park was predominately white, except for the Reed-Cooke neighborhood to the immediate west of 16th Street (Figure 13; Appendix B. 3).[274]

The ruling of the D.C. Court of Appeals in *Grady v. Garland* (1937) further supported the efficacy of these barriers as the judge upheld racially restrictive covenants. As the court document reads, racially restrictive covenants effectively created a "barrier against the eastward movement of [the] colored population into the restricted area."[275] However, while seen

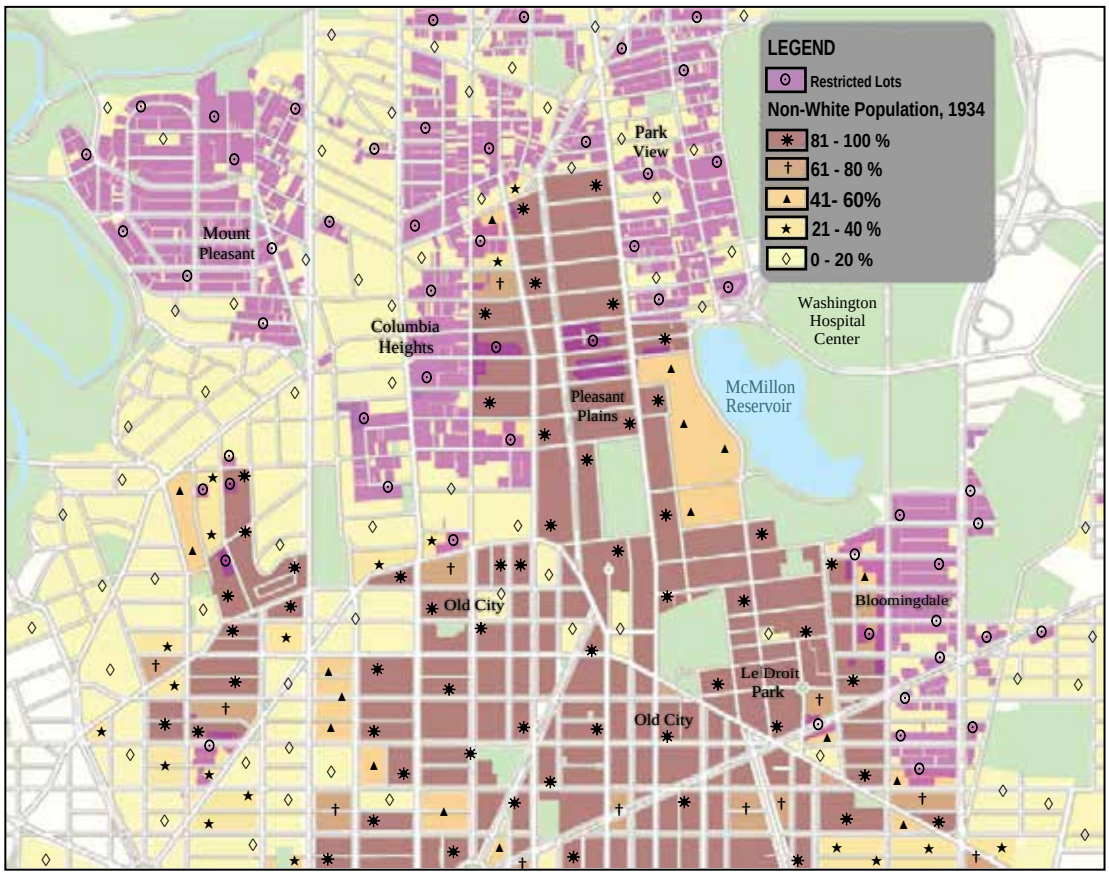


Figure 13: A Story Map by Prologue DC and JMT showing the location of restrictive lots and the District's African American population in 1934. The map illustrates how restrictive covenants created barriers around majority African American neighborhood ("Mapping Segregation in Washington DC: Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Racial Covenants as a Barrier." Prologue DC. Accessed Nov. 2017)

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[274] "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Racial Covenants as a Barrier," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC*.

[275] This case originated in 1937 when J. D. Grady and five other white homeowners on the 1737–1747 block of 1st Street, NW organized to nullify the 30-year-old restrictive covenants on their homes, which were located in an increasingly African American neighborhood. As the Garlands and two other homeowners on the block refused to nullify the covenants, the case was brought to the DC Appeals Court. The DC Appeals Court ruled in favor of Garland and upheld the restrictive covenants, see "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Grady v. Garland, 1937," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC*. For the court case, see 89 F.2d 817 (D.C. Cir. 1937, https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/89/817/1472833/.

as effective, these covenants, as well as the recorded increase in the District's black population between 1940 and 1948 and early urban renewal efforts, created a housing shortage in the District. African Americans, comprising 24 percent of the District's population, were thus restricted to 20 percent of the District's housing.[276]

In the years following, numerous cases went to court, laying the foundation for the end of housing segregation and the resulting housing shortage. In 1941, an African American couple, Frederick F. and Mary Gibson Hundley, were sued by their neighbors when they purchased a home in Columbia Heights (2530 13th Street) that had a racially restrictive covenant in the deed. The Hundleys, although not the only African American family on the block, lost the case and were forced to relocate. A year later, *Hundley v. Gorewitz* was taken to the U.S. Court of Appeals where it was ruled that the covenant was unenforceable due to significant changes in the neighborhood's racial demographics.[277] The *Baltimore Afro-American* article "D.C. Property Covenants Upheld by Appellate Court," (1945) documents that in another case, *Mays v. Burgess* (1945), the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that "covenants against colored ownership and occupancy of property are still valid and enforceable by the injunction in the District of Columbia, unless there has been a constant penetration of colored persons into a white neighborhood."[278] Appellate Court Judge Henry W. Edgerton cited the acute housing emergency for the 187,000 African Americans in the District as precedent.[279]

Sentiments toward housing segregation began to shift. In 1948, the President's Committee on Civil Rights not only recommended that racially restrictive covenants be eliminated, but the U.S. Department of Justice also filed a brief opposing racially restrictive covenants. Consequently, when *Hurd v. Hodge* (1948) was heard in the U.S. Supreme Court, the court ruled against racially restrictive covenants, citing the Civil Rights Act of 1866 as precedent.[280] After this ruling, African Americans moved across the 13th Street barrier into the white Columbia Heights. Many white families responded by moving to the suburbs. The integration of the all-white Central High School (now Cardozo High School) in 1950 and the ruling of the court in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) served as additional impetus for the exodus of white families.[281] The demographics of Columbia Heights reflected this shift,

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[276] Between 1940 and 1948, the district's African American population increased from 215,398 to 285,988. See Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 231, 161, 215.

[277] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 250–51; "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Hundley v. Gorewitz, 1941," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

[278] "D.C. Property Covenants Upheld by Appellate Court," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Feb. 3, 1945, p. 15.

[279] However, in the case of *Mays v. Burgess*, the covenant was upset because the neighborhood was "not sufficient to justify the abrogation of the rule of the law which his court had applied consistently in similar cases over a period of twenty-five years." See "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Mays v Burgess, 1945," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

[280] "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: Hurd v. Hodge," ibid.

[281] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 251.

the African American population on Meridian Hill increasing from 9 percent in 1940 to 11 percent in 1950 (Appendix B. 4 and Appendix B. 5).[282]

This phenomenon of white residents moving to the suburbs is referred to as "white flight."

White flight from the District had many causes, including the desegregation of schools, fear among the white community that their property values would fall if African Americans moved into their neighborhood, the development of the interstate highway system (which provided convenient means for suburbanites to commute from the suburbs to the city), and redlining (the process of denying loans). Kilolo Kijakazi et al. discuss these causes and the larger history of white flight from the District in *The Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital: A Joint Publication of the Urban Institute, Duke University, The New School, and the Insight Center for Community Economic Development* (2016).[283]

The authors write, "Washingtonians were drawn to the suburbs, where they could obtain more spacious housing, better resources, and lower taxes. For the District, this lure to the suburbs began in 1937 with the development of Greenbelt, a model suburb in Prince George's County (Lewis 2015)."[284] Greenbelt was segregated, restricting the suburbs to white families. Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro document the impact of restricting the suburbs to white families in *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (2006). They write that the "suburbanization of America was principally financed and encouraged by actions taken by the federal government which supported suburban growth from the 1930s through the 1960s by the way of taxation, transportation, and housing policy."[285] These policies "enabled 35 million White families to purchase homes in the suburbs but restricted Black families to central cities between 1933 and 1978."[286]

One of the federal government's discriminatory policies was the Home Loan Corporation Act (1933) and the resulting Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC). The Home Loan Bank Board gave the HOLC the task of creating the City Survey Program, and this effort resulted in residential maps that used color coding to convey the "desirability of neighborhoods." Red was given to the neighborhoods receiving a "D" grade—neighborhoods with lower homeownership rates, poor housing conditions, and "undesirable populations." [287] The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) adopted the HOLC's appraisal system, writing in

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[282] "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

[283] Kijakazi et al., *Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital*.

[284] Ibid., 22. See also Tom Lewis, *Washington: A History of Our Capital* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

[285] Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 18, as cited in Kilolo Kijakazi et al., *Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital*, 22.

[286] Kilolo Kijakazi et al., *Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital,* 22. For more on these discriminatory policies, see ibid., 22–23.

[287] Ibid.

their *Underwriter's Manual* that "if a neighborhood is to retain its stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes."[288] The federal government therefore began to deny FHA loans to African Americans residing in neighborhoods with "red" grades (grades F-H), a practice called redlining.[289]

In regard to the neighborhoods surrounding Meridian Hill Park, the primarily white section of Columbia Heights west of 13th Street and the Adams Morgan neighborhood west of 16th Street and the Park were given a "D" or "transitional" grade. Meanwhile, the largely African American section of Columbia Heights east of 13th Street as well as the Shaw/Greater U Street area south of the Park were given an "F" or "declining rapidly" grade. Very few FHA-insured loans were given in these "F" graded neighborhoods. As explained in PrologueDC's FHA Insured Housing public history project, the "FHA institutionalized disinvestment in DC" and subsidized "racially restricted development in DC and its suburbs," giving two-thirds of its loans to the suburbs, especially Fairfax, VA and Montgomery County, MD.[290] While this practice "supported the accumulation of property and wealth by white homeowners and builders who otherwise may have been unable to profit from owning real estate,"[291] this racially motivated practice spurred numerous long-lasting issues in the Direct including urban decay, intergenerational poverty, and the growth of crime.[292]

Adams Morgan: Segregation and Changing Demographics

Adams Morgan was known simply as "18th Street and Columbia Road" in the 1920s.[293] The area just north of Columbia Road was called Lanier Heights and the area to the south of Columbia Road (west of 16th Street) was considered part of the modern-day Reed-Cooke neighborhood.[294] By the 1920s, 18th Street and Columbia Road had also entered into what political scientist Jeffrey Henig termed its "white glove era."[295] Fashionable businesses opened up along Columbia Road to serve an elite clientele including Presidents Harry S.

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[288] Ibid.

[289] Ibid.

[290] "FHA Insured Housing: Mapping Segregation in Washington DC," PrologueDC, accessed March 2020, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=34603bd48c9f496fa2750a770f655013.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Brooke DeRenzis and Alice D. Rivlin, "A Pathway to the Middle Class: Migration and Demographic Change in Prince George's County," Brookings Institute, https://www.brookings.edu/wp- content/uploads/2016/06/20; Maury Gittleman and Edward N. Wolff, "Racial Differences in Patterns of Wealth Accumulation." *Journal of Human Resources* 39 (1): 193–227, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3559010?seq=1#page_scan_tab_conten.070402_princegeorge.pdf.; Howard Gillette Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, DC.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

[293] Levey et al., *Roads to Diversity.*

[294] Ibid.

[295] Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 438.

Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower.[296] Although these businesses targeted the white elite, the neighborhood population was actually 33 percent African American in 1930 (Appendix B. 3).[297] More specifically, the population of the modern-day Reed-Cooke neighborhood was 81 to 100 percent non-white in 1934 (Figure 13).[298] Conversely, the population of Lanier Heights was 3 percent African American in 1930 (Appendix B. 3).[299] This suggests that Adams Morgan was segregated; however, this segregation appears to have been self-imposed as there were only a few homes south of Columbia Road restricted by deed and there were no petition covenants in the area.[300]

Similar to Columbia Heights, neighborhood demographics shifted during World War II as the influx of new government workers into the District caused a housing shortage (Appendix B. 4). This shortage prompted the conversion of many larger residences into rooming houses. The rent for these rooming houses was cheaper, which attracted a younger and less affluent class of people.[301] In addition, the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Hurd v. Hodge* (1948) prompted the exodus of many white families to the suburbs. In their place, documents Olivia Cadaval in "Adams Morgan: Diversity with a Latin Beat" (2010), "a mixture of working-class people and young middle-class intellectuals—black, white, and Latino—moved into the area and changed its social character."[302]

Meridian Hill: The Early Lobbying Efforts of Mary Foote Henderson for the Development of 16th Street

Meridian Hill remained largely unsettled until former Missouri Senator John B. Henderson, and his wife, Mary Foote Henderson, began purchasing lots in the Hall and Elvans' subdivision in 1887. The Hendersons, a family ingrained in Washington's political and elite society, purchased six adjacent lots (Lots 1–6 of Block 3) on the west side of 16th Street and constructed their red Seneca sandstone mansion on the northwest corner of 16th and Boundary Streets.[303] This mansion, which was the first mansion constructed in the

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296 Levey et al., *Roads to Diversity.*

297 "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

298 Ibid.

299 See Appendices

300 "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The Spread of Petition Covenants," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC.*

301 Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 439.

302 Ibid.

303 Meridian House International, *Washington Renaissance: Architecture and Landscape of Meridian Hill* (Washington, D.C.: Meridian House International, 1989), 1; *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 32; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, Sec. 8, p. 32. For biographies on the Hendersons, see to Sue A. Kohler and Jeffrey R. Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume 1* (Washington, D.C.: Commission of Fine Arts, 1978), 343–47 and *"Meridian Hill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Sec. 8*, p. 33.

area after the American Civil War, came to be known as Henderson Castle, or sometimes Boundary Castle.[304]

Mary Foote Henderson was a woman of indomitable spirit. She was not only a socialite at the height of society, but also a woman of acute business acumen and an advocate for a variety of causes. Henderson was staunchly against imbibing in alcohol and tobacco use, she was a strict vegetarian, and she was extremely health conscious. Henderson was also a supporter of women's suffrage, though she opposed divorce. Architecture and city planning were among her many passions, so after Boundary Castle was built, Henderson began actively campaigning for the development of 16th Street.[305] In an effort to transform the street into the "ceremonial gateway to the nation's capital," Henderson engaged architect Paul Pelz to design a presidential mansion on Meridian Hill to the east of 16th Street.[306]

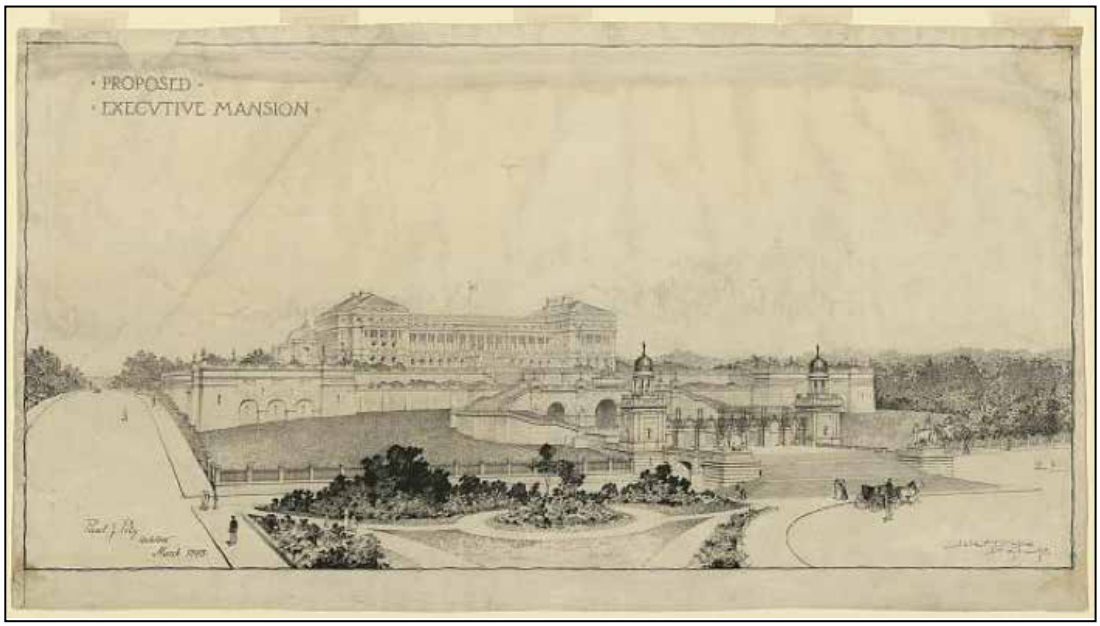


Figure 14: Proposed design of an executive mansion on Meridian Hill to the east of 16th Street, designed by Paul Pelz for Mary Foote Henderson (Library of Congress)

Pelz's design for the new presidential mansion was presented to Congress with a letter from Henderson touting the views from Meridian Hill and the adjacency to "what will, in the future, be one of the finest avenues in the country."[307] Two years later, on February 12, 1890, architect Franklin W. Smith presented another proposal for a presidential mansion on

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[304] Clem, *Images of America,* 24.

[305] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, pp. 33–34; *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 34; Meridian House International, *Washington Renaissance,* 1.

[306] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, Sec. 8, p. 33.

[307] Ibid., Sec.8, p. 35.

Meridian Hill.[308] Both proposals were rejected by Congress, but Mary Foote Henderson became respected on Capitol Hill for her beautification efforts, which were in line with the City Beautiful Movement of the early 1890s and the city's renewed interest in the overall design of the District.[309]

Henderson also advocated for the development of 16th Street as "Presidents Avenue"[310] and lobbied for the placement of monuments on Meridian Hill.[311] In 1911, the Lincoln Memorial Commission was formed to plan and execute a memorial for Abraham Lincoln. Architect Henry Bacon was asked to submit a design for a site on the Mall, while architect John Russell Pope was asked to submit a design for the Soldier's Home Grounds and Meridian Hill (as lobbied for by Henderson).[312] Pope's design for Meridian Hill, which involved placing the memorial in a park on the center axis of 16th Street, was rejected by the Commission of Fine Arts in part due to the anticipated busyness of the street.[313] Henderson was unrelenting in her efforts and hired the architectural firm Murphy and Olmstead to develop a new plan in 1912.[314] This new proposal was rejected by Congress, but a year later

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[308] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 34; Thomas W. Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," (Graduate Thesis, University of Virginia, School of Architecture, 1983), 8.

[309] The City Beautiful Movement sought to improve cities both physically and morally through civic enhancement, sanitation, and beautification projects." Also, the renewed interest in the overall design of the national capital was brought about by the impending celebration of the capital's centennial in 1900. See "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, pp. 33–35. The effort to find a new location for the White House eventually led to the creation of another National Park Service site, Rock Creek Park. The United States Senate, on June 25, 1866, directed its Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds "to inquire whether a tract of land of not less than three hundred and fifty acres, adjoining, or very near this city, can be obtained for a park and site for a presidential mansion, which shall combine convenience of access, healthfulness, good water, and capability of adornment." The Senate lowered the minimum size to 100 acres five days later. The chairman of the Public Buildings and Grounds committee, Sen. B. Gratz Brown of Missouri, then asked the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, to detail a Corps of Engineers officer to finding a new location for the White House. Maj. Nathaniel Michler, a West Point graduate, was assigned the task and on January 29, 1867 Michler submitted his report to the committee. In his report, Michler separated his recommendations into two types: park site and site for the new presidential mansion. The future Rock Creek Park was lauded by Michler as a potential park site. For more information on the origins of Rock Creek Park, see Barry Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park an Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985).

[310] Mary F. Henderson, *Remarks about Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular* (Private Printing, 1927), pp. 21–22, as cited in Trieschmann, "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8,8, p. 24.

[311] "Favors Meridian Hill: Writer Tells Why Lincoln Arch Should Be Put There," *Washington Post*, Jan. 18, 1909, 12. See also "Suggests Memorial Arch: Mrs. Henderson Would Have Gettysburg Portal on Meridian Hill," ibid., Aug. 7, 1911, 12.

[312] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 38; Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," 11.

[313] Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," 11. See Edward F. Concklin, *The Lincoln Memorial Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1927), 38–39.

[314] Mary F. Henderson, "Proposed Lincoln Memorial for Meridian Hill," ca. 1911, Washingtonia Vertical File Collection (Historical Society of Washington, Washington, D.C.), as cited in "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 35.

the Commission of Fine Arts recommended that the site be developed into a park following the original recommendation of the McMillian Commission.[315]

Meridian Hill: Mary Foote Henderson and the Creation of a "High Class" Neighborhood

Mary Foote Henderson continued to advocate for the beautification of what she referred to as "my Sixteenth Street."[316] In a booklet titled "Remarks About Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular," Henderson described her vision for 16th Street as "Something like the Champs Elysees" with "long, impressive vistas; beautiful villas, [and] artistic homes."[317] In an effort to fulfill this vision, Mary Foote Henderson purchased additional lots on Meridian Hill.[318] On these lots, a total of thirteen private residences and embassies were constructed in the years between 1906 and 1910 and 1920 and 1930. These residences attracted her desired residents: white elite individuals and foreign governments.[319]



Figure 15: 1920s Photograph looking north along 16th Street with the undeveloped upper-west side of Meridian Hill Park in the foreground (National Park Service)

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[315] Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," 11.

[316] Ibid.

[317] In 1913, Henderson successfully lobbied Congress to change the name of 16th Street to Avenue of the Presidents. The Commission of Fine Arts, however, rejected her proposal to erect busts of all the Presidents and Vice Presidents along 16th Street. In 1914, the name of the street was returned to 16th Street as the name Avenue of the Presidents was largely unpopular, see *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 41-42; Meridian House International, Washington Renaissance: Architecture and Landscape of Meridian Hill (Washington, D.C.: Meridian House International, 1989), 4; Mary F. Henderson, *Remarks About Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular* (Private Printing, 1927), 21-22, as cited in Trieschmann, "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, p.24.

[318] Henderson came to own most of the frontage on 16th Street across from and north of the future Meridian Hill Park, as well as a portion of 15th Street to the east of the park, see ibid., Section 8 Page 37; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, Page 37.

[319] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, pp. 33-34.

Real estate developers also began to construct luxury apartments on Meridian Hill. In 1915, the Kennedy Brothers real estate firm purchased the lot at the corner of 16th Street and Crescent Place from Mary Foote Henderson. On this land, the brothers constructed the Meridian Mansions (now The Envoy), which had "every comfort,"[320] documents *The Washington Post*, including separate chauffeurs and servants' quarters (Appendix B. 6).[321] These features attracted U.S. Senators and the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals, thereby adding to the neighborhood's growing prestige.[322] Another real estate developer proposed the construction of an eight-story apartment building named the Hadleigh (later the Roosevelt Hotel) at the south end of Meridian Hill (Appendix B. 7).[323] Henderson and Clarence Moore, former chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, convinced Congress to pass a bill limiting the height of the Hadleigh. According to Henderson, if the Hadleigh was constructed as planned, the building would have blocked the only remaining view in the capital that "compares with similar outlooks in Paris and Rome which have been preserved for posterity."[324] James M. Goode documents in *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses* (1988) that compared to the Meridian Mansions, the Hadleigh was popular with members of Congress and it was soon considered "the finest apartment-hotel south of New York."[325]

Between 1920 and 1925, the number of families living in apartments across the city increased from 15 percent to 50 percent.[326] Henderson recognized the inevitability of apartment construction and began to promote "uniformity of color and height for single- and multi-family dwellings along Sixteenth Street."[327] In 1922, Henderson hired architect George Oakley Totten Jr. to construct an apartment building called the Meridian Hill Studios on the east side of 15th Street between Euclid and Fuller Streets. This two-story, thirteen-unit luxury apartment building was to serve as a low-density model for future apartment developments on Meridian Hill.[328] The Meridian Hill Studios was home to artists and bachelor diplomats

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[320] "Has Many Innovation: Meridian Mansions Apartment to Be Climax of Convenience," *The Washington Post*, July 23, 1916, RE5.

[321] James M. Goode, *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 151–52. "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 40.

[322] Ibid.; "Rich Man's Rental Is Aired at Hearing: Dwellers of Meridian Mansion Present Protests to District Commission," *Washington Post*, Nov. 23, 1921, p. 5.

[323] Goode, *Best Addresses*, 196.

[324] "Mrs. Henderson Asks for Ban on Tall Buildings," *Washington Evening Star*, October 28, 1919, 12.

[325] Goode, *Best Addresses*, 196-197.

[326] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 45.

[327] Trieschmann, "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, p. 24.

[328] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 46.

until it was converted into a co-op in 1941.[329] Although some developers did not adopt Henderson's low-density, low-lying ideal, their luxury apartments were designed with the wealthy in mind.[330]

Mary Foote Henderson's lobbying efforts, business acumen, and relationship with the political elite allowed Meridian Hill to develop into a white, high-class neighborhood. However, while Henderson expressed her hope that "whatever there is of civic incongruities will be wiped out"[331] in her booklet *Remarks about Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular* (1927), working-class African Americans continued to reside on Meridian Hill until 1912. Both the 1900 and 1910 U.S. Census records document the presence of an African American community on Meridian Hill within the bounds of the future Meridian Hill Park (Square 2573). There were at least 35 residences on Square 2573. Nine were owned by African Americans and the remaining were leased to African Americans by white landlords. Some of these families took in boarders while others doubled up. As documented in the U.S. Census records, the African American residents on Meridian Hill worked a variety of skilled and unskilled jobs including, cook, dressmaker, laundress, servant, schoolteacher, day laborer, letter carrier, and employee of the Bureau of Printing and Engraving (Appendix C. 2).[332] There were also two non-African American families residing on Meridian Hill. One of the families owned and operated a small grocery store on Meridian Hill. The second small grocery store on Square 2573 was owned and operated by African Americans who resided on Meridian Hill.[333]

Meridian Hill: Neighborhood and Demographic Changes

After the death of Mary Foote Henderson in 1931, apartment construction intensified. This occurred, in part, because Henderson could no longer provide oversight but also

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[329] Goode, *Best Addresses*, 213.

[330] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 46.

[331] Mary F. Henderson, *Remarks about Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular* (Private Printing, 1927), 21–22, as cited in Trieschmann, "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Section 8, p. 24.

[332] Ancestry.com, 1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004); A total of 23 homes were identified in the 1910 US Census. Some of the residences on Meridian Hill were not accounted for in the census documents. However, of those identified, only two were occupied by white residents. At 2416 15th Street the white occupants were renters and the head of household was a carpenter. The white resident at 2432 15th Street was a Russian grocer who owned his home (mortgaged). Five of the 23 black homes identified on Meridian Hill were owned (4 fully owned/not mortgaged). These individuals included a barber (2400 15th Street), a hackman who operated his home as a boarding house (2414 15th Street), a laborer/painter (1508 Euclid Street), and an individual listed as "own income" (1510 Euclid Street), Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006); "The Displacement of Meridian Hill's African American Community," *Mapping Segregation in Washington, DC*, accessed January 2020, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=825617c96aff4db59f2f216e83b9d713#.

[333] Ibid.

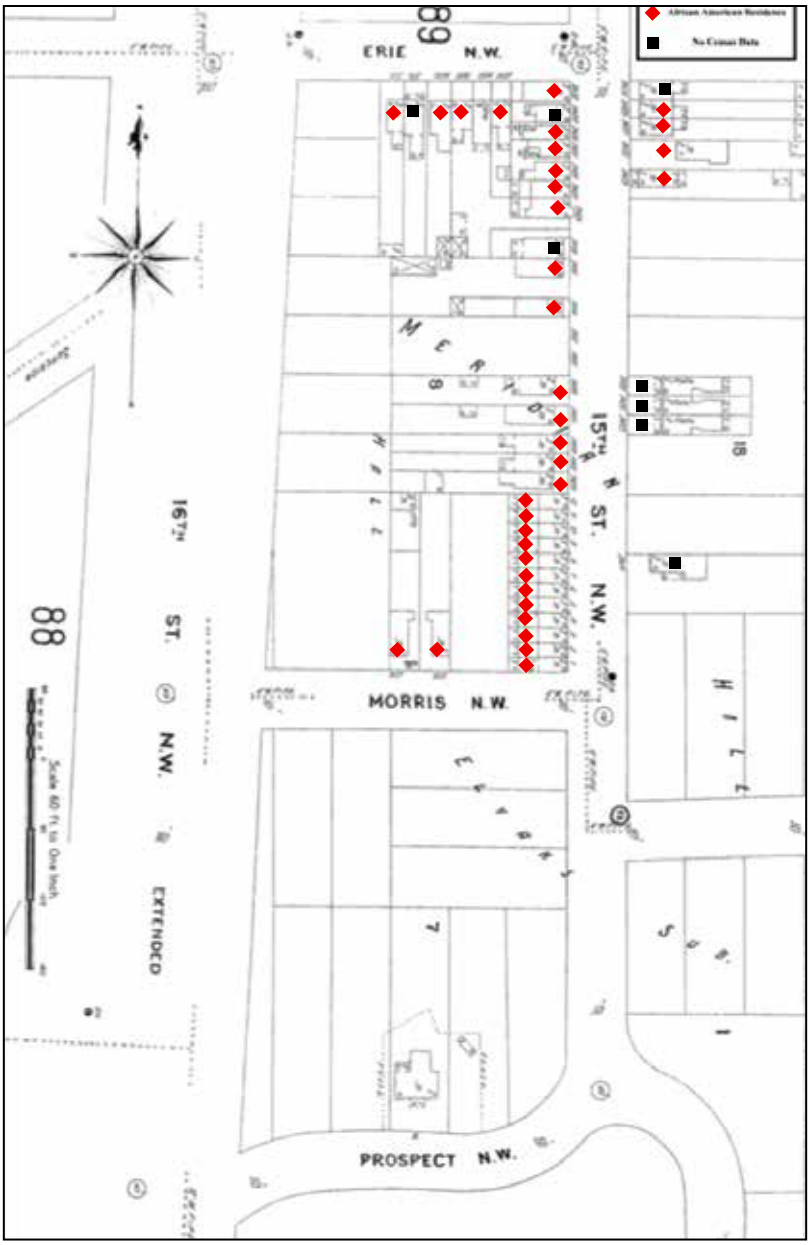


Figure 16: Edited Sanborn Fire Insurance Map c. 1903-1916 showing African American residences. Residences identified using data from the 1900 U.S. Census (Sanborn Fire Insurance Map)

because there was a city-wide housing shortage. Real estate developers maintained Meridian Hill's socially elite character, constructing buildings with amenities only available to people of means. In 1931, for instance, the Embassy Towers advertised how their "ultra modern apartments" provided amenities such as an "all night elevator service."[334] Real estate developers did, however, begin to exercise their zoning rights. They constructed five-story apartment buildings, altering the low-density character of the neighborhood. During the 1930s, some

[334] "Display Ad 29 -- No Title," *Washington Post*, Oct. 18, 1931, p. R10.

small-scale apartments and row houses were also constructed along 15th Street. These buildings did not attract Henderson's desired class of resident.[335]

Henderson's Castle, which *The Washington Post* described as "once the citadel of blue blood,"[336] was also converted into a "high-class rooming house" and after-hours club (Castle H Tennis and Swimming Club) in 1937.[337] This conversion, which brought "booze-soaked parties,"[338] dances, and banquets, was another indication that neighborhood demographics were shifting. Neighborhood residents, including Eugene Meyer, then-editor and owner of *The Washington Post*, found the noise from the parties irritating. These parties would have also horrified Mary Foote Henderson, who was a staunch prohibitionist.[339] Four years later, in 1941, Meyer responded to this annoyance by purchasing Henderson's Castle. Eight years later, Henderson's Castle was demolished.[340]

The onset of World War II was what ultimately ignited a major shift in neighborhood demographics. About 5,000 people arrived in the capital each month to support the war effort. In total, approximately 200,000 women came to the district during the war to join the workforce. These women became known as "government girls."[341] To accommodate the growing number of government workers in the district, the Defense Homes Corporation (DHC) purchased the undeveloped lot at 16th and Euclid Streets from the French government, constructing the Meridian Hill Hotel between 1941 and 1942.[342] This 644-room hotel, financed through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, was home to 800 women, all white.[343] The separation of the white government workers from the black government workers was an unspoken rule, and the DHC built separate dormitories for African Americans

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335 "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 47.

336 "Former Stronghold of Society, Henderson Castle Now Is Club: Those Who Once Vainly Sought Entry to Exclusive Mansion Can Play Tennis or Swim or Even Live There," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1937, p. 20.

337 Kohler et al., *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume 1,* 337–49.

338 John Kelly, "Answer Man Remembers 16th Street's Impressive Boundary Castle in 1949," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/answer-man-remembers-16th-streets-impressive-boundary-castle/2017/12/09/0a867b98-db82-11e7-b1a8-62589434a581_story.html.

339 "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 34.

340 Kohler et al., *Sixteenth Street Architecture, Volume 1,* 340; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 49.

341 Kijakazi et al., *Color of Wealth in the Nation's Capital*, 21. See also Tom Lewis, *Washington: A History of Our Capital* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); and "The Meridian Hill Hotel for Women, Luxury Living for Government Girls," *Streets of Washington*, accessed May 2019, http://www.streetsofwashington.com/2016/03/the-meridian-hill-hotel-for-women.html.

342 The DHC was charted in 1940 to build war-related housing. The formation of the DHC was in recreation to the governments slow building of dormitories during World War I. See "The Meridian Hill Hotel for Women, Luxury Living for Government Girls."

343 "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 47; Anne Hagner, "New Government Girls' Hotel—Home of 1941—Style Miss Washington," *Washington Post,* Aug. 13, 1942, p. 20. This enormous efficiency hotel was so popular that it had a waiting list of 200 women. See "Defense Homes Agency Goes to NHA Sept. 1," ibid., Aug. 23, 1941, p. 14.

including, George W. Carver Hall (211 Elm Street NW) and Lucy Diggs Slowe Hall (1919 Third Street NW). These dorms were later turned over to Howard University.[344] The residences on the 1600 block of Euclid Street, once home to African American laundresses and laborers, were also replaced by the five-story Ritz Apartments in 1943. This large-scale, high-density building was home to federal employees and veterans.[345]

[344] "The Meridian Hill Hotel for Women, luxury living for Government Girls."

[345] Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006).

Chapter 6

The Creation and Early Use of Meridian Hill Park

The Purchase of Meridian Hill Park and the Displacement of an African American Community

Before 1900, the 1791 L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington had languished. The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, combined with the looming celebration of the centennial of Washington, stirred a resurgence of interest in city and park planning. This renewed interest and concern for the overall design of the national capital was expressed at the annual convention of the American Institute of Architects in 1900. Members expressed their concerns, specifically debating the plans of Congress to turn over a significant portion of land on the Mall in front of the Capitol to the Pennsylvania Railroad for the construction of a railway station. Charles Moore, a member of the American Institute of Architects and the secretary to Senator James McMillan, presented this concern to McMillan, then-chair of the Senate Committee on the District Columbia.[346]

In 1901, Senator James McMillan responded by forming the Senate Park Commission. William Dolan writes in his graduate thesis "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C." (1983) that the Commission, also known as the McMillan Commission, studied "plans for the development and improvement of the park system of the District of Columbia."[347] The Commission traveled to Europe "to learn about European precedents for city-wide park use."[348] After a year of studies, the McMillan Commission submitted the Plan of 1901 for Washington in January 1902. This plan reinstated the 1791 L'Enfant Plan with its classical Mall vista, extended the plan (including 16th Street) beyond the original city limits, and suggested "a series of parks and parkways . . . 'to secure a harmonious and consistent building up of the entire city of Washington,'" writes Dolan.[349] These parks and parkways, as well as the privately-owned land recommended for purchase, were indicated on the published plan. On Meridian Hill, the group of vacant lots owned by Mary Foote Henderson between

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[346] Catalogue Essay on the Park: Washington's Italianate Park on Meridian Hill, Undated, Meridian Hill Park Files, National Capital Region Museum Resource Center.

[347] Tony P. Wrenn, *Washington, D.C. (*Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1975), 10, as cited in Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," 9.

[348] "Meridian Hill Park, HABS No., DC-532," 11.

[349] Wrenn, *Washington, D.C.*, 11, as cited in Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," 9.

15th and 16th Streets were recommended for purchase. The proposed park also included the land occupied by African Americans between 15th and 16th Streets and a portion of the Henderson property west of 16th Street.[350]



Figure 17: Section of a 1901 map of the District of Columbia showing the area on Meridian Hill recommended for a new park (Library of Congress)

The McMillan Commission's recommendation for a park on Meridian Hill was not acted upon. As a result, Mary Foote Henderson lobbied Congress for the construction of the proposed park on what she referred to as "my Sixteenth Street." A 1906 article lists Henderson's three major reasons for a park on Meridian Hill as follows: "First, there is no park near; second, because it commands one of the finest views in the world, comparable to

[350] Dolan, "Meridian Hill Park, Washington, D.C.," 9; *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 34; Catalogue Essay on the Park: Washington's Italianate Park on Meridian Hill.

that of Athens from the Acropolis and of Paris from the Arc of Triumph; third, [because it is] in the interest of the proper development of Sixteenth Street."[351] Henderson's fourth and most compelling argument was that the widening of 16th Street beyond Florida Avenue had made it "impractical for private use."[352] This "reduced its inherent redevelopment value" and thus, she argued, the land could be purchased at a "low cost."[353]

Having convinced Congress of the practicability of a park on Meridian Hill, a bill for its purchase and condemnation was presented on March 17, 1908. The bill read:

> The object of the bill is to acquire for a government reservation tracts of land aggregating about 10 acres in extent, lying between Euclid Street, Columbia avenue or Fifteenth street, W street or Florida Avenue, and Sixteenth street extended, in Hall and Elvan's subdivision of Meridian Hill. The reservation proposed is similar in nature to the small reservations or parks now existing throughout the city of Washington… There are no parks of this type north of Florida avenue, and nothing in the shape of public reservations to the south, except some small triangles… This proposed reservation lies along the great boulevard, Sixteenth Street, which connects the White House with Rock Creek Park…[354]

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds responded favorably to the bill (*S. 2968*) and replied without amendment.[355]A *Washington Post* article entitled "New Parks Are Planned for All Parts of the City" (1906) reported that the bill was passed along with four other bills which gave authority to "Extend Several Streets and Avenues and Acquire Ground for Parks."[356] These fifteen new parks, the article documents, were "to be acquired by condemnation proceedings and through dedication."[357]

Although legislation (*S. 725*) was passed in 1908 that confirmed that "there [was] no one site in the District as suitable for a government reservation [as Meridian Hill],"[358] no further action was taken.[359] The Commission of Fine Arts, created by Congress in 1910 with the express purpose of guiding "the architectural development of Washington," became the

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[351] "Park Bills Discussed: Meridian Hill and Rock Creek Advocates Heard," *Washington Post*, April 5, 1906, p. 4, as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 23.

[352] "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 36.

[353] Ibid.

[354] U.S. Congress, Senate, 61st Congress, 1st Session, 1908, S. 2986.

[355] "Plan Meridian Hill Park: Bill for Purchase of Land favorably Re-ported to Senate," *Washington Post*, March 18, 1908, p. 4, as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 23–24.

[356] "New Parks Are Planned For All Parts of City: E. H. Talcott, Assistant District Engineer, Submits Report," *Washington Post*, Aug. 23, 1906, p. 12, as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 23–24.

[357] Ibid. Dedication is a voluntary process whereby the landowner offers their property for public use, "Public Ownership of Land Through Dedication," Harvard Law Review 57, no. 7 (May 1962): 1406.

[358] Senate, *Report 725*.

[359] Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 24.

unofficial guardian of the McMillian and L'Enfant Plans. One of the first recommendations of the Commission was the purchase of Henderson's vacant lots on Meridian Hill. On March 20, 1910, *Senate Bill 7725* was proposed. Similar to *Senate Bill 2968*, this bill recommended the condemnation and purchase of the tracts of land on Meridian Hill.[360] By June 25, 1910, the land was officially designated for acquisition under Section 36 of the Public Buildings Act. Per said act, the land would become part of the park system of the District of Columbia and be managed by the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army. A total of $490,000 was appropriated through the General Deficiency Act for the purchase of the 11.42 acres of land on Meridian Hill between 15th and 16th Streets.[361]

In January of 1911, three white real estate men, including prominent Washington developer George Truesdell, were appointed by Chief Justice Harry M. Clabaugh to appraise the land. A list of the dollar amounts for each parcel of land was published in July of 1911. Two of the nine African American homeowners/residents on Meridian Hill accepted the dollar amount. The landlords of four African American households also accepted the published appraisal. However, the remaining African American homeowners/residents and white homeowners with African American tenants fought the condemnation. By June of 1912, most of the residents had relocated to other parts of the District.[362]

Some residents remained and paid rent to the Chief of Engineers Office until they were evicted. On November 13, 1912, the Chief of Engineers granted permission for the removal of "All of the old buildings in the part of the newly acquired Meridian Hill Park between W and Euclid Streets," records the *Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1913*.[363] The residents of these buildings were forced to relocate, most moving to other neighborhoods closer to downtown Washington, D.C.[364] Gladys Scott Roberts, one resident displaced by the

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[360] Commission of Fine Arts, *The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History, 1910–1984* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985); U.S. Congress, Senate, *Land In Hall and Elvan's Subdivision of Meridian Hill, District of Columbia (to Accompany S 7725),* 61st Congress, 2nd Session, 1910, S. Rep. No. 725, 1.

[361] *Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers 1913*, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 37.

[362] "The Displacement of Meridian Hill's African American Community," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC*, accessed January 2020, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=825617c96aff4db59f2f216e83b9d713#.

[363] *Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1913*, p. 1463, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 40.

[364] McKevitt, *Meridian Hill*, 48; Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 437; For the public history project Mapping Segregation in Washington DC, PrologueDC mapped the locations where former Meridian Hill residents moved after the purchase/condemnation of their homes. Many moved south of U Street into the Shaw/Greater U Street Area and west into the western area of the Hall and Elvan's subdivision (todays Adams Morgan and Reed-Cooke neighborhoods). Other families moved to the Navy Yard area, across the Anacostia River into Anacostia, to Foggy Bottom, and numerous other locations, "The Displacement of Meridian Hill's African American Community," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC*, accessed January 2020, https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=825617c96aff4db59f2f216e83b9d713#.

government acquisition of the land, recounts in an oral history interview that many of the families tried to relocate close to each other because the African American community on Meridian Hill was close-knit.[365]

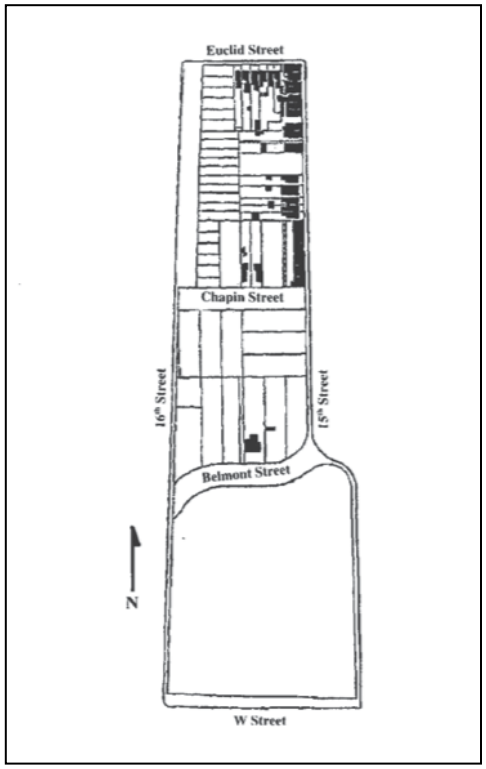


Figure 18: The existing buildings and parcels composing the future Meridian Hill Park site prior to the development of the park. Henderson's land was the undeveloped parcel north of W Street (HABS)

Roberts also recounts in an oral history interview that "By the time she [Mary Foote Henderson] got through dealing with the government, she not only took the land immediately for the park, she saw to it that the whole settlement moved, and it was quite tragic."[366] However, there was no mention of the displacement of the African American families in the local newspapers.[367] Rather, later newspaper articles described the condemned residences as "dilapidated dwellings," "shacks," and "unsightly messes" (Figures 19-21).[368] The act of condemning these homes can perhaps be seen as early twentieth century urban renewal. It

365 "The Displacement of Meridian Hill's African American Community."

366 Ibid.

367 *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, sec. 8, p. 40.

368 "Meridian Hill Is Finally Completed after 26 Years of Hard Work, Petty Strife," *Washington Post*, Oct. 3, 1936, p. X5; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 56.

also accomplished some of Mary Foote Henderson's vision for 16th Street, which she outlined in the booklet entitled *Remarks about Management of Washington in General*. Her vision for 16th Street reads:

> Something like the Champs Elysees, Sixteenth Street is central, straight, broad and long; it leads directly to the big park; its portal at the District line is the opening gateway for motor tourists to enter the Capital. On the way down its seven-mile length to the portals of the White House each section of the thoroughfare will be a dream of beauty; long, impressive vistas; beautiful villas, artistic homes, not only for American citizens, but diplomats of foreign countries. Whatever there is of present civic incongruities will be wiped out. It will be called Presidents Avenue. Like the Champs Elysees, it will be a driving boulevard for private vehicles and taxis only.[369]



Figure 19: Undated photograph looking north of the future upper mall of Meridian Hill Park. The houses in this photograph were within the bounds of the planned park along 15th and Euclid Streets at the parks northeastern corner (National Park Service)

[369] Emphasis added. Henderson, *Remarks about Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular*, 21–22, as cited in Trieschmann, "Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase)," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 8, p. 24.



Figure 20: View of 15th Street, the future Meridian Hill Park site to the left, and the "unsightly" homes typical in the area, ca. 1910 (National Park Service)



Figure 21: Photograph taken at the corner of 15th and Euclid Streets around 1910. This photograph shows the style of housing typical in the area (Commission of Fine Arts, as seen in Clem, *Images of America: Meridian Hill Park,* 51)

The Construction of Meridian Hill Park and the Use of African American Laborers

George Burnap, a landscape architect under the Office of PB&G, developed the original plan for Meridian Hill Park.[370] Burnap's plan, in accordance with the Beaux Arts tradition of the time, looked to classical precedents with a similar natural topography. The Pincian Hill

[370] Ethan Carr, "Meridian Hill Park," *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form* (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 5.

Park in Rome served as a model for Burnap's Italian baroque design, which was described in the National Historic Landmark nomination for Meridian Hill Park as "centered around a single longitudinal axis extending roughly north-south through the site."[371] At the elevated, north end of the park a fountain, formal gardens, and a great terrace were planned. "A water cascade of linked basins was planned for the steep slope to the south" and it was to be "terminated by rectangular reflecting pools in a wide plaza at the foot of the hill. The great terrace, above the cascade, was the main cross axis in the plan, and offered views of the lower park below, and of Washington in the distance."[372]

Initial site work commenced before the onset of World War I, and in 1915 John Earley began construction on the massive retaining walls along 16th Street. The stucco finish called for in Earley's contract proved to be "dull," which led him to experiment with concrete and an aggregate finish. By trial and error, Earley devised an aggregate process he named "architectural concrete," which involved the addition of pebbles to the concrete mixture.[373] This process was used throughout the park and by April 1916 the wall along 16th Street was completed. The grading of the lower portion of the park into a regular slope was completed that same year.[374] In 1917, Burnap was replaced by landscape architect Horace W. Peaslee. Peaslee revised Burnap's plans, exchanging the elaborate gardens in the upper portion of the park for an open mall, eliminating the bridge over the cross axis of the cascade, and simplifying the design for the reflecting pool area. The plan was modified again in 1920 when the planting plan of Vitale, Brinkerhoff, and Geiffert, a landscape architecture firm based in New York, was incorporated into the design.[375] Despite "incremental and uncertain funding under annual appropriations from Congress,"[376] the upper mall was completed and open to the public by 1923. By 1932, most major structural work was completed.[377] Several historic photographs on file with the National Park Service document that much of this work was completed by African American laborers.[378]

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[371] Catalogue Essay on the Park: Washington's Italianate Park on Meridian Hill.

[372] Carr, "Meridian Hill Park," *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form* (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 5.

[373] Clem, *Images of America,* 32, 49.

[374] Carr, "Meridian Hill Park," *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form* (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 5.

[375] Ibid., 6.

[376] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 37.

[377] Ibid.; Carr, "Meridian Hill Park," *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form* (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 6.

[378] "Photo Gallery: Construction of Meridian Hill Park," *National Park Service*, accessed 2018, https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery.htm?id=2521C892-1DD8-B71C-070A46F0616BDDCA.

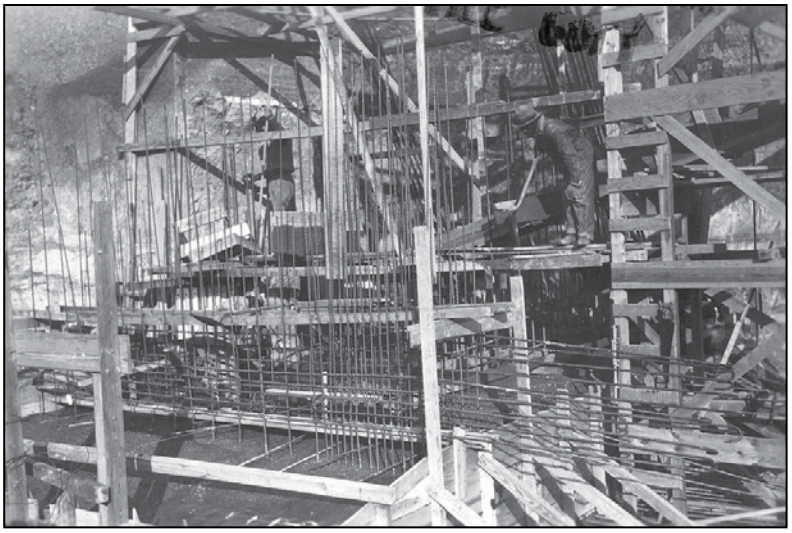


Figure 22: African American man working on the 16th Street wall (National Park Service)

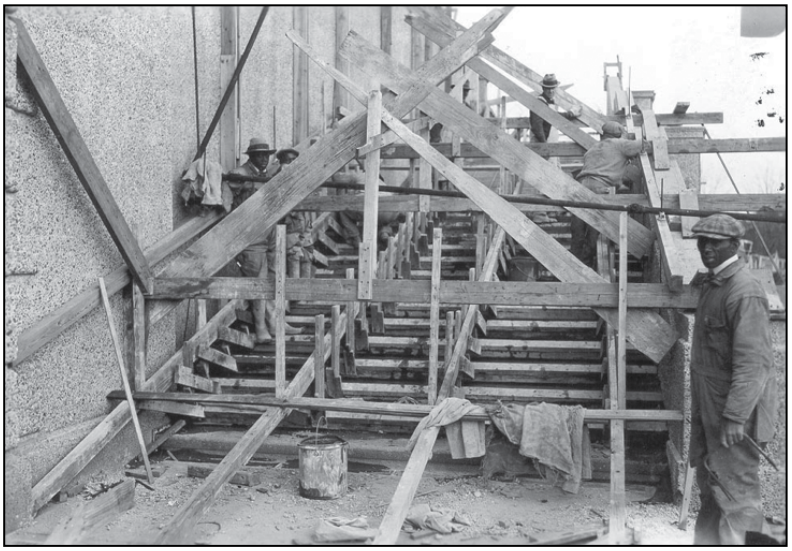


Figure 23: Several African American men constructing the stairs up to the Grand Terrace of Meridian Hill Park (National Park Service)



Figure 24: African American laborers creating a walkway to the Dante statue in Meridian Hill Park (National Park Service)

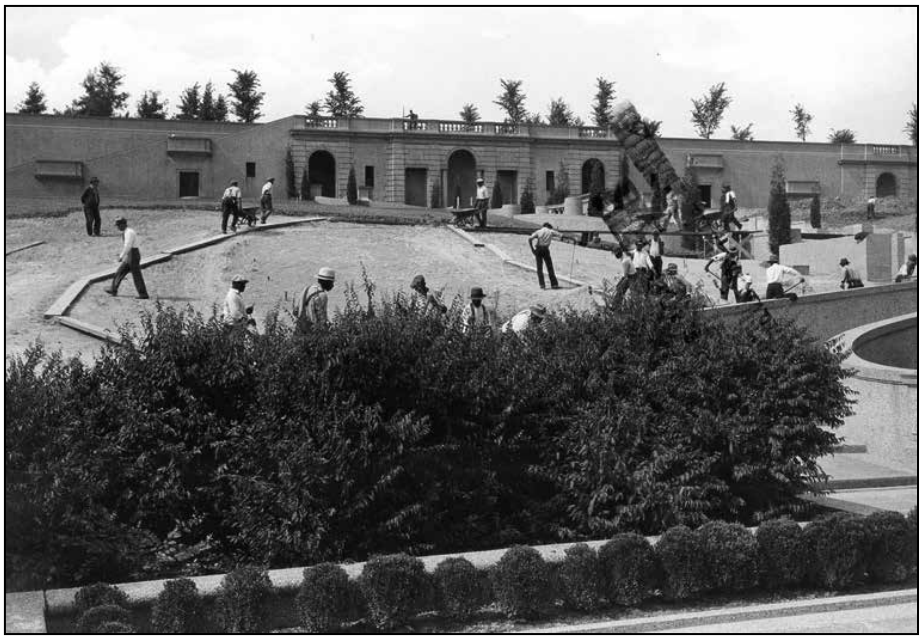


Figure 25: African American laborers starting to build the cascade portion of the Meridian Hill Park fountain (National Park Service)

African American Park Use under the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds and the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital

Although Meridian Hill Park was not completed until 1936, the upper portion was open to public use by 1923.[379] At the time, the Office of PB&G, under the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers, oversaw all federally owned reservations in the District, including Meridian Hill Park.[380] The Office of PB&G (renamed the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital [PB&PPNC] in 1925) enforced segregation through both administrative design and de facto segregation. According to Martha H. Verbrugge, the author of "Exercising Civil Rights: Public Recreation and Racial Segregation in Washington, DC 1909–1949" (2015), de facto segregation prevailed at other District parks because white and black residents used most federal facilities routinely at different times.[381] For instance, African Americans gathered at Rock Creek Park the Monday after Easter in the 1920s. Most white Washingtonians understood that this was "the Negroes' day" and either remained at home or went elsewhere.[382]

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[379] Ibid., 6.

[380] Meridian Hill Park was managed by the PB&G/PB&PPNC until 1933. See *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 15. Martha H. Verbrugge, "Exercising Civil Rights: Public Recreation and Racial Segregation in Washington, DC 1909–1949," in *DC Sports: The Nation's Capital at Play*, ed. Chris Elzey and David K Wiggins (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 109. See also Babin, *Links to the Past*, 93.

[381] Verbrugge, "Exercising Civil Rights," 106.

[382] William J. Jones, *Recreation and Amusement among Negroes in Washington, D.C.: A Sociological Analysis of the Negro in an Urban Environment* (1927; Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1972), 100, as cited in ibid.

Beginning in 1921, the Office of PB&G also permitted African Americans to play at the East Potomac and West Potomac Park golf courses at designated times.[383] However, white players soon became reluctant to share the courses even for a day. Lieutenant Colonel Sherrill, the first Director of the Office of PB&G, responded by establishing a separate nine-hole course under the Jim Crow principle of separate but equal.[384]



Figure 26: Photograph of the dedication ceremony of the Joan of Arc statue on January 6, 1922 (Library of Congress)

Lieutenant Colonel Sherrill also enforced segregation through administrative design.[385] In 1921, Sherrill wrote a memorandum to Superintendent Francis Gillen, prescribing the erection of signs at Rock Creek Park. These signs were to distinguish the "white" from the "colored" picnic areas.[386] Many leading citizens rejected this policy and threatened to go to the president or picket the White House.[387] Rep. Martin B. Madden of Illinois, the chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, succeeded in overturning the policy. According to Barry Mackintosh, the author of *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History* (1985), segregation was never again made an official policy; however, Sherrill's

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[383] Babin, *Links to the Past*, 96.

[384] Ibid., 46-47.

[385] Ibid., 98.

[386] Barry Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985), 25–26; Memorandum, Sherrill to Gillen, Sept. 14, 1921, General Correspondence file, Public Buildings and Grounds records, rg 42 (National Archives).

[387] "Jim Crow in D.C. Park," *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 21, 1922, p. 6, as cited in Babin, *Links to the Past*, 98.

successor, Lt. Col. U.S. Grant III, attempted to re-segregate the picnic areas in 1928.[388] Although not an official policy, both races continued to practice de facto segregation at Rock Creek Park and were careful about maintaining their social distances.[389]

Regarding Meridian Hill Park, the available records on file at the Washington National Records Center indicate that the park was not segregated by administrative design. This is evidenced in both the letter of R. C. Montgomery, which reads: "I saw nothing for which they [referring to African American youths] could be arrested,"[390] as well as the presence of African Americans at the 1922 dedication ceremony for the statue of Joan of Arc (Figure 26). However, some white park users were hesitant to share the park and wrote to the Office of PB&G/PB&PPNC complaining about African American park use. These letters ranged in severity with some issuing general complaints and others calling for the exclusion of African Americans from Meridian Hill Park altogether.

In one letter, dated August 2, 1927, a white park-user complained about the nighttime use of Meridian Hill Park by crowds of African Americans. The letter reads:

> *Do you know that young colored men + boys are using the beautiful main entrance to Meridian Hill Park for a meeting place, where they have a general good time singing, dancing + music with guitar and ukulele? Those amusements are all right in their place, but I think that is hardly the place.*
>
> *My family + I went up on that hill last Thursday night + when the time came to leave, found a crowd of perhaps 75 or 100 colored people massed at the top of the steps. Thought at first there had been an accident but finally after getting through the crowd, found they were having entertained by the young colored men below. We went on down the steps + managed to get through the dancers. But you may know we were all furious. No police-man in sight or I should have reported it to him. I seldom see a policeman in that park. There should always be at least one + those steps + entrance should be kept free from such loiterers. I pass that main entrance quite often + with few exceptions it is occupied at night by colored people using it for a sort of club room.*
>
> Please do something about it. I will not sign my name, but you can easily verify my complaint…[391]

In another letter, R. C. Montgomery documents the late-night park use of "boisterous" African Americans youths:

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[388] Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park*, 25–26.

[389] Jones, *Recreation and Amusement among Negroes in Washington, D.C.*, 99.

[390] R.C. Montgomery to Supt., U.S. Park Police, 26 August, Folder "Meridian Hill Park No. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[391] Unsigned Letter, 2 August, 1927, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

> I spent about an hour in the park around 10 o'clock Sunday night. I found the upper park in the vicinity of the croquet ground where it is well lighted orderly. South of the lighted portion, however, large groups of young Negro hoodlums were making a great deal of noise, congregating in the dark areas about the shubbery. I saw nothing for which they could be arrested, unless ill-mannered boisterousness could be considered a disturbance of peace. The officer on duty was busy going from one group to another, breaking up this rowdyism, but the gangs formed again as soon as his back was turned.[392]

M. J. Hope was even more explicit in his displeasure in his January 29, 1932 letter. Hope's letter also suggests that African Americans were only permitted to frequent the park at particular times and on holiday nights. However, Hope's handwriting is somewhat illegible, and no additional evidence has been identified that suggests that de facto segregation was in effect at Meridian Hill Park. Hope's letter reads:

> Meridian Park is growing to be a delight. Thank you? Unless the colored tenancy by Buchanan Monument is removed. The darkies not [now?] permitted to park en masse there holiday nights, late evenings (need police guard), so few people may go there. Wherefore is it constructed? The darkies today have about ruined Franklin Pk., Carnegie Library and park-- books dirt, ground unkempt.
>
> . . . Our ancestors were centuries saving, working to obtain. Must darkies take over our inheritance and misuse it. So soon as they see a desirable street as Sixteenth, their numerous progeny skate, above, slide, go into grounds as Henderson's and others-- they spoil the beauty of the surroundings. Why not they have their own park, care for it and stay in it?...[393]

While not all white park-users shared a need for a separate park, many expressed concerns about the late-night park use of African Americans. Joseph R. Flynn wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Grant III about "urgent need for better lighting of this section, which is much used in the evening by residents of the neighborhood- particularly children and their mothers or attendants. The southern section of the plateau in its present unlighted condition encourages the gathering of undesirable persons who are an annoyance and menace to the women and children, and this may result in serious trouble."[394] Charles Moore, chair of the Commission of Fine Arts, opposed night lighting, as it would "lower Washington to the movie

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[392] Montgomery to Supt., U.S. Park Police, Aug. 26, 1927, ibid.

[393] M.J. Hope to Lt. Col. Grant, Director, Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks National Capital, 26 January, 1932, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Folder "Meridian Hill Park No. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[394] Joseph R. Flynn, President, Adelphia Owners, Inc., to Lt. Col. Grant, Director, Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks National Capital, 26 January, 1932, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

standards."[395] However, Moore was aware that "as a consequence [of the lack of lighting] the colored population has occupied both Meridian Hill Park and the Capitol area to the north, to the exclusion of all others." Moore went on to express that "the lack of policing in Meridian Hill Park has made that place pestilential morally."[396]

Despite complaints, African Americans continued to frequent Meridian Hill Park "en masse," particularly at night. Meridian Hill Park was also in close proximity to three predominately African American neighborhoods: Shaw/Greater U Street to the south, the future Reed-Cooke neighborhood to the west, and the predominately African American section of Columbia Heights to the east of 13th Street. These neighborhoods, and the Shaw/Greater U Street area in particular, were referenced in numerous letters. Montgomery specifically wrote about how "the proximity of the large Negro district along U Street to Georgia Avenue . . . will doubtless continue to feed into this park these gangs of noisy young colored people."[397] Similarly, Stella Carpenter lamented in her August 4, 1931, letter how "With Florida Avenue, and 16th St. from Fla. Ave. south, given over almost entirely to the colored race, there will be little hope for the Park if left to this particular class."[398]

In the 1999 oral interviews series "The Voices of Columbia Heights," Dolores Tucker, a lifetime resident of Columbia Heights, provided a different perspective and recounted how African Americans enjoyed the park, appropriating it for a particular need. She stated, "At night when it was too hot to sleep you just pack up all your things and walked up from Mama's house up to Meridian Hill Park [inaudible, laughs] and everybody just slept up there in the park."[399] Unfortunately, the archives and newspaper articles consulted did not provide any additional information on the African American perspective. Given the racial climate of the 1930s, it is not surprising that the African American perspective was ignored.

African American Park Use Under the National Park Service, National Capital Parks

In 1933, the Office of PB&PPNC was absorbed by the new office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, Department of the Interior.[400] This office, established in 1916, was renamed the National Park Service (NPS) a year later. The NPS sanctioned a policy of

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[395] *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, Appendix 4, A4-3, as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 33.

[396] Ibid.

[397] R.C. Montgomery to Supt., U.S. Park Police, 26 August, Folder "Meridian Hill Park No. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[398] Letter from Miss Stella Carpenter, 4 August, 1931, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Folder "Meridian Hill Park No. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[399] Dolores Tucker, "Segregation: The Curse of Community Life," *The Voices of Columbia Heights, Columbia Heights Website*, http://innercity.org/columbiaheights/voice.html/, as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 34–35.

[400] Cornelius W. Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks* (National Park Service, National Capital Parks, photocopy), 36, as cited in *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Vol. 1*, 15.

"separate but equal" in parks located in Southern states.[401] Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes explained this policy, stating that while "everyone regardless of creed, color, or race . . . is invited to visit national parks and monuments . . . it has long been a policy [of the national parks] to conform generally to the State customs with regards to accommodation of visitors."[402] Meanwhile, the National Capital Parks (NCP) had a non-segregated, non-discriminatory policy in place since the early 1930s.[403] Patricia Babin, in *Links to the Past: A Historic Resource Study of National Park Service Golf Courses in the District of Columbia* (2017), documents that this policy proved difficult to enforce because the NCP "had inherited the de facto segregated recreation policy of its predecessors"[404] and some federal recreation sites were still managed by agencies with segregationist policies.[405] Beginning in the late 1930s, however, Secretary of the Interior Ickes began to slowly remove the segregationist policies put in place by the Office of PB&PPNC. This included opening up all picnic areas in National Capital Region to biracial use in 1938.[406] Since then, permits for all picnic areas in the region have been issued without regard to the race of the applicant.[407]

The records on file at the Washington National Records Center indicate that Meridian Hill Park was not segregated under the National Park Service. In Superintendent Marshall Finnan's November 1933 memorandum to the Director of the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, Finnan wrote that "There is no legal way to prevent law abiding citizens from using the park, regardless of their race."[408] Similarly, in August 1939, Acting Superintendent Frank T. Gartside responded to a resident's complaint about African American park use, stating that "The facilities of the National Capital parks system are available to all citizens and cannot be denied to members of a particular race."[409] Interestingly, while not segregated by administrative design, there was discussion of additional policemen and the possible effect that would have on discouraging a "particular class of citizen" from

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401 Babin, *Links to the Past*, 119.

402 Harold Ickes to Walter White, Feb. 4, 1937, as quoted in Terrance Young, "A Contradiction in Democratic Government: W. J. Trent, Jr. and the Struggle to Desegregate National Park Campgrounds," *Environmental History,* 14 (Oct. 2009): 656, as cited in ibid.

403 Martha H. Verbrugge and Drew Yingling, "The Politics of Play," *Washington History,* 27 (Fall 2015): 57–58.

404 Young, "A Contradiction in Democratic Government," 665–67, as cited in Babin, *Links to the Past*, 120.

405 Verbrugge and Yingling, "The Politics of Play," 58.

406 Babin, *Links to the Past*, 121.

407 *Progress in the Movement to Guarantee Equal Rights for All Citizens in the National Capital*, p. 6, Box 3838, RG 48, National Archives, College Park, MD.

408 C. Marshall Finnan, Superintendent, Memorandum to the Director National Capital Parks, 14 November, 1933, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

409 Frank T. Gartside, Acting Superintendent to Mrs. G.N. Richardson, 2560 University Place, N.W., 30 August, 1939, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

frequenting the park. In a memorandum dated November 14, 1933, Superintendent Finnan specifically wrote:

> The attached correspondence relative to Meridian Hill Park has been noted and I concur fully with Messrs. Demaray, Tolson, and Bryant, that there is no legal way to prevent law abiding citizens from using the park, regardless of their race.
>
> It is thought that full time detail of a park policeman at the upper and lower terrace of Meridian Hill Park during the hours which this park is most intensely used would be helpful in preventing acts of rowdyism or vandalism, but it is doubted that this would have the effect of making the park less popular to any particular class of citizen.[410]



Figure 27: Photograph of several African Americans enjoying a park bench facing W Street (National Park Service)

Much to the annoyance of some white park users, Superintendent Finnan was correct in his assertions. In a letter dated August 22nd, 1939, one white park user requested "that there should be something done about the colored people" who "usurp the Roque Courts" and "occupy the best benches." The author went on to express that "It is just too bad that such a nice park should go to ruin! The sunken garden for instance on Sunday's, there is scarcely six persons to the number of negroes."[411] Another white park user, a captain in the U.S. Army

[410] C. Marshall Finnan, Superintendent, Memorandum to the Director National Capital Parks, 14 November, 1933, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[411] G.N. Richardson to Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes, 22 August, 1939, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

and a resident at the nearby Roosevelt Hotel, requested that the "Park Police clean out the colored roustabouts and hoodlums who assemble in Meriden Park" (original spelling of letter author).[412] According to this individual, "white people do not feel safe therein" because the park is "poorly lighted" and "negroes sleep in the Park night and day in warm weather."[413] Similarly, R. U. Bashor, Director of the Media Research Bureau, wrote to Superintendent Finnan, stating that "it has become unsafe for white women to venture alone into the park, as shown in a recent line-up."[414]

Bashor also expressed that African American park use placed a "restriction on the white population of this area" and as a result "Meridian Hill Park has declined in value to those who contribute most to its support and protection."[415] Mrs. Irene Elliot of 2407 15th Street, N.W., Apt. 110 expressed a similar sentiment, writing:

> There is a situation which may not be under your control, but surely someone has authority to rectify it. The residents near this park and other white people who desire to receive the benefits that such a park would give in health and comfort, are prohibited from using it, more especially on hot days and nights when most needed, by the colored people who overrun the park and take every available and desirable space. There is no place for white children to play or older people to walk or sit. It would seem only fair and equitable that the people who help to pay for the park, should have some of its advantages and at least a small park to use in comfort and peace. The parks are all the poor people have to use in the summer. I am appealing to you to change this very bad situation, if possible.[416]

In addition to African Americans "monopolizing" the park at night, white park users were also "disgusted" and fearful of the behavior of black children frequenting the park. Mr. & Mrs. J. J. Wainwright and friends wrote in June 1940 to the chief of police that "there was 6 or 10 negroes from 6 to 14 years of age . . . bathing and romping in the fountain" at Meridian Hill Park with no clothes on. These children "were beating two little white girls with their fists."[417] Mrs. D. A. Sills of 2307 15th St. N.W. wrote to the park police that same year that

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[412] Chas. C. Quigley, Captain, U.S. Army, Hotel Roosevelt to Superintendent, U.S. Park Police, 25 May, 1934, Folder "Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[413] Ibid.

[414] R.U. Bashor, Director, Media Research Bureau to C. Marshall Finnan, Superintendent, 20 April, 1938, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC. The article "Nudist in Park Discards Pants; Forgets His $5," *Washington Evening Star*, June 6, 1938, p. B1 may be associated with the referenced line-up.

[415] R.U. Bashor, Director, Media Research Bureau to C. Marshall Finnan, Superintendent, 20 April, 1938, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Nov. 1920-Aug.1939," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[416] Mrs. Irene Elliot, 2407 15th Street, N.W., Apt 110 to F.F. Gillen, Acting Superintendent, National Capital Parks, Date Unknown, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[417] Mr. & Mrs. J.H. Wainright and Friends to Major Earnest Brown, Chief of Police, 26 June 1940, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

parents in the neighborhood would not permit their children to play in the park because they "do not know what they might do."[418] The "they" in this quote is in reference "to the gang of colored boys, around the ages of 12-13, [that] gather on the wall among the trees and bushes, where no one can see them, and . . . use not only bad language to them, but also make suggestions that is most undesirable."[419] In addition, other letters recount "colored boys ganging up on white children sailing boats at the pool"[420] and African American youths "going behind the bushes . . . [that] are badly in need of some education on sex matters."[421]



Figure 28: Photograph of children playing by the reflecting pool (National Park Service)

U.S. Park Police Private Hobbs also wrote about the "worsening" conditions of Meridian Hill Park in a letter to Captain Henry Helms, U.S. Park Police. The letter reads:

> This general condition of noisy, insulting and disorderly conduct on the part of the youthful colored people of both sexes who frequent Meridian Hill Park has been the rule rather than exception since 1935...It has become the observation of the undersigned that has become increasingly worse each year, until at present

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[418] Mrs. D.A. Sills, 2307 15th Street, N.W. to U.S. Park Police, 28 June 1940, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[419] Ibid.

[420] Mrs. J.R. Reilly, 1462 Belmont Street, N.W. to National Park Service, 22 May 1941, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[421] Florence C. Bell to Major Ernest W. Brown, Superintendent, Metropolitan Police, 14 August 1940, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

> respectable white people are not safe from molestation in any part of the park, if they stroll out of sight of the officer on duty.
>
> The worst element of the colored population in the city congregated here in large numbers. The park is so cut up with shrubbery nooks and winding, concealed paths and hideaways, that almost any kind of crime can safely be attempted, providing a sharp outlook is kept for the officer.[422]

There was also some controversy between the U.S. Park Police and the African Americans frequenting the park. On June 23, 1941, the park police reportedly mistreated an eight-year-old African American child named Winifred Robinson. According to the NAACP, the park police had punished Winifred for going into the fountain at Meridian Hill Park (which was against park policy) by taking " her clothes and compel[ing] her to become improperly dressed."[423] Winifred's father, Lee Robinson of 1421 U Street, was then told that the Park Police would release her clothes if he gave his daughter a beating with the policeman's belt. Robinson refused and was cursed by the officer.[424] Private Robert Mansell, the policeman referred to in the NAACP's letter, responded in another letter that the girl was never mistreated. Rather, he stated that he had picked up the clothes of the children who had fled upon his approach. This was done "as much to insure the safety of the property as to establish the identity of the children."[425] Senior Assistant Superintendent F. F. Gillen further investigated the report and spoke with the parents "who both agreed that the complaint was brought about by misunderstanding."[426] Once the matter was dropped, Gillen requested the aid of the NAACP, writing:

> It would be greatly appreciated if the [NAACP] would exert its influence in obtaining cooperation from the parents and children residing in the vicinity of Meridian Hill Park in obtaining compliance with the park regulations. This beautiful park has been constructed at a considerable expenditure of public funds, and the constantly recurring misdemeanours by Negro children and adolescents and the revolting acts of adult degenerates are destroying its value as a pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. I am certain that this

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[422] Private Jack B. Hobbs, U.S. Park Police to Captain Henry Helms, U.S. Park Police, 28 May 1941, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[423] John Lovell, Jr. Secretary, D.C. Branch, NAACP to Newton Drury, Director, National Park Service, 26 June 1941, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[424] Ibid.

[425] Private Robert J. Marshall, U.S. Park Police to Captain Henry Helms, U.S. Park Police, 3 July 1941, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[426] F.F. Gillen, Senior Assistant Superintendent, National Capital Parks to John Lovell, Jr. Secretary, D.C. Branch, NAACP, 11 July 1941, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

> condition is equally as distasteful to the Negro residents of the National Capital as it is to the officials of this office…[427]

Similar to the above section on African American park use under the Office of PB&G/ PB&PPNC, none of the archives or newspapers referenced include the perspective of African Americans during the early years of NPS management.

A Non-Discriminatory Park

In the District, recreational facilities, including those under the jurisdiction of the federal government, were managed by a myriad of agencies. As early as 1939 the Community Center and Playgrounds Department "oversaw schoolyards and neighborhood playgrounds, supervised and issued permits for some facilities maintained by the federal National Capital Parks, and ran programs on land purchased by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission."[428] Consequently, it is possible that although not segregated by administrative design, permits for Meridian Hill Park were issued on a discriminatory basis.

In 1942 Congress passed Public Law 534 (*H.R. 5075*) because the district's growing wartime population needed more leisure-time activities. This law replaced the Community Center and Playgrounds Department with the Recreation Department and established the Recreation Board of the District of Columbia. The seven-member board, which consisted of "a delegate from the District Commissioners, a Board of Education Representative, the head of National Capital Parks, and four community representatives selected by the District Commissioners," was authorized to "determine all questions of general policy" and to appoint a superintendent to the city's Recreation Department.[429] Together, the Board and superintendent were to design a "'comprehensive program of public recreation' and work out agreements with the federal government and the Board of Education for using facilities under their jurisdiction."[430] As documented in *The Washington Post* article "City's Recreation Centers Plan Full Summer Schedule," (1941) Meridian Hill Park was included on the Recreation Department's original list of recreation areas.[431]

The following year, the National Park Service transferred the duty of issuing permits for various federal recreational facilities to the Recreation Department.[432] However, in June 1945, the National Park Service threatened to revoke this duty when the Recreation Board

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[427] Ibid.

[428] Verbrugge and Yingling, "The Politics of Play," 58 (italics added). See also Babin, *Links to the Past*, 21.

[429] Verbrugge and Yingling, "The Politics of Play," 58.

[430] Ibid.

[431] Alan David, "City's Recreation Centers Plan Full Summer Schedule," *Washington Post*, May 31, 1941, p. B5.

[432] "Interior May Revoke Playground Permits in Segregation Row," *Washington Evening Star*, June 13, 1945, p. A13; Cora L. Thorpe, "Picnic Space Here for Enthusiasts: Rock Creek Park Area Is Largest Play Spot in City," *Washington Post*, p. B3. The article mentioned that the Recreation Department issued permits for two playgrounds, Rock Creek Park areas, and the Ellipse.

reaffirmed the National Capital Park and Planning Commission's segregationist policies in its by-laws. These by-laws were amended by the Recreation Board to read: "Recreation programs for white residents shall be conducted in regions A–F and in designated city-wide centers. Recreation programs for Negro residents shall be conducted in regions G–K and in designated city-wide centers."[433] The Recreation Board sought to enforce its segregationist policies at all recreational facilities under the control of the board, including federal sites. In a letter dated July 10, 1945, the Acting Secretary of the Interior reaffirmed the non-discriminatory policy of the Department and stated that this policy "must prevail in all areas under the control of the Department even if administered by the Recreation Board."[434] The Recreation Board did not relent and in 1949, the Secretary of the Interior ordered the Recreation Board to cease discrimination in the granting of permits at the city's eighteen tennis courts, which were on federal land. Secretary of the Interior J.A. Krug specifically "requested that the issuance of permits for any activity on all unassigned Federal park areas be administered on a 'first come, first served' basis, without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin."[435]

The Department of the Interior and the office of National Capital Parks continued to fight the discriminatory policies of the Recreation Board. In August 1949, an agreement was reached after months of negotiation. The board was permitted to manage about 20 federal areas (e.g. Fort Dupont, Rock Creek Park, and West Potomac Park) and "determine all questions of general policy" if they conformed to federal regulations that all sites are "open to use by all people irrespective of their race, creed, color, or national origin."[436] With this agreement in place, the Recreation Board slowly desegregated public recreational facilities in the district between 1949 and 1953. Following the ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Bolling v. Sharpe* in 1954, the board finally voted to operate all city facilities in the District on a non-discriminatory basis.[437]

It is unclear if the discriminatory policy of the Recreation Board applied to Meridian Hill Park. The majority of the permits on file at the Washington National Records Center were issued by the National Park Service, even after the duty of issuing permits was transferred to the Recreation Department in 1943. The first document mentioning the Recreation Board was dated 1951, which was after the 1949 agreement that federal recreation facilities would be open to all, regardless of race. In this document, Associate Superintendent Harry T. Thompson asked the Recreation Department permit clerk to "mail the necessary permit to [Mr. H.B. George, 1368 Euclid Street, N.W.] authorizing the use of these grounds [Meridian

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433 Babin, *Links to the Past*, 139.

434 *Progress in the Movement to Guarantee Equal Rights for All Citizens in the National Capital*, rg 48, National Archives, College Park, MD.

435 Elsie Carper, "Interior Department Acts: Segregation Ordered Lifted on 18 District Tennis Courts," *Washington Post*, Feb. 24, 1949, p. 1.

436 Verbrugge and Yingling, "The Politics of Play," 64.

437 Ibid., 67.

Hill Park]...to play roque on the north lawn area of Meridian Hill from 1:00 p.m. to dark on Saturdays and Sundays during the period April 15-September 30."[438] The second document was a D.C. Recreation Department "Application for Community Use of School and Public Grounds," dated April 1953. In this application, the National Baptist Memorial Church sought permission for the Vacation Church School to use the grounds for groups of small children to play directed games Monday from June 22 to 26 and June 29 to July 3, 1953.[439]

Although the available records are unclear, there is a strong argument for a non-discriminatory permit policy at Meridian Hill Park. The Starlight Concert Series (1941–1945) and the Washington Theater Festival (1949) at Meridian Hill Park were not segregated and there were no instances of "racial trouble," documents the National Park Service in "Progress in the Movement to Guarantee Equal Rights for All Citizens in the National Capital."[440] These events perhaps demonstrated the practicability of desegregation and may have encouraged the enforcement of a non-discriminatory permit policy at Meridian Hill Park. Or, the policy in effect at Rock Creek Park could have influenced Meridian Hill Park's permit policy. Since 1939, the permits for the Rock Creek Park picnic tables had been issued without regard to race, even under the department of recreation.[441]

Integrated Park Events

Summertime concerts and theatre events have long been held at Meridian Hill Park. The U.S. Marine Band began performing at the park in the summer of 1922.[442] This concert laid the foundation for future open-air performances. In 1924, documents *The Washington Post*, a Boy Scout band from Huntington, West Virginia, substituted "by special arrangement for the Marine band."[443] That same summer, the *Washington Evening Star* reports, Lieutenant Colonel Sherrill also secured the U.S. Navy Band, the U.S. Army Band, and a band "composed

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438 Harry T. Thompson, Associate Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Miss Dorothy Mayfield, Permit Clerk, D.C. Recreation Department, 13 April 1951, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

439 National Baptist Memorial Church, D.C. Recreation Department Application For Community Use Of School Building And Grounds, 29 April 1953, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

440 *Progress in the Movement to Guarantee Equal Rights for All Citizens in the National Capital*, p. 6, Box 3838, rg 48, National Archives, College Park, MD.

441 Babin, *Links to the Past*, 121.

442 "BAND CONCERTS," *Washington Post*, Aug. 8, 1922, p. 7. This first performance was originally scheduled to take place at a small reservation at Columbia Road, Sixteenth, and Mount Pleasant Streets; however, the performance was moved to Meridian Hill Park because "the Mount Pleasant street car line [ran] directly on the west side of the reservation . . . the noise from which [would interfere] with the full enjoyment of the music."

443 "BOY SCOUT NOTES," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1924, p. ES18.

entirely of natives from the Virgin Islands who have been regularly enlisted in the navy."[444] The Office of the PB&G/PB&PPNC continued to announce Navy, Army, and Marine band performances during the summer months until the management of Meridian Hill Park was transferred over to the National Park Service.[445] Additional performances included the Community Civic Band in July 1925.[446]

When the responsibilities of the Office of PB&PPNC were transferred to the National Park Service in 1933, performances continued to be announced. The Washington Gas Light Co. Employees Band, the Metropolitan Police Band, and the V.F.W. Overseas Military Band were invited to perform in the park.[447] The Army, Navy, and Marine bands also continued to perform at Meridian Hill Park; however, by the 1950s, service band concerts were rare. The National Park Service explained to landscape architect Horace Peaslee that this was "because of the very limited and inattentive audiences that attend."[448]

In addition to open-air concerts, theater shows were also held in Meridian Hill Park. In 1935, the Community Center Department and the office of the National Capital Parks started a project called the Rambling Theater.[449] Three times a week, *The Washington Post* documents, the theater "rambled" from park to park from noon until 5 p.m. by means of a park office truck "with a local Gable and Garbo sitting thereon."[450] The Rambling Theatre performed plays such as "Creatures of Impulse," "Robin Hood," and "The Taming of the

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444 "BAND CONCERTS," *Washington Evening Star*, July 7, 1927, p. 17; "BAND CONCERTS," *Washington Post*, July 31, 1924, p. 9; "Concerts Announced in Parks This Week," ibid., July 27, 1924, p. 19; "VIRGIN ISLANDS BAND TO BE HEARD TONIGHT: 70 Pieces to Give Concert at 7:30 in Meridian Hill Park," ibid., July 18, 1924, p. 11.

445 "Week's Concerts Begin Tomorrow with Two Recitals," *Washington Evening Star*, June 21, 1935, p. 15; Elizabeth Poe, "Music," *Washington Post*, June 21, 1925, p. S10; "Week's Band Concerts: Six Will Be Given in City during Next Five Days," *Sunday Star*, Aug.15, 1926, p. 21; "BAND CONCERTS NEXT WEEK: Marine, Navy and Army Organizations on List," *Washington Post*, July 3, 1926, p. 24; "BAND CONCERTS TODAY," ibid., Aug. 15, 1927, p. 14; "This Week's Band Concerts Announced," ibid., Aug. 14, 1927, p. 5; "BAND CONCERT," *Washington Evening Star*, July 8, 1931, p. A-2; "Branson to Conduct 7 Marine Concerts," *Washington Post,* Aug. 6, 1933, p. S10; "CONCERT SCHEDULE," *Sunday Star*, May 23, 1926, p. 25; "Today's Happenings," *Washington Post*, May 16, 1929, p. 21; Elizabeth Poe, "HAPPENINGS IN THE REALM OF MUSIC," ibid., May 18, 1930, p. A3.

446 "BAND CONCERT SCHEDULE: Seven Will Be Given in City Parks the Coming Week," *Washington Post*, July 11, 1925, p. 5.

447 "Three Park Concerts Schedule Next Week," ibid., July 13, 1935, p. 14; "No Previous Training Now Required for Marine Reserve: No 'Camp Butterflies' Wanted, Battalion Officers Rule," *Sunday Star*, June 4, 1939, p. C9; "Outdoor Band Concerts," ibid., Aug. 22, 1937, p. B1; "Police Band To Give Meridian Hill Concert," *Washington Evening Star*, Aug. 29, 1946, p. B8; "News of Veterans and Fraternal Orders," *The Washington Post*, June 11, 1939, L6.

448 National Park Service to Horace Peaslee, 26 April 1952, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

449 "Schedule of Plays: Rambling Theater to Appear at Parks in the City," *Washington Evening Star,* Aug. 9, 1935, p. B3; "New Rambling Theater and Other Local Items: Community Center Department Starts New Project- Tom Moore's Rialto Causes Comment- 'Tribly' Opens," ibid., July 29, 1935, p. B14.

450 "New Rambling Theater," B14.

Shrew."[451] In 1937, Community Center Department sponsored the Park View Playground's performance of "When George Washington Was a Little Boy" at Meridian Hill Park.[452] The following year, "Variety Hour" was performed at the park.[453]



Figure 29: The cost of general seating for the Starlight Chamber Music series was 25 cents, and reserved seats cost 50 cents. The seats, arranged around the reflecting pool, accommodated 2,000 people (National Park Service)

At the onset of World War II, the demographics of the neighborhood around Meridian Hill Park began to shift as new government employees arrived in the District. This change in demographics resulted in the development of new programming events at Meridian Hill Park including the "Starlight Chamber Music Concerts." These open-air concerts, organized by C. C. Cappel of the Cappel Concert Bureau, were held in the lower park by the reflecting pool.[454] The concerts accommodated an audience of 2,000 persons and there were "500 reserved seats at 50 cents each and 1,500 unreserved chairs available at 25 cents," documents the *Sunday Star* article "Starlight Concert Ticket Sale Starts Tomorrow" (1941).[455] The *Sunday Star* article continued, reporting that "ample free standing room" was also available.[456]

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[451] Ibid.; "Schedule of Plays," B3.

[452] "Rambling Theater Entertains Washington Youngsters," *Washington Evening Star*, July 15, 1937, p. B1.

[453] "Local Drama Groups: 'Petticoat Fever' Is Revived. 'Moonshine' Gets an Airing," ibid., July 4, 1938, p. B14.

[454] Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 46; "Starlight Concert Ticket Sale Starts Tomorrow," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1941, p. 27.

[455] "Starlight Concerts of Chamber Music Planned in Park: Well-Known Musicians to Play Out of Doors in Six-Week Series," *Sunday Star*, June 8, 1941, p. A-6.

[456] Ibid.



Figure 30: The Starlight Chamber Music series ran for four summers from 1941 to 1944. Those who did not purchase general or reserved seating sat along the walls of the cascades or wherever else they could find seating. African Americans were not segregated from white concertgoers (National Park Service)

On July 8, 1941, the Primrose Quartet was featured in one of the first open-air concerts at Meridian Hill Park. The concerts continued each Tuesday and Friday night for six weeks and included other acts such as the Salzedo Concert Ensemble, the Gordon Quartet, the Perole Quartet, and the Kolisch Quartet.[457] A *Washington Evening Star* article in 1941 mentioned a concert by the Trapp Family Singers was reportedly so popular that the "audience overflowed the seating space of the park, with several hundred turned away."[458] The Starlight Chamber Music Concerts, sponsored by the Starlight Chamber Music Committee, were a success and ran for three additional summers.[459] Although the concert series primarily featured chamber music, modern dancer Martha Graham performed with her dance troupe on July 21 and 23, 1942.[460]

In 1943, *The Washington Post* sponsored a separate concert series at Meridian Hill Park to provide federal government employees with a retreat "away from the heat and noise

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[457] Ibid.; "Trapps Bring Artistry to Music Series: Chamber Music to Be Given Locally at Meridian Hill," *Sunday Star*, June 29, 1941, p. F-6; The Starlight Chamber Music Concerts Pamphlet, Parks, Meridian Hill (1800–1971), Washingtonia Vertical File Collection, Washington, D.C.

[458] Alice Eversman, "Trapps Charm Audience With Simple, Sweet Songs: Hundreds Turned Away as Lovers of Unspectacular Melody Flock to Meridian Hill Park Concert," *The Washington Evening Star*, August 9, 1941, A-7.

[459] Clem, *Images of America,* 107.

[460] Ibid.; "Graham Dancers Appear Tonight at Meridian Hill," *The Washington Post*, July 20, 1941, 22.

of [the] war-geared Capital."[461] The concert series, called the *Post* Starlight Concerts, reserved two hundred seats at each of its sixteen concerts for employees of various federal government agencies. Tickets were also made available to "the general public at popular prices."[462] At both the *Post* Starlight Concerts and the Starlight Chamber Music Concerts series the "general public" included African Americans. African American concertgoers were not segregated from white Washingtonians, as evidenced in historic photographs on file with the National Park Service. In one photograph, African American and white concertgoers were shown sharing the overflow space along the walls. However, as evidenced in another photograph, whites dominated the seating on either side of the reflecting pool at the base of the cascades.[463]



Figure 31: In June 1949, the Washington Theatre Festival opened at Meridian Hill Park as a direct result of the National Theatre's refusal to integrate its audience. The summer production drew a crowd that was 10 and 15 percent African American (National Park Service)

These concert series proved that non-discriminatory events were possible in the District. Thus, after the National Theatre chose to close its doors rather than integrate, the non-segregated Washington Theater Festival was held at Meridian Hill Park in 1949. The Washington Theater Festival, organized and managed by Productions Inc., was funded by "more than 60 people from all walks of life," documents the *Baltimore Afro-American*.[464]

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461 "200 to Be Presented At Each Performance In Meridian Hill Park," *The Washington Post*, June 4, 1943, B1.

462 Ibid.

463 "Photo Gallery: Historic Photographs," *National Park Service*, accessed 2018, https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery.htm?id=29CE775E-1DD8-B71C-07054614AA09E776.

464 "No Jim Crow under the Stars in New D.C. Legit," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 25, 1949, p. 8.

Fifty-five percent of the investors were white and the remaining 45 percent were African American.[465] The investors together raised $18,000 for the construction of the stage and initial expenses. All remaining profits at the end of the eight-week season were to go to the construction of an indoor, non-segregated theater.[466]



Figure 32: Photographs showing mixed-race audience for the Washington Theatre Festival in 1949. The audience was 10 to 15 percent African American throughout the season (National Park Service)

On June 26, 1949, the non-segregated Washington Theater Festival opened at Meridian Hill Park with Jean Giraudoux's play "Amphitryon 38," starring Elizabeth Bernger.[467] Mary McLeod Bethune wrote about the opening in the *Chicago Defender*, stating:

> What interested me, intensely was the manner in which this non-segregated theatre was received by the public- a public deprived of the legitimate theatre in the National Capital, because of the refusal of theater operators to admit Negro patrons to performances, along with other citizens. Yet, here before me were hundreds of people, coming and going with ease, intent only on seeing a fine theater production; consciously or subconsciously understanding that those around them were there in that beautiful, sylvan theater for the same reason.[468]

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[465] Ibid.; Richard L. Coe, "One on the Aisle: Bergner to Open Outdoor Theater," *Washington Post,* June 8, 1949, p. 14.

[466] Ibid.

[467] "Meridian Hill Park Theater Opens Tonight," *Washington Post*, June 26, 1949, p. M16.

[468] Mary McLeod Bethune, "Meridian Hill Park Is Move toward Democracy in Capital," *Chicago Defender*, July 9, 1949, p. 6.

Bethune went on to write that the Washington Theater Festival was a successful step in the capital's "move toward democracy" as it was a "pleasant gathering held without fanfare."[469] However, she emphasized that "the opening of this beautiful theater, with all that it implies, does not mean that the walls of Jericho have fallen. . . . But all these strivings toward democracy go to prove that it can work, if given a chance."[470] The National Park Service also commented on the success of the event, noting that pessimists of non-discriminatory practices had been proved wrong.[471] In fact, this non-discriminatory theater was such a success that the eight-week summer theater season was extended to eleven weeks.[472]



Figure 33: Photograph showing mixed-race audience for the Washington Theatre Festival in 1949 (National Park Service)

Years later, on April 4, 1952, another important concert was held at Meridian Hill Park. On this day, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands presented a temporary 32-bell carillon to President Harry S. Truman at a ceremony in Meridian Hill Park.[473] This gift, a symbol of gratitude for aid given during and after World War II, was to remain in Meridian Hill Park until the permanent bells arrived from the Netherlands. Radio Station WWDC proposed a summer

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469 Ibid.

470 Bethune, "Meridian Hill Park Is Move toward Democracy in Capital," 6.

471 *Progress in the Movement to Guarantee Equal Rights for All Citizens in the National Capital*, p. 6, box 3838, rg 48, National Archives.

472 David Polland, Washington Theatre Festival to Ed Kelly, National Capital Parks, 14 September 1949, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

473 Jean Reiff, "8500 See Juliana Present Gift Carillon to President," *Washington Post*, April 5, 1952, p. 15; Clem, *Images of America,* 112; The carillon presented at Meridian Hill Park was a symbol of the permanent carillon being cast in Holland that eventually would be sent to the United States, see "Netherlands Bells Given to America: Juliana Presents Token Carillon to Truman Here," ibid., April 5, 1952, p. 1.

concert series performed by Art Brown, WWDC's radio personality and a former student of Anton Breese of Belgium, known to be the world's greatest Carolleneer.[474] The office of the National Capital Parks permitted the carillon concerts and on Memorial Day, May 30, 1952, Brown gave his first concert.[475] Throughout the rest of the summer, Brown gave weekly Sunday concerts.[476] These concerts were such a success that Supt. Edward J. Kelly wrote to Brown about continuing the carillon concert series the following summer.[477] For reasons unknown, there was no 1953 carillon concert series, and by 1954 the temporary bells had been removed from the park.[478]



Figure 34: Queen Juliana with a group of children at Meridian Hill Park. The children sang Dutch folk songs and serenaded the queen upon her arrival (Harry S. Truman Library & Museum)



Figure 35: Queen Juliana of the Netherlands presenting a gift of a carillon to President Harry S. Truman at Meridian Hill Park on April 4, 1952. About 8,500 attended the ceremony (Harry S. Truman Library & Museum)

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[474] Irv Lichenstein, Public Relations Director, Radio Station WWDC to Edward J. Kelly, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 12 March 1952, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[475] "Memorial Day Observances Honor America's War Dead," *Washington Post*, May 30, 1952, p. 7.

[476] "Carillon Concert Sunday At Meridian Hill Park," *Washington Evening Star*, June 6, 1952, p. B13; "Open-Air Concerts to Feature Week-End Activities in Park," *Washington Evening Star,* July 4, 1952, p. A12; "'Mystery Trip' Is Highlight of Park Program," *Washington Post*, Aug. 15, 1952, p. 21; "Caravan Trip to Highlight Parks' Week-End Activities," *Washington Evening Star*, Aug. 22, 1952, p. B7; Sonia Stein, "All-Night Music on Radio Starts April 13 on WTOP," *Washington Post*, March 31, 1952, p. 29.

[477] Edward J. Kelly, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Art Brown, Radio Station WWDC, 26 May 1953, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[478] "Gift Carillon to Be Put in West Potomac Park," *Washington Evening Star*, March 4, 1954, p. A23.

Additional Park Uses: Permits for Religious, Education, and Patriotic Events

Meridian Hill Park was used for a variety of other events and activities as it was the policy of the National Park Service office of National Capital Parks "to permit meetings of a patriotic, civic, educational, or religious nature at [the] various locations in the National Capital Parks System."[479] In regard to patriotic events, Supt. Irving C. Root granted the Columbia Heights Defense Area Air Raid Wardens' School permission to use the center of Meridian Hill Park for an incendiary bomb demonstration in February 1942.[480] The American Legion was also permitted to use the park for a variety of events including drilling practices (November 1942, April 1943, and July 1944), the dedication of the American Legion headquarters located across the street from the park at 2437 15th Street (June 1942), Flag Day Services, and rallies.[481] Permits for educational events included a Girl Scouts meeting (June 1945) and the H.D. Cooke School's annual May Day Program (May 1946).[482]

The majority of the permits issued for Meridian Hill Park were for religious events including, the National Baptist Memorial Church's "singspiration" (August 1945).[483] Other permit requests were received from the Shigo Society of Missionary Men (July 1947) and

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[479] Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Miss Iva Irene Swift, Apt 311, South Clifton Terrace, 6 August 1946, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[480] Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Mr. Hallett Hill, Deputy Warden, Columbia Heights Defense Area, 6 February 1942, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC. Mr Hallett Hill, Deputy Warden, Columbia Heights Defense Area to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 3 February 1942, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[481] Senior Assistant Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Capt. James C. Clarke, 5 November 1942, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC. Adjutant Elwood Schuler, American Legion to Frank T. Gartside, Assistant Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 1 July 1944, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC. Program Flag Day Services, The American Legion Home, 14 June 1942, Mrs. Sonia Hyman to Hon. Fred Seton, Secretary of Interior, 9 June 1958, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC. Charles K. Dunn, Department Commander, The American Legion to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 14 April 1950, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; "Meridian Hill Historic District," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,* Sec. 7, p. 11; "District American Legion Dedicates Home," *Washington Post*, June 15, 1942, p. 6; "Allies Join in Flag Day Rites in Pledging Defeat of Axis: Roosevelt Welcomes Mexico and Philippines to Nations Opposing Aggressors," *Washington Evening Star*, June 15, 1942, p. A8; "Legion, Elks Sponsor Rites For Flag Day," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1943, p. 10.

[482] Mrs. Mauricio Markmann, Ch. Public Relations, Girl Scout District II to Miss Mayfield, Department of Recreation, 1 June 1945, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, WNRC. Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Mr. George R. Hammond, Director, Safety and Education, D.C. Division, D.C. Motor Club, 13 May 1946, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[483] Private W.W. Lange, U.S, Park Police to Commanding Officer U.S. Park Police, 26 August 1945, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

the Pocket Testament Institute of Washington, Inc. (September 1947 and May 1948).[484] The Pocket Testament Institute specifically requested to use the park for "scripture visualization and gospel presentation." The Pastor's Study Club of John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church also sought permission to use the park for a festival (July 1948) and the North Unit Jehovah's Witnesses requested permission to host a series of religious services from September to October 1948.[485] These religious services, and the use of sound application systems during the services, disrupted neighborhood residents. As a result, the National Park Service "discontinued the issuance of permits [in September 1948] for meetings to be held in Meridian Hill Park, and for any other purposes than those for which the area primarily is devoted."[486] Superintendent Irving C. Root explained the reasoning of the National Park Service in a letter to the Christ's Ambassadors, Calvary Church. The letter reads:

> On Sunday, September 12, the United States Park Police received a report from the Metropolitan Police dispatcher that citizens had complained of the disturbance being created in Meridian Hill Park because of the volume of sound emanating from the public address system operated by your group [Christ's Ambassadors, Calvary Gospel Church (3213 Q St NW)] in connection with its meeting. Investigation by the Park Police revealed the complaints to be justified.
>
> Because of this situation and previous complaints which we have received from citizens resulting from meetings conducted by other organizations in Meridian Hill Park., it is apparent that the use for which Meridian Hill Park is primarily devoted makes its use for such meetings contrary to the comfort, convenience and interest of the general public. We are, therefore, discontinuing the issuance of permits for meetings by private groups in the park.

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[484] H.E. Battersby, Leader, The Shigo Society of Missionary Men to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 7 July 1947, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.; Dr. Walter A. Leas, President, The Pocket Institute, Inc. of Washington to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 15 September 1947, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; Dr. Walter A. Leas, President, The Pocket Institute, Inc. of Washington to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 15 April 1948, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; Dr. Walter A. Leas, President, the Pocket Institute, Inc. of Washington, to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, April 15, 1948, ibid.

[485] Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Miss Margaret Davis, President, Pastor's Study Club, John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church, 10 May 1948, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; Wayne M. Griggs, Unit Servant, North Unit Jehovah's Witnesses to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 22 August 1948, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[486] Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Wayne M. Griggs, Unit Servant, North Unit Jehovah's Witnesses, 25 August 1948, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Miss Josephine Fite, Christ's Ambassadors, Calvary Gospel Church, 14 September 1948, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

Accordingly, the permission granted you on March 22 to conduct religious meetings in Meridian Hill Park during the hours 4:00-5:00 p.m. on Sundays between April 4 and October 31, 1948, is hereby revoked.[487]



Figure 36: Croquet on the upper mall (National Park Service)

The National Park Service continued to issue permits for other park activities such as birthday parties, games of croquet on the northern lawn, and American Legion events.[488] Applications for repeated religious events, such as the request of the Washington Catholic Evidence Guild, were denied. However, in a letter to the Washington Catholic Evidence Guild, Superintendent Edward J. Kelly noted that this policy did not apply "on special religious holidays such as Good Friday or Easter Sunday."[489]

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[487] Ibid.

[488] Special Assistant to the Superintendent to U.S. Park Police, 20 April 1949, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; Special Assistant to the Superintendent to U.S. Park Police, 25 July 1949, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; Harry T. Thompson, Associate Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Miss Dorothy Mayfield, Permit Clerk, D.C. Recreation Department, 13 April 1951, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC; Charles K. Dunn, Department Commander, The American Legion to Irving C. Root, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 14 April 1950, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[489] Edward J. Kelly, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Mr. Ralph F. Turner, President, Washington Catholic Evidence Guild, 3 April 1951, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

Part III

Meridian Hill Park in the Civil Rights Era (1954–1968)

Chapter 7

A Brief Introduction to the Civil Rights Era in Washington, D.C.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that "separate but equal" educational facilities were "inherently unequal," thereby mandating the end of segregation in public schools. That same year, the District court ruled in the case of *Bolling v. Sharpe* that segregation in the District's public schools was unconstitutional.[490] Across the United States and in the District anti-integration demonstrations ensued. The all-white Federation of Citizens' Association even filed suit in the U.S. District Court to stop the integration of public schools in the national capital.[491] A year later, the U.S. Supreme Court responded by ordering that the integration of public schools proceed "with all deliberate speed." The court also remanded desegregation cases to the lower federal courts, which unintentionally allowed local politicians and judges to evade desegregation.

This resistance fueled the nascent civil rights movement. In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Her arrest for violating segregation laws sparked boycotts, sit-ins, and other demonstrations including, the Montgomery bus boycott led by Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference called the 381-day boycott a "signal to Black America to begin a new phase of the long struggle, a phase that came to be known as the modern civil rights movement."[492] As nonviolent demonstrations spread across the South, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and other protest groups met in 1957 to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).[493] The SCLC, in collaboration with the NAACP, organized the "Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom" that same year. Led by King and A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Negro American Labor Council, over 25,000 people gathered at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to support civil rights struggles.[494]

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490 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 241.

491 Ibid., 245.

492 "SCLC History," *Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, last modified 2014, http://nationalsclc.org/about-us/history/.

493 Ibid.

494 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 251; Linda and Charles George, *Civil Rights Marches (Cornerstones of Freedom)* (New York: Children's Press, 2000), 12.

After the "Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom," Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. emerged as a leader in the civil rights movement. President Dwight D. Eisenhower also signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957. This act, the first civil rights act passed since 1875, established a Presidential Commission on Civil Rights within the Justice Department.[495] The Commission was responsible for investigating, reporting on, and making recommendations to the president on civil rights issues.[496] These reports laid the foundation for future civil rights acts including the Civil Rights Act of 1960 which established penalties for voter obstruction.[497] However, as the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 allowed for only moderate gains, sit-ins, boycotts, and other protests continued to take place across the United States.[498]

In 1963, civil rights issues came to a head as the Birmingham Campaign, the murder of civil rights workers Medgar Evers and William L. Moore, and the bombing of Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church rocked the nation.[499] The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom was conceived by A. Philip Randolph in 1963 as a means to express the public's dissatisfaction with civil rights abuses and employment discrimination, as well as to show support for President John F. Kennedy's proposed Civil Rights Act of 1963. The March was a peaceful occasion with the event's sponsors (the NAACP, the National Urban League, the SCLC, the Congress on Racial Equality, and the SNCC) presenting their "Ten Demands" which included fair living wages, fair employment policies, and the desegregation of school districts. It was on this day that Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in front of an audience of 250,000 people (190,000 were African American and 60,000 white).[500]

After the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, African Americans continued to press for the passage of his proposed civil rights act. In a January 1964 newspaper column, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. declared that legislation "will feel the intense focus of Negro interest. . .. It became the order of the day at the great March on Washington last summer."[501] Thus, after much debate and a fifty-seven-day filibuster in the Senate, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 2, 1964.[502] This breakthrough act prohibited segregation in public spaces and forbade the federal government from working with

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[495] Ibid., 252.

[496] "Civil Rights Act of 1964," *National Park Service*, accessed 2018, https://www.nps.gov/articles/civil-rights-act.htm.

[497] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 262.

[498] "Civil Rights Act of 1964."

[499] Ibid.

[500] "The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," *National Park Service*, accessed 2018, https://www.nps.gov/articles/march-on-washington.htm.

[501] "Civil Rights Act of 1964."

[502] Ibid.

businesses practicing racial discrimination.[503] The Civil Rights Act of 1964 "prohibited tactics to limit voting; guaranteed racial and religious minorities equal access to public accommodations; outlawed job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; continued the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission."[504]

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, however, failed to fully address issues of voting discrimination. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. subsequently led marches in Selma, Alabama where violence was used to prevent African Americans from voting.[505] President Johnson responded to these nonviolent marches by signing the Voting Rights Act of 1966, which made discriminatory voting practices such as literacy tests and poll taxes illegal.[506] The following year, Edward William Brooke III became the first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate since 1881, Thurgood Marshall was appointed the first African American U.S. Supreme Court justice, and Walter E. Washington was appointed the District's first black mayor. Despite this progress, riots occurred in the District over police brutality, urban renewal, and discriminatory practices.[507] After the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968, tensions reached an all-time high and new riots broke out across the District.[508] By the end of this civil disturbance, twelve fatalities and over 7,500 arrests were recorded.[509] A total of 1,200 buildings were burned and property damage was estimated at $24.7 million.[510]

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503 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 273.

504 "The Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1964," *National Park Service*, accessed 2018, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/civilrights/modern-civil-rights-movement.htm.

505 "Voting Rights Act of 1965," *National Park Service*, accessed 2018, https://www.nps.gov/articles/votingrightsact.htm.

506 Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians, 275*.

507 Ibid., 278–81.

508 Ibid., 282–83.

509 Ibid.

510 Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 253.

Chapter 8

Neighborhood Developments in the District of Columbia

Urban Renewal

Despite the passage of various Civil Rights Acts, African Americans were still marginalized in the District. In particular, urban renewal schemes threatened various black communities in the city. Howard Gillette Jr. argues that as the United States entered into the Cold War, the District and the nation entered into a period of prosperity. Home buying and homebuilding was commonplace and, because of increases in federal employment, Gillette Jr. explains,

> Washington, was one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country. Yet as Washington residents joined the national suburban trend, government officials worried about the deterioration of inner-city areas, many of them close to concentrations of federal jobs. In the effort to revitalize the urban core, they seized on new tools for redevelopment and highway construction. While the impetus for such policy came from the federal government, which openly worried that urban slums would encourage communist subversion, it received a warm welcome in Washington press and from many builders and architects, and from civic groups. Left out of the partnership, however, was the city's growing black population. Ultimately what was intended to serve locally as both a solution to federal needs and a national model for urban revitalization proved instead to be inflammatory, as racially charged social conflict rose to new levels, ultimately contributing to the tragic civil disturbances of 1968.[511]

The federal government, leading the charge for redevelopment, passed the Redevelopment Act of 1945 to redevelop blighted areas in the District. This act also created the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA), which was "granted the power to further the redevelopment of blighted territory in the District of Columbia" and prevent, reduce, or eliminate "blighting factors or causes of blight" by assembling "real property by purchase, exchange gift, dedication, or eminent domain."[512] The passing of the Housing Act of 1949, and specifically

[511] Howard Gillette Jr, *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, DC* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 151–52.

[512] The District of Columbia Act of 1945, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/79th-congress/session-2/c79s2ch736.pdf.

Title I, further institutionalized the government's role in redevelopment. This act "prescribed a radical rehabilitation of American cities based on the concept of "district planning." Cities were granted the power of eminent domain over large sections of their downtowns to remove urban blight and replace it with comprehensively planned structures."[513]

In the initial planning process, policymakers debated two competing goals for the redevelopment of the District. Howard Gillette Jr. argues that these goals were (1) rehabilitating neighborhoods and improving "housing opportunities for existing low and moderate-income residents near potential places of work" and (2) total rebuilding "to attract a higher-income-level resident who would contribute to the local economy as a consumer and taxpayer."[514] Ultimately, planning officials adopted a total rebuilding approach for Southwest, D.C. Originally, the officials had planned for rehabilitation, but they switched their plans when the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency rejected the project, noting that it was insufficient for national funding.[515]

The Washington Board of Trade, the Committee of 100, and the all-white Southwest Citizens' Association supported this switch in project goals.[516] The all-black Southwest Civic Association, however, "decried the lack of plans for low-income housing and described redevelopment 'as a shameful un-American displacement program.'"[517] Despite the concerns of the African American community, the District proceeded with their plans for total renewal. The project leveled 99 percent of buildings in the Southwest. Gillette Jr. further explains:

> Of the 5,900 new units constructed, only 310 could be classified as moderate-income. Except for the Kober-Sternberg apartment complex . . . no homes existed in the new Southwest for low-income families. More than a third of the population displaced found alternative homes in public housing, much of it just outside the redevelopment area. Another 2,000 families moved into private rental units, and only 391 purchased private homes, all in other parts of the city.[518]

Those displaced "began to flood into other black areas, ultimately spilling over into predominantly white neighborhoods, such as Anacostia, just across the river from the Southwest."[519] In an independent study entitled *Where Are They Now,* about 500 of those displaced were asked about the urban renewal program and whether they perceived it to be a success. The study found the program to be a success in terms of physical rehabilitation, but

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[513] Robert E. Lang and Rebecca R. Sohmer, "Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949: The Past, Present and Future of Federal Housing and Urban Policy," *Journal of Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (March 2010): 294-95.

[514] Gillette Jr, *Between Justice and Beauty,* 161.

[515] Ibid., 162.

[516] Ibid.

[517] Ibid., 163.

[518] Ibid., 164.

[519] Ibid., 165.

it also found that those displaced felt a high level of alienation and loss off community. The report ended with the statement that the "New Southwest may yet develop into the 'Good City, but its birth has been at a cost. . .. It has risen over the ashes of what was a community of well-established, though poor, inhabitants."[520]

Urban renewal, and more specifically highway development, continued to threaten African American neighborhoods. City officials planned to create an Inner Loop Expressway composed of three beltways: the Inner Loop (composed of various segments including the Southwest Freeway, Southeast Freeway, South Leg, West Leg, East Leg, and Center Leg), the Middle Loop, and the Outer Loop, or the Capital Beltway. This highway system "would both define the area and direct through traffic from the suburbs away from the most congregated part of the city."[521] The Inner Loop, which was more a double loop, or oval with a central leg, would have required the demolition of 65,000 building units, one-fourth of the city's total, if fully completed. As documented in the 1959 RHA annual report, "Fortunately the essential segment of the inner loop could be placed and integrated with [the Southwest Freeway] rather than passing through the area as an unrelated and uncongenial element."[522]

The Northwest Freeway, also referred to as I-70S or US-240, was another highway that was never completed in the district. This freeway, which would have entered the District through Friendship Heights and run along Wisconsin Avenue, across Rock Creek Park and down 14th Street to intersect the Inner Loop, received much opposition from members of Congress, many of whom lived in the affluent Northwest, D.C. neighborhood. The predominantly black neighborhoods to the east of Rock Creek Park, however, remained threatened by what Gillette describes as "two interstate connector routes, the North Central and the East Leg of the Inner Loop, which according to the Mass Transportation Survey would have displaced thirty-three thousand residents."[523] These connector routes, as well as various urban renewal schemes, were never completed. In the following sections on Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan, these schemes will be discussed further. Neighborhood context, including population statistics, will also be presented.

Columbia Heights: Increased Crime and Urban Renewal Schemes

The population of Columbia Heights became solidly African American as racial tensions rose in the district (see Appendix B. 4, Appendix B. 5, and Appendix B. 8).[524] In *Long Distance Life*, a historical fiction novel by Marita Golden, the neighborhood was described through the eyes of character Logan Spenser. Spenser, reflecting on his childhood neighborhood in the 1940s/1950s, described Columbia Heights as follows:

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[520] Ibid.

[521] Ibid., 157.

[522] Ibid., 165.

[523] Ibid.

[524] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 251.

> Fourteenth and Park Road was not far from what had once been the heartbeat of Black Washington. As a child, there were Sunday afternoon features at the Savoy Theater, games of tag in stately Meridian Hill Park. It was a Black world in which a wonderful democracy of conditions prevailed—waitresses, doctors, preachers, winos, teachers, number runners and funeral directors, prostitutes and housewives, cabdrivers and laborers all lived as neighbors. The white world sat despised, irrelevant beyond the boundaries imposed by this community of grace.[525]

This account, which suggests that African Americans coalesced in Columbia Heights due to racial tensions, was informed by primary research and interviews with long-term African American neighborhood residents.[526]

However, Golden's harmonious portrayal of the African American community in Columbia Heights was slightly inaccurate. Brian Kraft in "Columbia Heights: Passageway for Urban Change" writes that "the residential area was increasingly suffering the social challenges [such as crime and poverty] common to densely populated inner cities at the time."[527] By the mid-1960s, University Place, located one block to the east of Meridian Hill Park, led the city in crime.[528] The All Souls Church, a Unitarian congregation at 16th and Harvard Streets, NW responded to these worsening social conditions by launching the Girard Street Playground Project. Dr. Duncan Howlett, "one of the five most trusted white men" in the district according to the *Baltimore Afro-American,* led the project and established a credit union and tutoring program for children, and set up a playground and neighborhood block party.[529] The new Office of Economic Opportunity addressed issues of poverty, launching an experimental program at Cardozo High School in 1964. The goal of this program, writes

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[525] Marita Golden, *Long Distance Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 13–14, as cited in Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 52–53.

[526] Ibid., 53.

[527] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 251.

[528] Ibid.

[529] Ibid., 252–53. In the 1960s, 90 percent of the residents of the 1400 block of Girard Street in Columbia Heights were African American. Many of the residents on the 1400 block were also welfare recipients, as 25 percent of the welfare recipients in the District lived within the boundaries of the Cardozo school district. Those living on the 1400 block of Girard Street faced poor housing conditions and a need for social services. The All Souls Unitarian Church (14th and Harvard Streets) created a social welfare committee to address residents' housing needs. However, the first goal of Anita Bellamy, a social worker chosen by the church's Social Welfare Committee, was to create social ties in the neighborhood and build a sense of place and community. Bellamy supplied information about social services and helped form the Girard Street Association, a community group that banded together to organize a club for local girls, a block party, etc. The church, therefore, "played an important role in galvanizing neighbor's involvement in their immediate neighborhood to improve both social conditions and the physical environment." The creation of the Girard Street Playground, which exists today, was one project successfully completed by the association. See Kara A. Hadge, "Networked Neighborhood: Hyperlocal Media and Community Engagement in Columbia Heights, Washington, D.C." (M.A. thesis., Georgetown University, 2011), 21.

Kraft, was to "alleviate poverty through innovative approaches to education."[530] Through this program, Cardozo High School became a focal point in the community, and neighborhood residents soon began to refer to the Columbia Heights neighborhood as Cardozo.[531]

During the 1960s, urban renewal schemes also targeted working-class African American neighborhoods such as Columbia Heights. These schemes were given the nickname "Negro removal"[532] because entire neighborhoods were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of African American families were uprooted. The urban renewal plans for Columbia Heights and other northwest Washington, D.C. neighborhoods were outlined in a 1965 article entitled "20-Year War on Blight Here Is Blueprinted." These plans, drawn up by a private consulting firm, presented a "20-year redevelopment program aimed at knocking out existing or potential blight in 20 sections"[533] of the district. The area of Columbia Heights east and west of Fourteenth Street from Florida Avenue to Columbia Road was foreseen as a possible clearance project after 1975.[534]

Before any urban renewal plans could be initiated, the neighborhood was rocked by the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968. Civil disturbances erupted across the District, and in Columbia Heights white-owned businesses along 14th Street north of U Street were looted and destroyed.[535] At the end of the unrest, many businesses were unsalvageable and a total of $6.6 million dollars in structural damages was recorded (Figures 37-39).[536] Church leaders, neighborhood associations, and the federal government worked to rebuild the community. The Cardozo Heights Association for Neighborhood Growth and Enrichment (CHANGE), a citizens association, established housing programs, a health clinic, and "street academy."[537] Meanwhile, documents Kraft et al. in "Cultural Convergence: Columbia Heights Heritage Trail," the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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[530] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 251–52.

[531] Ibid., 252.

[532] Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 53.

[533] "20-Year War on Blight Here Is Blueprinted," *Washington Post*, Sept. 29, 1965, p. B1.

[534] Ibid.

[535] "1968 Riots: Four Days that Reshaped D.C.," *Washington Post*, March 27, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/dc-riots-1968/.

[536] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 253.

[537] The Columbia Heights Street Academy was developed after the 1968 riots and the completion of a study showing that youths in the district were increasingly committing crimes. The Street Academy was thus a preventative education community program with the purpose of taking "youngsters off the streets" and channeling "their energies into projects that would help make them productive young citizens." The academy was therefore "an educational and recreational outlet for youth in the area," offering education (GED classes and tutoring services), on-the-job training, counseling, recreation, narcotics symposiums with ex-addicts, referrals (for young people with drug addiction problems), and follow-ups (for drug addicts and children replaced in school systems), see "Hearings before the Subcommittee on Public Health, Education, Welfare, and Safety of the Committee on the District of Columbia. United States Senate, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session on S. 2693" (Washington, D.C.: Congress of the U.S. Senate, 1972), 290.

"bought, or took by eminent domain, hundreds of properties, giving some to the city for public housing."[538] Buildings damaged in the riots and old row houses were also razed, leaving behind "an urban desert of vacant lots."[539] In the years following, additional community-based arts, social services, and political organizations were developed with the goal of reviving the neighborhood.[540]



Figure 37 14th Street and Columbia Road after the April 1968 riots (Ghosts of DC)



Figure 38: Photograph of 14th Street and Columbia Road after the April 1968 riots (Ghosts of DC)

[538] Kraft et al., *Columbia Heights Heritage Trail*.

[539] Ibid.

[540] Ibid.



Figure 39: Photograph of 14th Street in Columbia Heights after the April 1968 riots (Ghosts of DC)



Figure 40: 14th and Kenyon Streets in Columbia Heights after the April 1968 riots (Ghosts of DC)

Adams Morgan: Urban Renewal Schemes and a Growing Latino Population

Similar to Columbia Heights, the future neighborhood of Adams Morgan began to evidence a decline. This decline, as well as the integration of public schools, fueled urban planners and liberal activists to come together to promote a new identity for the community.[541] The name "Adams Morgan" was developed in 1955 when the "colored" Morgan School and the white Adams School joined forces to campaign for improved facilities.[542] The Adams

[541] Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 440.

[542] Jane Freundel Levey et al., *Roads to Diversity: Adams Morgan Heritage Trail* (Washington, D.C.: Cultural Tourism DC, 2005).

Morgan Better Neighborhood Conference, organized by the principles of both schools, brought together both races and a variety of community organizations to plan neighborhood improvements.[543] However, in 1958, American University researchers were awarded a contract by the city government to develop solutions for the area's "urban blight."[544] Some in the community, including the Adams Morgan Planning Committee, saw these urban renewal schemes "as an opportunity to use planning and public money to upgrade the community."[545] Others, such as the King Emmanuel Baptist Church, Jubilee Housing, and the area's low-income residences, feared the loss of affordable housing. In 1962, unable to reach a consensus, the federal, city, and local planners decided against urban renewal for the semi-industrial area of Adams Morgan between 16th and 18th Streets.[546]

Adams Morgan was once again the subject of urban renewal schemes in the mid-1960s. A private consulting firm recommended the major clearance of the area west of Meridian Hill Park on 16th Street between the years 1970 and 1975. The consultants also suggested "that the deteriorated area in the hollow below 16th Street and Columbia Road nw, might be covered with a huge "deck" with middle- and upper-income housing above and parking and roadways below."[547] This development, the consulting firm theorized, would help "meet the pressure for more housing within the city." Ultimately, these urban renewal schemes were not carried out; however, in 1965 the Zoning Commission rezoned the Henderson tract across 16th Street from Meridian Hill Park. This allowed for the "construction of high-rise, medium-high density apartments" in the previously restricted neighborhood.[548] The Meridian Towers, a ten-story, 170-unit apartment building, was one of the high-density apartment buildings constructed. This building not only cut off the vista to the south of Meridian Hill Park but also added to congestion in the area.[549]

By the 1960s, the demographics of the neighborhood had also begun to shift. Economic hardships and political turmoil brought thousands of Spanish-speaking people from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean to the United States. Adams Morgan, with its pre-existing Latino population and close proximity to Spanish-speaking embassies, was seen as a desirable location to settle.[550] These immigrants opened family stores and restaurants along Columbia Road that became the "hub of social interaction."[551] The

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543 Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 440.

544 Ibid.

545 Ibid.

546 Ibid., 441.

547 "20-Year War on Blight," B1.

548 "Henderson Tract Zone Approved," *Washington Post*, May 15, 1965, p. D14.

549 Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 54.

550 Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 441.

551 Ibid., 442.

businesses provided a space for Latinos to build a dynamic community.[552] Meanwhile, as rent declined and the Latino population continued to grow, a younger, more mixed population moved into Lanier Heights. This new group of residents was politically active and community conscious, making Lanier Place "a hub of anti-establishment politics."[553]

The growing Latino population in Adams Morgan worked to improve the community. In 1962, Carlos Rosario, a prominent community leader, established a Latino Theater program at the Colony Theater in the adjacent neighborhood of Columbia Heights. This program offered weekly films in Spanish and announced local events, available jobs and housing, and places for job assistance. The St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church served as a gathering place for the Latino community and "provided the basis for the development of more formal social and political leadership."[554] By the late 1960s, this leadership was in place and community leaders actively sought to better the lives of Latinos in Adams Morgan and nearby Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant. In 1966, they successfully used bureaucratic mechanisms to gain federal funds for social services. Furthermore, Rosario and a group of locals "made noise" to get the attention of the local government in the late 1960s. Mayor Walter Washington responded by requesting a meeting with Rosario to allow him to express the needs and frustrations of the Latino community.[555]

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[552] Levey et al., *Adams Morgan Heritage Trail.*

[553] Ibid.

[554] Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 443.

[555] Ibid., 441–45.

Chapter 9

Meridian Hill Park in the Civil Rights Movement

Issues of Increased Crime and Vandalism

As neighborhood demographics shifted and racial tensions rose in the district, the residential areas surrounding the park began to suffer the social challenges of crime and poverty.[556] This brought about a steady increase in criminal activity in Meridian Hill Park. The crimes reported vary from disorderly conduct to assault to possession of drugs. For instance, both *The Washington Post* and the *Washington Evening Star* reported in June 1954 that U.S. Park Police Pvt. Harold L. Blackford had found a man bleeding profusely from a scalp wound in the lower gardens of the park. This man successfully tore Pvt. Blackford's gun from his holster while attempting to flee. When Pvt. Blackford regained control of his gun, he shot the man, later identified as George Robinson, in his lower extremities. Robinson was charged with disorderly conduct and assault.[557] In another article, U.S. Park Police Pvt. Charles E. Welsh reportedly requested backup after hearing a group of about thirty-five people say they were going to "get" the policeman on duty. Fifteen people, including ten juveniles, were arrested for disorderly conduct.[558] The *Washington Evening Star* also reported in 1958 that a fight had ensued between a park patron and a policeman. According to Pvt. Labosky, the defendant struck him first.[559]

The criminal element at Meridian Hill Park affected not only the U.S. Park Police but also the everyday park user. In 1958, *The Washington Post* and the *Sunday Star* reported that "a colored boy [of] about 15" robbed a woman on the 2500 block of Mozart Place, NW. The suspect "eluded her husband and dashed to safety in Meridian Hill Park." Although the suspect was apprehended by the U.S. Park Police, Meridian Hill Park was still seen as a "safe haven" for criminals.[560] Criminals also attacked park patrons. One article reported that "a Negro of medium build" was said to have grabbed a twenty-seven-year-old woman. The

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556 Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 251.

557 "D.C. Man Shot in Struggle with Police," *Washington Post*, July 30, 1954, p. 51; "Man Shot Resisting U.S. Park Policeman," *Washington Evening Star*, July 29, 1954, p. A-25.

558 "15 Picked Up At Meridian after Threat," *Washington Post*, June 18, 1958, p. A3.

559 "Jury Clears Man Charged in Fight with Policeman," *Washington Evening Star*, Aug. 1, 1958, p. A12.

560 "Man Finds Wife Victim of Robbery," *Sunday Star*, Nov. 30, 1958, p. A25. "Thieves Snatch Purses From Three Women," *Washington Post*, Nov. 30, 1958, p. B24

victim, Katherine E. Wilson, responded to her would-be attacker by applying the lighted end of her cigarette to the man's face.[561] Russell Woodruff, 34, was picked up by the U.S. Park Police and identified by Wilson in a lineup. Woodruff was later found guilty of assault and given a 270-day jail term.[562]

In 1959, *The Washington Post* also reported that the 13th Precinct (bounded by S Street to the south, Rock Creek to the west, North Capitol Street to the east, and Calvert and Euclid Streets and Michigan Avenue to the north) was a hub of criminal activity. The article continued, describing that the area at the center of the 13th Precinct and the east end, which included Meridian Hill Park, had "generated enough serious crime [in 1958] to place this fourth-smallest of the city's precincts fifth from the top in the vice parade."[563] This increase in crime in and around Meridian Hill Park influenced park usage. One neighborhood resident wrote to the Secretary of the Interior about this issue, stating:

> This morning another attack on a young woman on her way to work around 8 a.m. in Meridian Hill Park emboldens me to appeal to the official at the head of the U.S. Park System for increased protection to the public in this neighborhood.
>
> I am a tenant at Hotel 2400- 16th, where a number of unattached women— some are widows of high government officials, Army and Navy personnel, etc.—make their home. We are afraid to make any use of the park...due to the frequent attacks and robberies… This situation calls for immediate protection for the better-class citizens who are entitled to use the park, instead of surrendering it for the use of hoodlums and thieves.[564]

Unfortunately, violent crimes remained an issue, as did the defacement of park statues. This vandalism not only occurred in the form of graffiti, but also the theft of swords and fingers from figural statues. The Serenity statue in Meridian Hill Park was frequently defaced with lipstick or paint.[565] In 1957, the *Washington Evening Star* wrote that the "Fingers on its right hand have been broken off. In its lap lie shards of broken glass from discarded whiskey bottles. Its surface is pocked with a thousand missiles."[566] This repeated vandalism perhaps reflected changing attitudes toward the neighborhood as well as park.[567]

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561 "Hot Cigarette Routs Attacker," *Washington Post*, June 25, 1958, p. A23.

562 "Assailant Gets 270-Day Term," ibid., July 9, 1958, p. A10.

563 Alfred L. Lewis and Harry Gabbett, "No. 13's Beat Ranges from High to Sordid: Worst Stationhouse," ibid., Jan. 13, 1959, p. B1.

564 Mrs. Sonia Hyman to Hon. Fred Seton, Secretary of Interior, June 9, 1958, Folder "Meridian Hill Park No. Sept. 1939–Dec.1958", Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

565 Paul Sampson, "Bad Weather, Bad Boys Mar District Statuary," *Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 1955, p. 14.

566 C. Steed Evans, "Artwork in District's Parks Suffers Heavy Toll from Juvenile Vandals," *Washington Evening Star*, Jan. 2, 1957, p. A-17.

567 Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 48.

Theft, vandalism, and violent crimes continued to plague Meridian Hill Park into the 1960s. *The Washington Evening Star* reported in 1961 that "a young colored man, about 5 feet 9 inches tall" snatched the purse of a Soviet Embassy attaché's wife and in 1963 the *Star* reported that "a Negro man about 22 to 25 years, 5 feet eight inches tall" snatched the wallet of a Mr. Parker, age 66.[568] Criminal activity was such an issue that it influenced the park's landscape design. The U.S. Park Police wrote in an Incident Report that a replacement fence should be erected as "this fencing prevented anyone from reaching through the hedge and snatching pocketbooks, which has happened several times since its removal. It also tends to lessen the escape route of those persons with criminal intent, serving as a barrier."[569]

Not surprisingly, public opinion of the park varied. In 1964, the Washington planning consultancy firm Marcou, O'Leary, and Associates was contracted by the U.S. Urban Renewal Administration to complete an open-space usage and efficiency study. The Marcou firm selected two parks as "laboratories," Anacostia Park and Meridian Hill Park, and applied the principles that they had developed with the aid of a psychologist and professor of city planning at each park. Marcou found that Meridian Hill Park "divided two vastly different neighborhoods, low-income Negro on the east and middle and upper income whites on the west."[570] The park was not only a demographic divide, but it also divided sentiments toward the park itself. Marcou conducted in-home interviews, finding that the white residents living west of the park "avoided the park for reasons ranging from dissatisfaction with sidewalks and benches [to] fear based on proximity to the low-income [primarily African American] area to the east."[571] Meanwhile, Marcou found the responses of the African Americans living to the east of the park "unimaginative, negative, and pessimistic" and he reported they "held little hope anything would or could be done."[572]

Park Uses: Drills, Easter Egg Rolls, and Political Protests

Despite Meridian Hill Park's worsening reputation, the park was used for a variety of activities and events.[573] The *Sunday Star*, for instance, reported that the annual Easter Egg

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568 "Attache's Wife Is Robbed of $3," *Washington Evening Star*, June 21, 1961, p. A14; "Wallet Snatched, Owner Loses $25," ibid., Sept. 10, 1963, p. B4.

569 Lt. Alfred D. Beye, U.S. Park Police to Chief, U.S. Park Police, 31 July 1961, Folder "Meridian Hill Park [Res #327] #3 1959-1962," Box 26, Accession no. 66A1097, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland (hereafter WNRC)

570 Leroy F. Aarons, "Open Space Use Scored in Study," *Washington Post*, Nov. 8, 1964, p. B2.

571 Ibid.

572 Ibid.

573 The *Washington Post* reported that Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba visited Meridian Hill Park in 1959 after being interviewed at the Cuban Embassy, located a block north of the park. Castro was photographed in the park surrounded by autograph-seekers and holding the 16-month-old child of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Hayes of 2327 15th Street, NW. See Phil Casey, "A Lesson for the Future, Castro Calls Post-Revolution Cuban Executions," *Washington Post*, April 17, 1959, p. A1. *The Washington Post* reported in 1957 that a convention of 150 religious youths were to meet at Meridian Hill Park for "A sunrise breakfast and worship." See "Youth Session to Attract 150," ibid., April 27, 1957, p. D3.

Roll was held at Meridian Hill Park in 1955 and that a historical tour was held in 1956.[574] The Abu-Bekr Temple Patrol No. 91, a group of Shriners, requested permission to conduct drill practices in Meridian Hill Park in 1956.[575] The following year, the American-Hungarian Federation sought permission to hold a protest in the park. Two-hundred attendees representing the Free Hungary movement were expected to attend including the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, students from Georgetown University, and exiled former Hungarian officials.[576] These groups planned to walk through the park with signs and placards protesting the Legation of the Hungarian Republic's celebration of "the signing of the recent pact with the Soviet Union and the 12th Anniversary of the entrance of Russian troops upon Hungarian soil."[577] Per an agreement with the office of the NCP, "no speeches or stationary congregations" were allowed during this event.[578] No articles or documents have been identified indicating that the American-Hungarian Federation's protest actually took place.

In 1958, another request was submitted to the office of the NCP for the use of Meridian Hill Park in a protest. The Walk for Peace Committee, "a project seeking to influence the government to end the testing of nuclear weapons," specifically sought permission to assemble walkers in the lower grounds of the park.[579] The committee was granted permission to assemble in Meridian Hill Park provided that "no placards or posters are displayed in the Park, nor that any public speeches other than instructions to the assembly will be made."[580] Similarly, in April 1960, the Committee for Nonviolent Action requested permission to use the park as a gathering place during their planned two-day public demonstration. On April 15th,

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[574] "Command Performance," *Sunday Star*, April 2, 1955, p. D25; "Water Lily Tour Set for Today," ibid., June 24, 1956, p. C7.

[575] Lorin A. Davis, Acting Assistant, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Mr. Wilkins W. Water, Captain, Abu-Bekr Temple Patrol #91, 30 March 1956, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

[576] Assistant Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Acting Chief, U.S. Park Police, 2 April 1957, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

[577] Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Chief, U.S. Park Police, 1 April 1957, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

[578] Assistant Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Acting Chief, U.S. Park Police, 2 April 1957, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, RG 79, WNRC.

[579] John C. Ingersoll, Winchester Coordinator, Walk For Peace Committee to Superintendent Henry J. Thompson, National Capital Parks, 16 May 1958, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

[580] T. Sutton Jett, Acting Superintendent, National Capital Parks to John C. Ingersoll, Winchester Coordinator, Walk For Peace Committee, 27 May 1958, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Sept. 1939-Dec.1958," Box 47, Accession no. 64A-42, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

the estimated 100 to 300 participants were to assemble at Meridian Hill Park from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. for a briefing session and then walk down 16th Street to the White House.[581] The office of the NCP granted the committee permission provided:

1. That public order will be maintained at all times and any necessary instructions from the United States Park Police will be complied with.
2. That no signs or placards will be displayed in Meridian Hill Park and that any such signs as are carried by members of the march will be stacked on the adjacent walk areas.
3. That no speeches may be made in the Park other than those concerned specifically with information and briefing for the remainder of the walk.[582]

In this same letter, the associate superintendent went on to explain that "the above provisions are necessary because Meridian Hill Park is normally not available for public assemblies and meetings." [583] They had once been permitted, but noise complaints had resulted in the institution of a new policy in 1948.[584] No articles or documents have been identified that indicate whether or not these protests actually took place.

Revitalizing Meridian Hill Park: The University Neighborhoods Council Reinstates Open-Air Concerts and Art Shows

The University Neighborhoods Council, a non-partisan, non-sectarian association formed in 1961, sought to fill this void and bring life back to Meridian Hill Park.[585] The association, which stemmed from the "combined efforts of local churches, youth groups, senior citizens, Howard University[,] and civic and business associations," was dedicated to community improvement in the three-mile area around Howard University.[586] The Educational and Cultural Commission of the Council specifically worked to "develop and extend cultural activities."[587]

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581 T. Sutton Jett, Associate Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Mr. Bradford Lyttle, Committee for Nonviolent Action, 11 April 1960, Folder "Meridian Hill Park [Res #327] #3 1959-1962," Box 26, Accession no. 66A1097, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

582 Ibid.

583 Ibid.

584 Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 50.

585 Rasa Gustaitis, "2 Groups Formed to Fight Social Ills in Cardozo Area Battle Each Other," *Washington Post*, Nov. 23, 1964, p. B1; "'My Fair Lady' to Aid Concerts in the Parks," *Washington Evening Star*, Nov. 24, 1964, p. D2.

586 "17 Free Concerts Listed For Meridian Hill Park," *The Washington Post*, May 12, 1964, A10.

587 "'My Fair Lady,'" D2.

In addition, it proposed reinstituting open-air concerts at Meridian Hill Park.[588] The office of the NCP granted permission to the Council to hold a series of four concerts at the park during the summer of 1963. These concerts, performed by bands such as the Watergate Symphony Band, Capital Wood Wind Quartet, and the Meridian Hill String Quartet, were free and drew a large crowd.[589] According to *The Washington Post* three hundred people attended the first concert, and "hardly a speck of grass was visible" at the last concert as there were about 7,000 people in attendance.[590] The audience was diverse and ranged "from elderly folks from the Roosevelt Hotel to little tots from crowded nearby neighborhoods."[591]



Figure 41: Photograph of the Watergate Symphony Orchestra, 1963
(Rock Creek Park files)

Inspired by the success of the 1963 season of the Sunday in the Park concerts, the council increased the number of concerts to seventeen the following year.[592] The council also expanded their repertoire to represent the musical tastes and cultures of the neighborhood's

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588 "List of Events," *The Washington Evening Star*, July 3, 1963, B4; "Meridian Hill Park Concert Fund Sought," *Washington Evening Star*, June 21, 1963; Mrs. San Juan W. Barnes, Chairman, Cultural Development Commission, University Neighborhoods Council to Mr. T. Sutton Jett, Superintendent, National Capital Parks, 5 June 1963, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Res #327 1/1/63-1/1/65," Box 21, Accession No. 68A3201, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

589 "Concert Series Ends Sept. 1," *Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1963, p. B2; "List," ibid., p. B4; "17 Free Concerts," ibid., p. A10; Clem, *Images of America,* 115.

590 "17 Free Concerts," *Washington Post*, p. A10.

591 Ibid.

592 Cornelius W. Heine, Assistant Regional Director, Conservation, Interpretation, and Use to Mr. J. Allen Young, Director, University Neighborhoods Council, 21 May 1964, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Res #327 1/1/63-1/1/65," Box 21, Accession No. 68A3201, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland).

international and multiracial community. "To draw everyone who enjoys music on a summer's Sunday evening," the genres offered varied from "jazz to chamber music, calypso to symphonic."[593] Some of the musicians featured were the Howard University Band, the U.S. Air Force Band, the Trinidad Steel Band, the Jamaican Folklore Group, the Youth Symphony Orchestra, and the United States Navy Band.[594] At the end of the season, representatives from the Italian and Mexican embassies performed cultural dances, such as the zambra.[595] The second Sunday in the Park was a success and drew more than 50,000 people in total to the park. Concertgoers even came from as far as Baltimore, Maryland and Fairfax, Virginia.[596]

San Juan Barnes, an African American woman and the chairman of the council's Cultural Development Commission, was ambitious in her plans for the concert series. Barnes intended to organize a Christmas concert and "cold weather concert series" at Cardozo High School in Columbia Heights during the winter of 1964/1965.[597] She also sought permission from the office of the NCP to host free open-air concerts at Meridian Hill Park every Sunday during the spring, summer, and fall months.[598] In an effort to raise the needed $10,000 for the 1965 season, the council sold tickets for the second-day opening of "My Fair Lady," the Audrey Hepburn–Rex Harrison film adaptation of the Broadway hit. The tickets were sold at the council's headquarters at Howard University for $7.50 and $5.00.[599] The council was only able to raise $2,100 dollars ($500 from the D.C. Recreation Department, $600 from citizens, and $1,000 from individual donors) and was forced to discontinue the series after the sixth scheduled concert. Rev. William A. Wendt, rector of St. Stephen and the Incarnation Church, chairman of the council and civil rights activist, felt the cessation of the summer concerts was

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593 "17 Free Concerts," *Washington Post*, p. A10. Sue Cronk, "She Sparkled Concerts, Sunday in the Park," *Washington Post*, Nov. 25, 1964, p. B2.

594 "Concerts to Start In Meridian Hill Park," *Washington Evening Star*, May 13, 1964, p. B1; Jo Anne Mark, "Parks Here Offer Resort-Like Glamor," ibid., May 16, 1964, p. 8; Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 50.

595 "Dancing in the Park," *Washington Post*, Sept. 5, 1964, p. C2.

596 "17 Free Concerts."

597 Cornelius W. Heine, Assistant Regional Director, Conservation, Interpretation, and Use, National Capital Region to Mrs. San Juan W. Barnes, Chairman, Cultural Development Commission, University Neighborhoods Council, 7 August 1964, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Res #327 1/1/63-1/1/65," Box 21, Accession No. 68A3201, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland).

598 Theodore T. Smith, Chief, Division of Special Events, National Capital Parks to Mrs. San Juan W. Barnes, Chairman, Cultural Development Commission, University Neighborhoods Council, 18 May 1965, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Res #327 1/1/63-1/1/65," Box 21, Accession No. 68A3201, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland; Mrs. San Juan W. Barnes, Chairman, Cultural Development Commission, University Neighborhoods Council to Mr. Theodore Smith, National Capital Parks, 4 April 1965, Folder "Meridian Hill Park Res #327 1/1/63-1/1/65," Box 21, Accession No. 68A3201, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

599 Cronk, "She Sparkled Concerts. Sunday in the Park"; "Movie to Benefit Summer Series," *Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 1964, p. B1; Richard L. Coe, "One on the Aisle: 'enry 'iggins Embassy Guest," ibid., Nov. 21, 1964, p. E29; Richard L. Coe, "One on the Aisle: Novak, Yes Harvey, No," ibid., Nov. 12, 1964, p. C11.

a great loss to the community as they "filled a cultural need in the Cardozo area . . . and helped keep some of the undesirable element out of the Park." [600]

In addition to the open-air concert series, the University Neighborhoods Council also planned a summer art program called Art in the Park. This program, a collaboration with the National Park Service and the D.C. Recreation Department, allowed professional and amateur artists to submit art works into a contest. Participating artists could enter up to five works in any one category (fine arts, crafts and ceramics, sculptures, works by children up to twelve years of age, and works by teenagers age thirteen to eighteen) and awards were presented in the two classes (professional and nonprofessional). Mrs. Lois J. Pierre-Noel (associate professor of art at Howard University) was the guest artist, and Samuel Bookatz (Washington artist), Walter Gretschel (art director of U.S. News and World Report), Jacob Kainen (curator of graphics arts at the Smithsonian Institution), Francis Luzzatto (instructor at the Corcoran School of Art), and Ben L. Summerford (professor of fine and applied arts at American University) served as judges.[601] The Art in the Park program was a success, featuring more than 1,000 exhibits and artists from as far away as Arlington, Virginia and Silver Spring, Maryland.[602] Furthermore, the program successfully bridged "demographic gaps in terms of appeal" with the items on display ranging from silk-screen posters to modern jewelry styled after ancient Egyptian styles.[603] In 1966, two years before the council disbanded, the University Neighborhood Council hosted their final Art in the Parks program.[604]

Summer in the Parks

Meridian Hill Park was largely abandoned after the University Neighborhood Council's summer concert series (1963–1966). By 1967, the U.S. Park Police considered it the second most dangerous park in the District in terms of crime.[605] However, most of the District's parks were hardly used as few had any facilities and most lacked electric power. George Hartzog, the Director of the National Park Service from 1964 to 1972, recognized this disuse. Hartzog also recognized the need for more green space in urban areas across the United States. During his directorship, Hartzog not only added more than seventy new park units, many in urban areas, but also actively "worked to develop an NPS that reflected

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600 Ernest A. Lotito, "Meridian Hill Concerts Halted by Lack of Funds," *Washington Post*, Aug. 13, 1965, p. C1.

601 "Art Show Planned in the Park," *Washington Evening Star*, Aug. 4, 1964, p. B7; "Paintings Blossom In a Park," *Washington Post*, July 4, 1964, p. D2; Mary Haverstock, "Art in Washington: Corcoran Is an Aperitif for Print Season," ibid., Aug. 23, 1964, p. G8.; "Park Art in Preparation," ibid., Aug. 19, 1964, p. A23.

602 Louise Durbin, "Art Thrives Here In Summer Sun," *Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1964, p. B3.

603 Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 51. Durbin, "Art Thrives Here."

604 "Art Show Planned," *Washington Evening Star*, Aug. 18, 1966, p. B8.

605 National Park Service, *Summer in the Parks Booklet* (Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 1969), 5; Untitled Typed Document, Undated, Folder A8227, Folder "Summer in The Parks 8/1/68 part 2", Box 10, Accession no. A8227, RG 79, WNRC.

changing demographics and was relevant to urban society."[606] Sarah J. Morath argues that it was Hartzog's, as well as many others belief, that "urban greenspaces could help address a range of social ills that were present in the 1970s."[607] The Summer in the Parks Program, initiated after the April 1968 riots, exemplifies Hartzog's vision as it brought inner-city children to the parks during a time of social unrest. It was thought that urban park programming would help ease tensions in the city.[608] *The Washington Post* agreed, writing that the "'Summer in the Parks' plan sounds like good, preventative medicine. Certainly it is not the panacea for curing our racial and economic dilemma, but it could sure help to 'cool it' while other constructive measures are put into effect!"[609]

To get people back into the parks, Hartzog called in industrial designer Russell Wright.[610] Wright, who had developed a similar program in New York City's Central Park, recognized that America's early 20th-century parks did not match the tempo of modern-day life. These parks (e.g. Central Park and Meridian Hill Park) had been designed to suit a slower-paced era, but as times and the surrounding neighborhoods had changed, they fell to disuse.[611] As such, new park concepts were being developed and implemented across the United States. The National Park Service's Summer in the Parks booklet writes that the "vest pocket" park, which turned small spaces in crowded communities into tiny playgrounds, was particularly popular in the 1960s. However, because the National Capital Region had large areas of parkland, an "outdoor family-style recreation room" concept was proposed.[612] This concept, also called "Community Parks," was developed with the following considerations in mind:

1. A park should be within walking distance of its users;
2. It should contain the facilities most desired by that neighborhood as determined by expression of the people who live there; and
3. There should be neighborhood participation and contribution to management, operation, and maintenance.[613]

The Summer in the Parks booklet continues, stating that "Neighborhood Planning Councils throughout the city were asked to designate neighborhood-based groups to

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606 Sarah J. Morath, "A PARK FOR EVERYONE: THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN URBAN AMERICA" *Natural Resources* Journal 56, no. 1 (2016): 7, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24889108.

607 Ibid., 6.

608 Robinson & Associates, Inc., *National Capital Region Administrative History- Summer in the Parks* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2008).

609 "Spark of Light," *Washington Post*, March 29, 1968, p. A20.

610 Russel Wright, "Summer in the Parks- 1968," *Trends in Parks & Recreation* 6, no. 2 (April 1969): 8.

611 Wright, "Summer in the Parks- 1968," 4.

612 National Park Service, Summer in the Parks, 17.

613 Wright, "Summer in the Parks- 1968," 7.

implement summer enrichment programs."[614] The Summer in the Parks team then asked each of the twenty groups which National Park property would best suit their neighborhood's needs.[615] As most groups had little to no experience in park programing, it was decided that each park would have a standard set-up: a permanent theatre arrangement, a large oval asphalt pad for dances and other performances, and two light poles equipped with theatrical spotlights.[616] The Smithsonian Institution, working in cooperation with the National Park Service, used these set-ups for regularly planned programs, including, concerts, community sings, dance contests, puppet shows, daily art lessons from artmobiles, and clay and pottery instructions.[617] These programs were designed to be inclusive and cognizant of the demographics of the community.[618] For instance, the Reading is Fundamental BookMobile Program primarily operated in neighborhoods with high poverty rates, which at the time correlated with low literacy rates and a high African American population.[619]



Figure 42: Badminton in the park (Russel Wright, "Summer in the Parks-1968")

The National Park Service, in cooperation with the DC Recreation Department and various church and civic group programs, also bused up to 200 children each week for nine weeks to outlying parks. Russell Wright, the Summer in the Parks coordinator, explains in the

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[614] Ibid.

[615] Summer in the Parks: Site Selection by Neighborhood Planning Councils for Summer in the Parks as of June 6, 1968, folder 4, box 8, series 3, Theodore R. McCann Papers (Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park).

[616] Wright, "Summer in the Parks- 1968," 7.

[617] Untitled Typed Document, Undated, Folder A8227, Folder "Summer in The Parks 8/1/68 part 2", Box 10, Accession no. A8227, RG 79, WNRC.

[618] National Capital Region, "Democracy of Public Space."

[619] Ibid.

article "Summer in the Parks- 1968" that "This was of special value in widening the horizons of inner-city children, many of whom had never been outside of their own neighborhoods."[620] Organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers, YMCA, and YWCA assisted park staff and supervised the children on these excursions which involved nature hikes, water sports, outdoor games, fishing, and numerous other activities.[621] The Summer in the Parks team also planned "Special Events and Spectaculars" such as "Bicycledelic Day" and "African Night," and hosted noontime concerts at parks downtown.[622]

At Meridian Hill Park, improvements were first made to discourage crime. These improvements involved strengthening lightbulbs in the existing park lamps and adding concealed lighting along the pathways. Once these initial improvements were made, the park's sixteen fountains and cascades were activated and the reflecting pool was equipped with four great sprays for the neighborhood children to splash around in.[623] On the upper mall, garden tables with parasols, volleyball courts, badminton courts, concession stands, and picnic tables and chairs were also added.[624] Interestingly, despite Meridian Hill Park being "on the edge of the ghetto," the opening program for Summer in the Parks program took place at the park on July 14, 1968.[625] Perle Mesta, a Washington hostess with an international reputation for planning parties, and Pearl Bailey, Broadway Star of "Hello, Dolly!," hosted the kick-off party which boasted some 20,000 attendees.[626] As documented in a *Washington Evening Star* article, "There were white helium-filled balloons floating over the treetops, fireworks before, during and after the 2 ½-hour program" and performances by Pearl Bailey and co-star Cab Calloway, New York supper club singer Hildegarde, The Soul King and the Invaders, dancers Dick Sims and Audre Deckmann, Howard University's Afro-American Dance troupe, the African Heritage Dancers and Drummers, and numerous others.[627]

Given the level of tension in the District, it is not surprising that there were some disturbances during the summer in the Parks kick-off party. *The Washington Post* documents

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[620] Wright, "Summer in the Parks- 1968," 6.

[621] Ibid., 6-7.

[622] "Summer in the Parks," Undated, Meridian Hill Park Files, National Capital Region Museum Resource Center, Landover, MD.

[623] Untitled Typed Document, Undated, Folder "Summer in the Parks 8/1/68 part 2," Box 10, Accession no. A8227, RG 79, WNRC; Wright, "Summer in the Parks- 1968," 5.

[624] Meridian Hill Park, May 31, 1968, Folder "Summer in the Parks 1/1/68-7/3/68 part 1," Box 10, Accession no. A8227, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD; Assistant Coordinator, Summer in the Parks to Superintendent, North Capital Parks, June 4, 1968, ibid.

[625] National Park Service, Summer in the Parks Booklet, 5.

[626] Roberta Hornig, "Summer In The Parks: Two 'Pearls' Toss Gem of a Party for 20,000," *Washington Evening Star*, July 15, 1968, p. B; "Perle At Meridian Hill: 'Summer in Parks' to Open," *Sunday Star*, July 7, 1968, p. F5.

[627] Ibid.; "Perle Mesta to Be 'Hostess to the Mostess' at Parks' Premiere," *Washington Post*, July 12, 1968, p. A19.



Figure 43: Photograph of Summer in the Park opening night, 1968
(National Park Service)

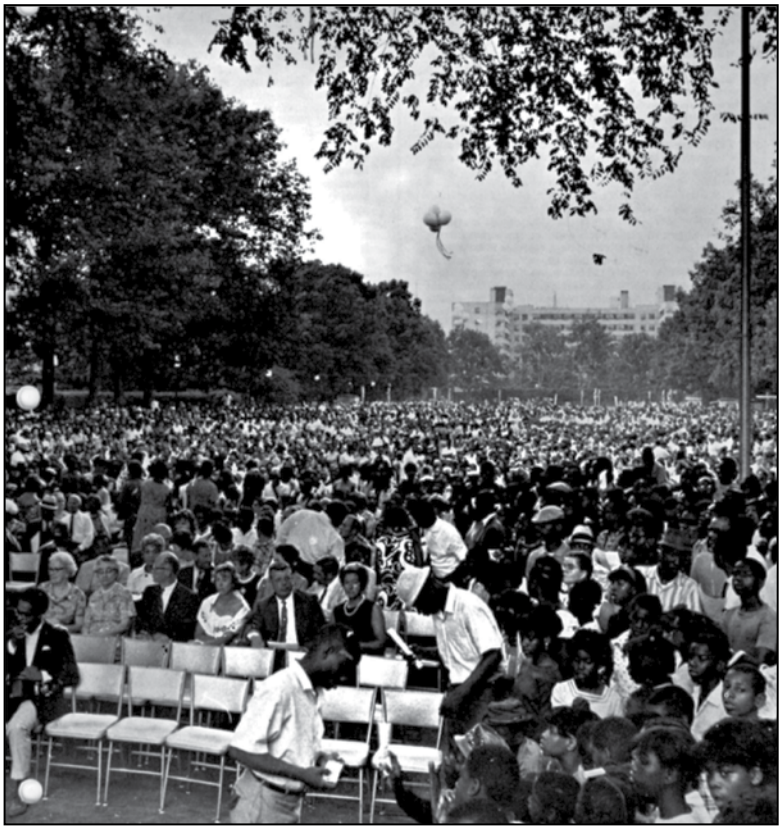


Figure 44: Photograph of Summer in the Park opening night, 1968
(Russell Wright, "Summer in the Parks-1968")

that at one point, "about 50 youths, some of them carrying placards, kept up a steady chant of 'no more murders' between and during some of the earlier performances. One sign protested the shooting of citizens by D.C. policemen."[628] During Hildegarde's performance, the young attendees then "pushed their way through the crowds to the front and took over the reserved seats occupied by some of Mrs. Mesta's guests."[629] This surge nearly crushed young children against the stage fence and caused some guests to leave early. At the request of program officials, Pearl Bailey and Cab Calloway appeared on the stage to calm the crowd. Bailey reminded the audience that "this is a fun place, we don't need this."[630] The appeals worked and the kick-off was able to end with a "big splash."[631] However, not all were pleased with the event as the entertainment "was not expressive of the neighborhood."[632] Russell Wright, the Summer in the Parks coordinator, responded that they had originally "planned to have only Negro performances and no chairs. [But they] had to accept these inappropriate features because Mrs. Mesta had procured all entertainers for us."[633]



Figure 45: Photograph of Summer in the Park opening night, 1968. National Park Service.

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628 Ibid.

629 Ibid.

630 Ibid.

631 Russel Wright, Coordinator to Miss Barbara Shuler, 30 July 1968, Folder "Summer in the Parks 1/1/68-7/3/68 part 1," Box 10, Accession no. 72A-6215, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

632 Ibid.

633 Ibid.



Figure 46: Summer in the Park concert at Meridian Hill Park
(Russell Wright, "Summer in the Parks-1968")

After opening night, a variety of programs were scheduled at Meridian Hill Park including a puppet theater, concerts, pottery demonstrations, movie showings, talent shows, and Artmobile visits.[634] African Day was also hosted at Meridian Hill Park and it drew a crowd of about "3000 African diplomats, students and Washingtonians."[635] The upper mall was transformed into an African bazaar where African craft items could be bought. African fashions were modeled, and the Minsah High Life Band and Pearl Primus dancers performed.[636] In addition to the National Park Service and Smithsonian Institution sponsored events, the Summer in the Parks team urged the local Neighborhood Planning Councils to develop their own programs. Unfortunately, according to Russell Wright, they had "little success with getting the communities to express themselves" and "the most disappointing community [was] that of Meridian Hill."[637] Wright wrote that the program had "gone to great expense and great effort to make this park [referring to Meridian Hill Park] a useful asset to the community and it seems to our staff here that they [referring to neighborhood groups] are putting forth little or no interest or effort."[638]

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[634] Summer in the Parks Program- Meridian Hill Park, July and August 1968, Folder "Summer in the Parks 8/1/68 part 2," Box 10, Accession no. A8227, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD; Names and Addresses of Winners- Meridian Hill Park Talent Show, September 8, 1968, ibid.

[635] Newspaper Clipping, Sept. 5, 1968, ibid.

[636] Ibid.; Yvonne Lanier, Public Relations to Honorable Joseph Palmer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Department of State, 10 September 1968, Folder "Summer In The Parks 8/1/68 part 2," Box 10, Accession no 72A-6215, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland; Yvonne Lanier, Public Relations, Mr. Gilbert Bandio, Charge d'Affairs A.I., Embassy of the Republic of Central Africa, 10 September 1968, Folder "Summer In The Parks 8/1/68 part 2," Box 10, Accession no 72A-6215, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

[637] Russell Wright, Coordinator to Miss Barbara Shuler, July 30, 1968, Folder "Summer in the Parks 1/1/68-7/3/68 part 1", Box 10, Accession no. A8227, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

[638] Ibid.

The Growing Importance of Meridian Hill Park to the African American Community

The diverse cultural programs hosted by the University Neighborhoods Council and Summer in the Parks program, as well as the proximity of several largely African American neighborhoods and Howard University, attracted black patrons to Meridian Hill Park. After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, African Americans gathered at the park to commemorate his death. According to William Taft, co-chairman of the Capital City Juneteenth and U.S. Emancipation Day Council, drummers came to the park "to hold him up in the form of a circle. . .. After that, they kept doing it every week, drumming to honor the fallen leader and to express their African heritage."[639] The drumming circle continues to meet weekly, but the once small, sacred circle has been impacted by the gentrification of the surrounding neighborhoods (see Chapter 13).

Furthermore, after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968, black nationalists began to gather at Meridian Hill Park. Black nationalists, as well as black militants, utilized Meridian Hill Park because the Summer in the Parks program brought the park "into the good graces of many of the Black Militants," presumably because it supplied positive programming for black children during times of unrest.[640] The park was also in close proximity to several predominately African Americans neighborhoods and the headquarters of several black nationalist groups, including the BUF. On July 17, 1968, 75 youths rallied at the park to discuss the shooting of Theodore Lawson, an African American man suspected of stealing groceries.[641] The *Washington Evening Star* reported that during the meeting, heated and angry speeches were given with "the police department, Mayor Walter Washington and President Johnson [coming] in for sharp criticism."[642] After the rally, the demonstrators walked to the New Bethel Baptist Church where Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy, the vice chairman of the city council, was pastor.[643] On October 12, 1968, another BUF rally was scheduled at Meridian Hill Park. Stokely Carmichael, the founder of the Washington chapter of the BUF and the prime minister of the Black Panther Party, was to speak at a rally. Representatives from Howard University, Federal City College, and the New School on Afro-American Thought were also scheduled to speak on the racial crisis in the District and the Front's goals.[644] Neither *The Washington Post* nor the *Washington Evening Star* reported if the rally actually took place.

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[639] Heather Murphy, "Drawn Into a Circle of Drum-Driven Rhythms," *Washington Post*, Sept. 22, 2005, p. T56.

[640] National Park Service, Summer in the Parks Booklet, 23.

[641] "Police-Control Proposal Planned by Black Front," *Washington Evening Star*, July 17, 1968, sec. D; Charles Conconi, "Citizen Police Control Sought by Black Front," ibid., July 18, 1969, sec. A.

[642] "Front: Control Over Police Sought," ibid., July 18, 1968, p. A6; Woody West, "Plea From Mayor: 'We are Shocked, Appalled,'" *Sunday Star*, July 21, 1968, sec. B.

[643] "Front"; "Police-Control Proposal Planned."

[644] "Black Front Set For Park Rally," *Washington Evening Star*, Oct. 10, 1968, p. B3.

The growing importance of Meridian Hill Park to the African American community is also evidenced in the novel *Meridian* by Alice Walker.[645] Jonathan Dick, the author of the article "'Racism is really just a mask for greed': Salon talks to Alice Walker on the 40th anniversary of 'Meridian'" (2016), writes that the novel offers "a perspective of the [civil rights] movement that, until its publication, had largely gone unsung."[646] It presents the struggles of fictional character Meridian Hill, an African American woman, before, during, and after the civil rights movement. In non-chronological order, the reader discovers that at the age of seventeen Meridian becomes pregnant and marries the father of her child, Eddie. After Eddie leaves her, Meridian gets a second chance when she is offered a full scholarship to the fictitious Saxon College. There, Meridian becomes active in the civil rights movement and forms an intimate relationship with another activist, Truman Held. The novel, while depicting the struggle of African American women during the civil rights movement, also presents "that the African-American woman's battle was not only against oppression but against misogyny and violence that was not limited to her white oppressors but which revealed itself within and without the larger struggle for equality."[647] Therefore, *Meridian* presents the largely neglected perspective of African American women and, according to some critics, suggests that the movement ignored and actually perpetuated chauvinist and misogynistic values. Other critics believe that the novel showcases Walker's womanist values as Meridian is a strong female character who faces and overcomes life's unavoidable obstacles.[648]

The question of why Walker named the novel *Meridian* and the protagonist Meridian Hill was explored by Deborah G. Plant in *Alice Walker: A Woman for Our Times* (2017). Plant wrote:

> Alice Walker's novel, Meridian, is at the meridian of thought. The title of the novel and the protagonist's name evoke Meridian Hill Park, a historical site which commemorates the location of one of four prime meridians that marked the area where the United States Capitol was to be constructed. The Capitol Meridian, situated at Meridian Hill, was just north of the White House. That Walker prefaces the novel with several definitions of "meridian' and chooses Meridian Hill as the name of a character engaged in civil rights activism and the pursuit of her own individual liberty is telling.
>
> At the meridian of thought, from the highest point of human consciousness, the character Meridian Hill envisioned an egalitarian society wherein the beauty and

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[645] Alice Walker, *Meridian* (New York: Harcourt, 1976).

[646] Jonathan Dick, "'Racism is really just a mask for greed' Salon talks to Alice Walker on the 40th anniversary of "Meridian" about the power of revolt," *Salon*, May 30, 2016, https://www.salon.com/2016/05/30/racism_is_really_just_a_mask_for_greed_salon_talks_to_alice_walker_on_the_40th_anniversary_of_meridian_about_the_power_of_revolt/.

[647] Ibid.

[648] Walker, *Meridian*; Karen F. Stein, "Meridian: Alice Walker's Critique of Revolution," *Black American Literature Forum* 20, no.1/2 (Spring–Summer, 1986).

> power inherent in all life is cherished and protected. She knew the worth of her own life and that existence has its own value. As civil rights activist and warrior-hero, her efforts contributed to the restoration of a sense of worth to a people.[649]

Eva Lennox Birch provides a different perspective in *Black American Women's Writing: A Quilt of Many Colours* (1994). Birch postulates that the novel's title, *Meridian*, has a significant connection to Meridian Hill Park, colloquially referred to as Malcolm X Park, in that it "articulates Walker's rejection of the violent revolution advocated by Black Muslims."[650] It is also possible, however, that Meridian Hill was selected as the name of her protagonist because Meridian Hill Park was simply appropriated by a variety of black activist groups, not solely black militant groups, during and after the civil rights movement. The park has long been a space for social contestation, free speech, and resistance for a variety of ethnic groups and civil rights and social justice activists. In March 2003, Alice Walker even spoke at a rally in Meridian Hill Park, protesting the war in Iraq.[651]

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[649] Deborah G. Plant, *A Woman for Our Times: Alice Walker* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2017), 67-68.

[650] Eva Lennox Birch, *Black American Women's Writing: A Quilt of Many Colours* (1994; New York: Routledge, 2014), 67.

[651] Sylvia Moreno and Lena H. Sun, "In Effort to Keep the Peace, Protesters Declare 'Code Pink,'" *Washington Post*, March 9, 2003, p. C1.

Part IV

Post-Civil Rights Movement

Chapter 10

Washington, D.C. in Decline: Drugs & Violence in the National Capital

The Rise of Black Nationalist Groups in the National Capital

The District was in a state of unrest after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and the April 1968 riots. Racial tensions were further heightened by the escalation of the Vietnam War—for which a disproportionate number of poor African Americans were drafted—and the aggressive policing of the Nixon administration. It was under these conditions that black power and black activist groups arose in the District, a location previously resistant to revolutionary change and overthrowing "the system."[652] Robert Rippy, a supervisor for the United Planning Organization (UPO) and member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), founded a pseudo–Black Panther group in the district called the Black Defenders.[653] The Black Defenders were a cultural nationalist group that believed in "empowerment through cultural pride, economic development and social separation [from whites]."[654] Applicants, youths ages fourteen and up, had to own a gun because

[652] Black militant groups, such as the Black Panthers, targeted poor black communities that felt oppressed by "the system." In the District, however, there was a large middle-class African American population. The average annual household income was $14,200, as compared to the national average of $10,577. Furthermore, more than 58% of the 34,094 people employed by the city government were black and 25% of the 291,085 federal works in the city were African American. This created a sense of affluence and job security, and thus black Washingtonians were less inclined to join radical political organizations. See Joseph D. Whitaker, "Black Panther Drive Falters in D.C.: Black Panther; Affluence of Negroes Cited," *Washington Post*, Feb. 1, 1970, p. A1.

[653] John Preusser, "The Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party: From Revolutionary Militants to Community Activists" (Masters Thesis, University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2006), 11. The SNCC was formed in 1960 to give African American youths more of a voice in the civil rights movement. In its early years, the group engaged in non-violent direct action, including sit-ins and marches, to protest the segregation of restaurants and buses. The group also participated in the Freedom Rides organized by Martin Luther King Jr. and organized for voting rights in the South. After the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 (during which three SNCC members were killed by the KKK), and the national Democratic Party's refusal to seat the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) at the 1964 national convention, the SNCC was embittered. This was a turning point of the SNCC, and they soon adopted a more radical approach with Stokely Carmichael as national chairman. See "SNCC," *History*, accessed May 2018, https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/sncc; and Charlie Cobb, "Inside SNCC: The Story of the SNCC," *SNCC Digital Gateway*, accessed May 2018, https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/the-story-of-sncc/.

[654] Ibid.; Andrew P. Smallwood, "Black Nationalism and the Call for Black Power," *University of Michigan Research Center for Group Dynamics*, accessed May 2018, http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/prba/perspectives/fall1999/asmallwood.pdf.

"the use of guns for self-defense was central to Rippy's vision."[655] Hoping to become a Black Panther chapter, the group attended the United Front against Fascism Conference in 1969. However, because the Black Defenders did not support coalition politics, the Black Panther Central Committee denied affiliation to the group. The Black Defenders subsequently disbanded and joined the BUF.[656]

Stokely Carmichael, the former national chairman of the SNCC, founded the District chapter of the BUF prior to the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. In January 1968 Carmichael called together a coalition of moderate to radical black nationalist and black militant groups, uniting them under the shared goal of helping "all black people in the District of Columbia . . . obtain a rightful and proportionate share in the decision-making councils . . . and proportionate control of the economic institutions of the black community."[657] Unlike the Black Panthers, the BUF believed "in revolution as long as it takes place within the context of the capitalist system" and that "you cannot look to your oppressor for salvation."[658] The Blackman's Volunteer Army of Liberation, established by Col. Hassan Jeru-Ahmed Bey in 1969, was another black nationalist group operating in the district. According to an article in *The Washington Post*, Hassan was "the minister-general of the Provisional Government of the United Moorish Republic, which [consisted] of about 700 disciplined men and women whose ultimate goal [was] to migrate to Africa."[659] In the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, the group organized patrols to prevent break-ins by drug addicts. Hassan's "soldiers" were not armed, though he noted in an interview that it may one day become "a necessity."[660] The group also established the largest methadone treatment program for heroin addicts in the District. Hassan's treatment centers, named the Blackman's Development Center, eventually fell under the scrutiny of the U.S. Attorney's Office because of their unconventional practices.[661]

By the end of the decade, a district chapter of the Black Panther Party had yet to be established. This was attributed in part to the city's strong black militant presence. Robert Rippy, the founder of the since-defunct Black Defenders, also considered it unlikely that the party would be allowed to exist in the district because the agencies tasked with destroying the party—the FBI, the Secret Service, and other federal law enforcement agencies—were

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655 Preusser, "The Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party," 18.

656 The Black Panthers, previously opposed to coalition politics, had recently allied themselves with white radicals from the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); Ibid., 2, 11; For more on the BUF, see Paul Delaney, "Fauntroy Sees Front Proposal As 'Negotiable': Police Control Plan Not Revolutionary, Councilman Says," *Sunday Star,* July 21, 1968, sec. B'; "The 'Black United Front,'" *Washington Post,* Jan. 12, 1968, p. A16.

657 Robert C. Maynard, "Black Front Will Back King, Join Fight against Freeways," *Washington Post*, Feb. 15, 1968, p. B1.

658 Whitaker, "Black Panther Drive Falters in D.C," A1.

659 Robert Williams, "Col. Hassan's House of Liberation," ibid., Jan. 17, 1971, p. E1.

660 Claudia Levy, "Black Unit Patrols Mt. Pleasant Area," ibid., May 31, 1969.

661 "Blackman's Army Here Claims Success, Others Wonder: 'Army' Treats Heroin Addicts," *Washington Post*, Jan. 26, 1970, p. C1.

headquartered there.[662] However, after the Chicago police murdered Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, the Districts diverse black and antiwar groups met to form an umbrella organization called the Coalition against Racism and Fascism (CARF).[663] The CARF subsequently organized a rally at the All Souls Unitarian Church (16th and Harvard Streets, NW) in support of the Black Panther Party. Recognizing the districts growing sympathy for the party, the Black Panthers established a district chapter of the National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF) in January 1970. *The Washington Post* described the NCCF as "an organization created by the Panthers to rally funds and bring urban police departments under community control."[664]

In the following months, racial violence escalated across the country. In May 1970, the police and National Guard wounded and killed over 100 people, on May 4th ten white students were wounded and four were killed at Kent State University; ten days later on May 14th, twelve African American students were wounded and two were killed at Jackson State University. Six African Americans were also murdered during the Augusta, Georgia race riots, eleven students were bayoneted at the University of New Mexico, and numerous other students were wounded at Ohio State University and in Buffalo.[665] These violent events, combined with Nixons invasion of Cambodia, galvanized the "radical left." On June 19, 1970, David Hilliard, the Chief of Staff of the Black Panther Party, gave a speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Hilliard, in his book *This Side of Glory* (2001), recounts that he not only called for an alternative U.S. Constitution without racism and repression but also "railed against the Nixon administration, white colonization of neighborhoods, and competing black power organizations like the Black Liberation Army [BLA]."[666] He also declared the districts branch of the NCCF a full Black Panther chapter and assigned them the task of securing a site for the November 1970 Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention.[667]

The headquarters of the NCCF became the headquarters of the 38th chapter of the Black Panther Party. Nearby, in what was then a predominantly African American neighborhood, were the headquarters of the Blackmans Volunteer Army, the Black Liberation Army, the BUF, and Marion Barrys Pride, Inc. In an effort to establish themselves in the community,

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662 Whitaker, "Black Panther Drive Falters in D.C."

663 The Chicago police raid the apartment of Hampton and Clark, firing 100 bullets at the sleeping men. Hampton and Clark were only able to fire one shot in return; "This Day in History: Police Kill Two Members of the Black Panther Party," *History*, accessed 2018, https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/police-kill-two-members-of-the-black-panther-party.

664 Whitaker, "Black Panther Drive Falters in D.C."; Michael Anders, "U.S. Constitution Target of Panthers Rally Here," *Washington Evening Star* , June 19, 1970, p. B4.

665 George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 120, as cited in Preusser, "Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party," 25.

666 Jackie Trescott, "Panthers Convention Is Still Seeking a Site," *Washington Evening Star* , Nov. 28, 1970, p. A20; David Hilliard, *This Side of Glory* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Press, 2001), 143, as cited in Preusser, "Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party," 26.

667 Ibid.

the district chapter opened a community center at 1932 17th Street, NW. Two weeks later, on July 4, 1970, the Washington Metropolitan Police Department raided the center when responding to a noise complaint at the building. Reports on the raid vary: the police claimed that the Panthers had taunted the first arriving officers, throwing bottles and rocks at them. One officer was reportedly hit in the face with a brick, which ultimately prompted the raid.[668] Maurice Laurence, the information officer of the district chapter, recounted a different story. Laurence told *The Washington Post* that the Panthers were singing and "then the pigs moved in and we went into the house. Then they kicked in the door and started beating everybody."[669] In another account, Laurence adopted even more violent rhetoric, stating that "these Fascist fools with wrecking hammers and axes in their hands started chasing children, women, and men all over the house like mad slave catchers. . . . They handcuffed the brothers, threw them on the floor and began their mad terrorist act of beating, stomping, and kicking."[670]

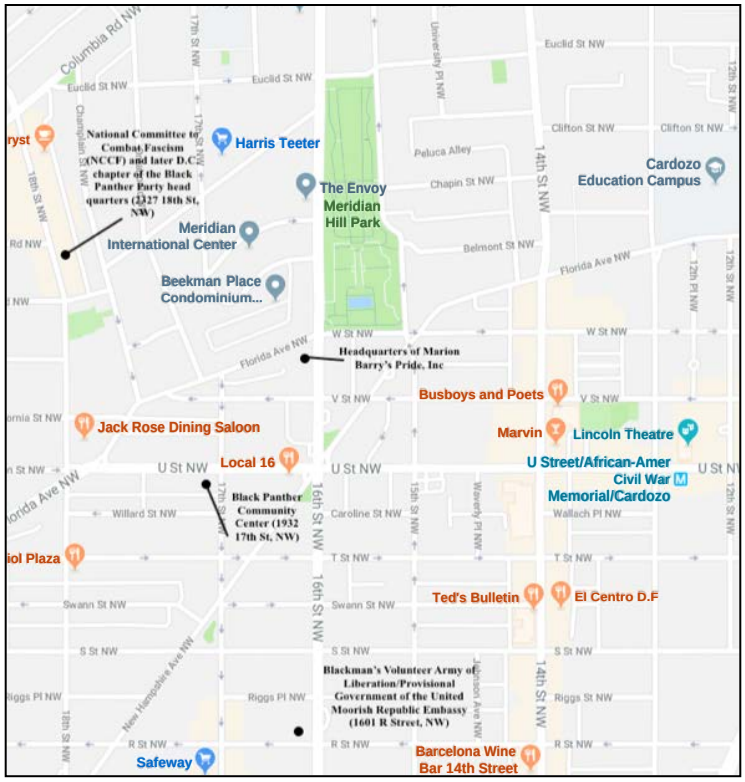


Figure 47: Map showing the location of several black activist group headquarters in the district

On the night of the raid, nearly 200 neighborhood residents and black activists, some wielding rocks and beer bottles, marched from the Panther community center to the Third

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668 Ibid., 28

669 Ivan C. Brandon, "Panthers Dispute Charges by Police," *Washington Post*, July 6, 1970, p. A4.

670 "20 Arrested at Center; Officer Hurt," *Washington Afro-American*, July 7, 1971, p. A1.

Street Police Station to protest what they felt was a violent and warrantless raid.[671] Newspaper articles purporting the police's theft and destruction of the Panthers' personal property further escalated the already mounting tension.[672] In the press, the District chapter adopted a violent tone and militant rhetoric, subsequently increasing the chapter's public notoriety and attracting new local black recruits. However, this approach also resulted in the "intense surveillance and persecution" of the Panthers, as evidenced in the chapter's inability to secure a location for the Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention.[673] Rippy's assertion was thus correct, and district chapter membership steadily declined from 100 members in 1970 to 35 or 40 members in 1972. By 1973, all remaining members had moved to Oakland, California.[674] In its last few years of its existence, the district chapter refocused its efforts and developed community support programs, such as the Free Breakfast Program and the People's Free Health Clinic.[675]

Meanwhile, the Black Panther Party also began to fracture at the national level when leaders Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton began promoting opposing philosophies: Cleaver calling for urban guerrilla warfare and Newton proposing making community organization and education the party's number-one priority. Cleaver ultimately broke from the Panthers, forming a splinter group called the Black Liberation Army (BLA). The BLA, documents the Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, called for military revolution and the "liberation and self-determination of black people in the United States."[676] Stokely Carmichael also left the Black Panther Party, founding the District branch of the All-African People's Revolutionary Party (A-APRP) in 1972. The A-APRP, comprising primarily college students, was inspired by the pan-Africanist teachings of Ghanian President Kwame Nkrumah. Bob Brown, a local spokesman for the party and former member of the Black Panther Party, told *The Washington Post* that "the ultimate goal of pan-Africanism is the total liberation and unification of Africa under Scientific Socialism."[677] In the District, the A-APRP organized the annual African Liberation Day and Malcolm X Day celebrations at Meridian Hill Park.[678]

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[671] Ben McKelway III, "Police vs. Panthers: Two Views," *Washington Daily News*, July 6, 1970, p. 5.

[672] "Seized Black Panther Guns Unregistered, Police Report," *Washington Evening Star*, July 6, 1970, p. 2; "Panthers Say Police Took Their Money," *Washington Daily News*, July 7, 1970, p. 1.

[673] Preusser, "The Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party," 31–34.

[674] Ibid., 56.

[675] Preusser, "Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party," 51–52.

[676] The FBI's COINTELPRO program eventually targeted the BLA because the group was involved in a series of bombings, murders, robberies, and prison breaks. Ibid., 36, 39; "Black Liberation Army (BLA)—United States," *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium*, accessed May 2018, https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/black-liberation-army-bla-united-states.

[677] "About the APRP," *All-African People's Revolutionary Party*, accessed May 2018, https://aaprp-intl.org/about-aaprp/; Edward D. Sargent, "3,000 Marches Celebrate African Liberation Day," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1981, p. D3.

[678] Ibid.; Howard University and the University of the District of Columbia were strongholds for black radical political activity. See Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 296.

African Americans and Political Engagement in the District Post-Civil Rights Movement

In addition to black-nationalist groups, black Washingtonians also began to engage in local politics, forming the D.C. Statehood Party in 1971.[679] Furthermore, after Congress voted to allow District citizens to elect members to the Board of Education, District residents could vote for the first time in one hundred years.[680] Marion Barry, the first chairman of the SNCC and the founder of Pride, Inc., was elected to the district school board in 1971.[681] Despite Barry's drug use and felony conviction for possession, he was elected mayor for four consecutive terms beginning in 1979. During this sixteen-year time period, former civil rights members were appointed to positions in the Barry administration and economic and political opportunities were provided for the district's growing black middle class.[682]

Black Washingtonians also began to participate in the peace movement. The Third World Task Force against the War in Southeast Asia was one of the non-white anti-war groups in the district. *The Washington Post* documents in the article "Minority Antiwar Role Changing," (1971) that the Third World Task Force's members were "blacks, Asian-Americans, Spanish-Americans, students from the Middle East and other nonwhites." Its members, *The Post* article continues, believed that minorities were increasingly participating in anti-war activities because third world people—a term which the article used to refer to people of all colors in the United States— "have come to see themselves as disproportionately victimized by the war—both on the battlefield and at home."[683] This can be seen in the fact that "Over 8,500 Spanish-surnamed brothers have been killed in Vietnam; [and] over 12,000 *Baltimore Afro-American*s have also been wasted. These two figures are, if taken together, over half of all U.S. troops killed in Vietnam."[684]

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679 Ibid., 296.

680 This was the first time since 1871 that District residents could vote to elect members to the Board of Education. Ibid., 295–96.

681 In 1960, Marion Barry became the first chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), one of the major civil rights movement organizations of the 1960s. Barry moved to Washington, D.C. in 1965 and separated from SNCC in 1966 when Stokely Carmichael was elected national chairman. While Barry still supported SNCC's views of self-determination and community control of police, he was could no longer associate with the newly radical SNCC if he wished to apply for federal money to establish poverty programs; In 1968, Barry formed the self-help organization Youth Pride, later Pride, Inc., using funds allocated by the Office of Economic Opportunity. The organization set up headquarters at 16th and Florida Avenue, across from Meridian Hill Park. Barry, who maintained a close relationship with the Black Panthers, Stokely Carmichael, and other leaders of black power organizations, called on District residents in May 1970 to shoot police men entering their homes unannounced under the "no knock" provision of a new crime bill. See Preusser, "Washington Chapter of the Black Panther Party," 14–21; and Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 299.

682 Ibid.

683 William Raspberry, "Minority Antiwar Role Changing," *Washington Post*, April 17, 1971, p. A23

684 Ibid.

The Third World Task Force thus viewed the war through a racial lens and joined the 200,000 marchers in downtown Washington, D.C. on April 24, 1971 to protest the war in Indochina.[685] The following month, the Task Force, the Black Panthers, the National Association of Black Students, and the Student Organization for Black Unity, formed the D.C. Black Action Coalition. One of the first efforts of the coalition was to launch a petition campaign to rid the black community of armed forces recruiting centers"[686]

Drugs, Crime, Violence, and the Gentrification of the National Capital

In 1969, the District's crime rate reached an all-time high, with a total of 83,040 felonies documented in the FBI Uniform Crime Report. Congress responded to this increase by expanding the D.C. police force from 3,000 officers to 5,100 officers between the years 1969 and 1973. By 1972, the crime rate had actually dropped significantly, and President Nixon declared Washington "one of the safest cities in the country."[687] The crime rate continued to fall despite heroin being the most peddled drug in the District in the 1970s.[688] Castaneda explains in *S Street Rising: Crack, Murder, and Redemption in D.C.* (2014) that the market for heroin was stable in the District and "Its sale was highly centralized, limited to a handful of locations [north of downtown]."[689] In addition to the District's downtown heroin market, cocaine was also sold at 9th Street Northwest, cocaine and heroin were sold in the deep Southeast, and heroin was sold at 4th and M Streets in the Northwest. The old-school dealers, Castaneda writes, "had their enforcers, but they knew that violence was bad for business."[690]

However, when Jamaican drug dealers began to sell marijuana in the District in the 1980s, turf wars ensued. The Jamaicans introduced a whole new element to the drug scene, as they brought with them semiautomatic nine-millimeter shotguns, MAC-10 fully automatic submachines, and Uzis. The introduction of crack cocaine in the mid-1980s escalated street violence.[691] Young men and teens living in deep poverty in the District recognized the profitability of crack cocaine, and open-air markets developed at14th and S and 14th and T Streets

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685 Woody West, "200,000 March Against War," *Washington Post*, April 25, 1971, pp. A1, A8.

686 "City and State: Armed Forces Recruiting Centers Target of New Black Coalition Unit," ibid., July 14, 1971, p. C2.

687 Debbie M. Price, "'Murder Capital' Label Has Long Stalked D.C.," ibid., April 4, 1989, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/04/04/murder-capital-label-has-long-stalked-dc/06a3c715-5888-4c26-b6c7-64ef290b305d/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.723d10e9ad6f; Kashino, "The Reinvention of 14th Street;" Aidan Lewis and Bill McKenna, "Washington DC from Murder Capital to Boomtown," *BBC News*, Aug. 6, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28605215.

688 Ibid.; Lewis and McKenna, "Washington DC from Murder Capital to Boomtown."

689 Ruben Castaneda, *S Street Rising: Crack, Murder, and Redemption in D.C.* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2014), 26.

690 Ibid.

691 Ibid., 27.

and 14th and Clifton Streets (the latter in Columbia Heights).[692] The dealers protected and fought for territory and, as Castaneda writes, "with frightening speed, a culture of intimidation and retaliation took hold."[693] From the mid-1980s to the mid-to-late 1990s, witness and retaliatory killings, a type of violence almost unheard of before, were common. By 1989, the annual homicide rate was over 400, making the district the murder capital of the United States.[694] The use of crack had also become an epidemic. Karst Besteman, an addiction expert who testified to Congress in 1989, equated crack cocaine to fast food, as it cheap, convenient, and available on the corner of the street.[695]

The district's strong criminal element was influenced in part by the economy. Beginning in the 1950s, middle- and upper-class white families began to migrate to the suburbs while the poor, less-educated, and moderate-income classes remained in the urban center (after the April 1968 riots some middle-class black business owners also migrated to the suburbs). This process of suburbanization shrank the tax base in the district, caused an economic downturn, and led to an increase in poverty and crime. In an effort to improve the economy, the district government pursued policies that would attract new investments. These investments, the government postulated, would bring in wealthier residents, increase taxable income and housing sales, revitalize retail activity, and raise sales tax revenue.[696] The Frank D. Reeves Municipal Center, a 500,000-square-foot government office building constructed at the center of the District's drug market, was one such investment. The District government hoped that a government building at this location would deter crime and attract private developers to an area otherwise avoided.[697]

The Frank D. Reeves Municipal Center did not alleviate the problem of crime on 14th Street or attract private developers. However, beginning in the 1970s, gentrifiers began to renovate homes in various "up-and-coming" neighborhoods, including Mount Pleasant, Capitol Hill, and Adams Morgan.[698] Since the 1990s, however, the District government has actively worked with outside developers to revitalize the District. This is because the population of the District had severely decreased and the government hoped to attract middle- and upper-class individuals that would add to the tax base. Gentrification, therefore, was characterized by the District government working in partnership with outside developers. These

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[692] Lewis and McKenna, "Washington DC from Murder Capital to Boomtown."

[693] Castaneda, *S Street Rising*, 28.

[694] Ibid.

[695] Jacob Fenston, "Crack's Rapid Rise Brought Chaos to D.C.," *WAMU*, Jan. 27, 2014, https://wamu.org/story/14/01/27/crack_1/.

[696] Jackson, *An Analysis: African American Employment, Population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C,* Fenston, "Cracks Rapid Rise Brought Chaos to D.C." 13.

[697] Marisa M. Kashino, "The Reinvention of 14th Street: A History," *Washingtonian*, April 4, 2018, https://www.washingtonian.com/2018/04/04/how-14th-street-came-back-reinvention-a-history/.

[698] James P. Fremgen, "Columbia Heights Renewal Slowed," *Washington Post*, Jan. 9, 1982, p. E9; Kashino, "The Reinvention of 14th Street;" "Columbia Heights Renewal Slowed," E9.

developers demolished public and low-income housing and invested in mixed-income housing in more affluent neighborhoods.[699] The African American population decreased from 92.9 percent to 44.2 percent in neighborhoods where affordable housing complexes were demolished. Meanwhile, the white population increased by 1,000 percent, or from 4.8 percent to 44 percent.[700] The demolition of low-income housing without the construction of new affordable units led to the displacement of former residents, now unable to afford the higher housing costs"[701]

Maurice Jackson writes in *An Analysis: African American Employment, population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C.* (2017) that gentrification has not only pushed many low-income African Americans out of the housing market, but also "pushed [many] out of the job market due to the lack of available jobs, lack of skills training, and a lag in educational attainment."[702] Jackson expanded on these problems, predicting that more than half of all the new jobs in the District between the years 2010 and 2020 will require at least a bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately 60 percent of all new jobs will also require education and training above a high school diploma. However, 16.5 percent of adult African American residents (a total of 60,000) have not finished high school, 50 percent have no education past high school, and only 12.3 percent have obtained a bachelor's degree. Comparatively, only 3.5 percent of the white residents have less than a high school diploma and 37.1 percent have obtained a bachelor's degree. Thus, based on Jackson's study, many black Washingtonians do not meet the education qualifications of the District's demanding labor market. As a result, the unemployment and poverty rates are higher for African American district residents.[703]

The influx of millennials, ages 18 to 34, has contributed to the displacement of lower-income African Americans and elderly District residents.[704] By 2014, millennials

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[699] Jackson, *An Analysis: African American Employment, Population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C.*, 13.

[700] Claire Cook, "The Displacement of Displacement: New-Build Gentrification in Washington, D.C." (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2014), cited in ibid., 14.

[701] Ibid., 14.

[702] Jackson, *An Analysis: African American Employment, Population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C.*, 2.

[703] Ibid., 5, 10; In 2016, the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute issued a report showing that white employment was under two percent while African Americans unemployment was 13.4 percent, or six times higher than the white rate. In addition, the number of poor residents in the District increased by 18,000 from 2007 to 2014, African Americans experiencing the largest increase from 23 percent to 26 percent. Also, despite an overall increase in D.C.'s median household income by approximately $10,000, the median household income for African Americans remained flat. The median annual income for white families being $120,000 and $41,000 for African American families. Furthermore, white households have a net worth 81 time greater than black households: $284,000 versus $3,500.

[704] Ibid., 6; Joy Phillips, "DC's Millennial Population Age 18-34: Then and Now," DC Office of Planning/State Data Center, Nov. 2015, https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/page_content/attachments/Millennials%20Demographic%20Characteristics%20DC%20vs%20US.pdf.

accounted for 35 percent of the District's total population.[705] These new, younger residents typically meet the educational requirements of the district's changing job market and are able to obtain jobs that place them in the middle- and higher-income categories. In 2011, 65 percent of new residents had a bachelor's degree or higher while only 42 percent of the current residents had a bachelor's or graduate degree. The financial success of millennial residents has spurred the District's economy and ignited a residential building boom; however, their success has also contributed to rising housing costs and the displacement of lower-income African American residents.[706]

In 2015, *The Washington Post* polled district residents on their attitudes toward redevelopment and the resulting rise in housing costs. The majority of Washingtonians, including 86 percent of white residents polled, saw the benefits of redevelopment. However, between 2000 and 2015, "the percentage of residents expressing reservations about the changes [grew] from a quarter to more than a third of the population."[707] By 2015, 55 percent of African Americans polled expressed that redevelopment and gentrification "is bad for people like them."[708] This was a 16 percent increase from 2014. In 2000, three in four black residents even applauded redevelopment. The poll suggested that race *and* class influenced views of redevelopment: "among blacks and whites alike, people with higher incomes have more positive views of redevelopment than those with lower incomes. But among those earning $50,000 to $100,000, nearly half of all blacks [saw] redevelopment as a negative, a view shared by only 17 percent of whites."[709] The year after the poll, researchers found that 62 percent of the District's "extremely low-income"[710] residents—91 percent of whom were African American—spent more than half of their income on rent and utilities, which was a 12 percent increase from 2004.[711] The direct effect of these developments has been the movement of African American outside of the district, particularly to Prince George's County, Maryland.[712]

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[705] Phillips, "DC's Millennial Population Age 18-34: Then and Now."

[706] Tatian and Lei, "Washington, DC: Our Changing City, Chapter 3: Housing"; Jackson, *An Analysis: African American Employment, Population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C.*, 13.

[707] Schwartzman, Hauslohner, and Clement, "Poll: White residents in D.C. think redevelopment helps them. Black residents don't," https://search.proquest.com/docview/1734962219?accountid=46320.

[708] Ibid.

[709] Ibid.

[710] "Extremely low-income" is classified as making more than $32,000, or less than 30 percent of the area median, for a family of four. See Jackson, *An Analysis: African American Employment, Population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C.*, 12.

[711] Ibid.

[712] Schwartzman, Hauslohner, and Clement, "Poll: White residents in D.C. think redevelopment helps them. Black residents don't"; Sasha-Ann Simons, "How Prince George's County Came To Be 'Ward 9'—To Mixed Reviews," *WAMU,* May 22, 2018, https://wamu.org/story/18/05/22/prince-georges-county-came-ward-9-residents-feel/; Leah Brooks and Caitlyn Valadez, "Policy Brief: African Americans in the Greater DC Area: 1930 to the Present," GW Institute of Public Policy's Center for Washington Area Studies, https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.gwu.edu/dist/7/677/files/2017/09/Final-Version-Mapping-Segregation-Policy-Brief-1tjali5.pdf.

The district earned the nickname Chocolate City because it was the first large city in the United States to have a majority black population.[713] In 1970, the District's African American population reached an all-time high of 71.1 percent; thereafter, it steadily declined as the city gentrified.[714] According to the U.S. Census records, the district's population was 70 percent black in 1980, 61 percent black in 2000, and 51 black percent in 2010.[715] By 2015, the district's African American population had dropped below 50 percent—to 48.3 percent—for the first time in sixty years. The percentage of African Americans living in the District continues to decline, falling to 47.7 percent in 2017.[716] In comparison, the district's Asian population steadily increased from 0.6 percent in 1970 to 1.8 percent in 1990, 3 percent in 2000, 4.2 percent in 2010, and 4.1 percent in 2017. The Hispanic population also increased from 2.8 percent in 1970 to 5.2 percent in 1990, 7.9 percent in 2000, 9.1 percent in 2010, and 10.9 percent in 2017. The white population in the District increased from 27.7 percent in 1970 to 28 percent in 2000, 35 percent in 2010, and 44.6 percent in 2017.[717]

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[713] Rosa Cartagena, "DC May No Longer Be 'Chocolate City,' But This Exhibit Is Keeping the Name Alive," *Washingtonian*, April 26, 2017, online, https://www.washingtonian.com/2017/04/26/dc-may-no-longer-chocolate-city-exhibit-keeping-name-alive/.

[714] The District began the first city to reach a majority African American population in 1957. See Jackson, *An Analysis: African American Employment, Population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C.*, 2.

[715] Tatian and Lei, "Washington, DC: Our Changing City, Chapter 1: Demographics."

[716] The African American population declined in specific neighborhood clusters, which are defined as "small areas within the city that are being used by the D.C. government for budgeting, planning, service delivery, and analysis purposes." There are a total of 39 neighborhood clusters in the District, and between the years 2000 and 2010, the African American population declined in 14 of the 39 clusters. Perry Stein, "The Healthy D.C. Economy is Leaving behind Longtime Black Residents, New Study Finds," *Washington Post*, Oct. 12, 2017. In 2015, African Americans accounted for 48.3 percent of the population in the district. See Jackson, *An Analysis: African American Employment, Population & Housing Trends in Washington, D.C.*, 2; and Tatian and Lei, "Washington, DC: Our Changing City, Chapter 1: Demographics," *Urban Institute*, accessed May 2018, http://apps.urban.org/features/OurChangingCity/demographics/index.html#index.

[717] Ibid.; "DC City Profile- Population." *Neighborhood Info DC*; Sawyer and Tatian, "Segregation Patterns in the District of Columbia 1980 to 2000;" "Quick Facts: District of Columbia," *United States Census Bureau*.

Chapter 11

Neighborhood Developments

The Renaissance of Columbia Heights

After the April 1968 riots, the Columbia Heights neighborhood fell into a severe decline that lasted until the late 1990s. The 14th Street corridor, once a destination shopping area, was "a sort of urban desert of vacant lots and storefronts," writes Brian Kraft in "Columbia Heights: Passageway for Urban Change" (2010).[718] In the early 1970s, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development enacted the Cardozo Urban Renewal Plan with the hope of revitalizing the area. The Cardozo Plan, which involved purchasing and clearing seventy acres of land, failed to attract real estate developers and left most of the properties between Irving and Monroe Streets vacant for decades.[719] By the mid-1970s as racial tensions eased in the District, renovation work shifted across 16th street into the predominantly black Columbia Heights neighborhood.[720] These restorers, typically young white professionals, bought and renovated homes, sometimes selling them for more than $110,000.[721] The median sales price in 1980 was $58,650, up from the $27,500 in 1975.[722] This increase in sales price led to the gentrification of the neighborhood. The white population jumped from 69 people in 1970 to 751 people in 1980 and the African American population dropped from 5,529 in 1970 to 4,136 in 1980.[723] By 1980, the population of

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[718] Kraft, "Columbia Heights," 254.

[719] Ibid., 253–54; Kraft et al., *Columbia Heights Heritage Trail*.

[720] Mount Pleasant, Capitol Hill, and Adams Morgan were saturated with renovators. See Fremgen, "Columbia Heights Renewal Slowed," E9; The population of Columbia Heights was approximately 94 percent African American in 1970. See "Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC," *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC, Prologue DC,* accessed Nov. 2017, http://jmt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=061d0da22587475fb969483653179091.

[721] Restorers purchased "rowhouse shells" for prices ranging from $40,000 to $55,000 and livable homes for prices ranging from $65,000 to $75,000. See LaBarbara Bowman, "Landlord Wins 2 ½-Year 'War' with His Tenants," *Washington Post*, Feb. 28, 1981, p. C1.

[722] Fremgen, "Columbia Heights Renewal Slowed."

[723] Ibid.

Columbia Heights was 80 percent black, 11 percent white, 7.5 percent Hispanic, and 1.2 percent Asian.[724]

Despite these early renovation efforts, Columbia Heights had a strong criminal element.[725] To the east of Meridian Hill Park there was an active crack market at Euclid and Newton Streets.[726] Clifton Terrace, a low-income housing complex at 14th and Clifton Streets, "was run by a notoriously rapacious slumlord" and known to be "one of the worst pockets [of crime]" in the District.[727] To the west of Meridian Hill Park, in the predominantly African American Reed-Cooke neighborhood, a drug ring operated in the lobby of the apartment building at 2440 16th Street. A former resident told *The Washington Post* that "when we came into the building [drug dealers] would ask us if we wanted to buy drugs, marijuana."[728] According to *The Post,* the landlord "let drug addicts adopt the buildings public hallways as home" because he wanted to rid the building of its currents residents and convert the property into high-priced condominiums.[729] The drug market thus impacted the neighborhood in numerous ways. On Belmont Street, for instance, the homes were neglected, the streets were littered with glass, and plastic syringes lined the gutters.[730] A series of 21 murders in the area surrounding Meridian Hill Park in the mid-1980s had gained the neighborhood a reputation as "murder central."[731]

Through the late 1980s and early 1990s, Columbia Heights continued to be the scene of violent crime.[732] In 1992, the District police force launched a counterattack against the drug and murder crisis, arresting 15 individuals that were part of the "Newton Street Crew." This crew, which *The Washington Post* described as "a sophisticated, violent drug organization,"[733] operated on Newton Street between 14th and 16th Streets. The District police force

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[724] Noah Sawyer and Peter A. Tatian, "Segregation Patterns in the District of Columbia 1980 to 2000," *DC Data Warehouse*, no. 2 (Oct. 2013), 7, https://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/pdfs/DC-Segregation-data.pdf. The influx of Latinos was apparent in the opening of numerous support agencies, such as the Latino American Youth Center. This center, which was opened in 1974, offered arts and crafts programs, employment and family services, and physical education classes. CentroNia, located at 1420 Columbia Road, was another support agency opened in the 1970s and it continues to offer bilingual child care to minority and low-income families in the area. La Clinica del Pueblo, located at 2831 15th Street, continues to provide medical care to Latino immigrants facing cultural and linguistic barriers. See "Our History," *La Clinica Del Pueblo*, accessed May 2018, https://www.lcdp.org/about-us/our-history; "Who We Are," *CentroNia*, accessed May 2018, https://centronia.org/mission/.

[725] Kashino, "The Reinvention of 14th Street."

[726] Michael Willrich, "The Autobiography of Malcolm X Park," *City Paper,* Nov. 23–30, 1989.

[727] Kashino, "The Reinvention of 14th Street."

[728] Bowman, "Landlord Wins 2 ½-Year 'War' with His Tenants."

[729] Ibid.

[730] Earl Caldwell, "Much of the Park's Beauty Is Hidden," *Washington Star*, Oct. 16, 1977, sec. C.

[731] Willrich, "The Autobiography of Malcolm X Park."

[732] Michael York, "Group Accused of Violent Drug Enterprises. 15 Arrested in Investigation of Newton Street Crew in NW," *Washington Post*, July 30, 1992, p. B1.

[733] Ibid.

and FBI also conducted homicide and drug investigations throughout Ward 1, and by 1993 Ward 1 ranked in the bottom half of the eight wards for the number of homicides, rapes, and assaults reported.[734] Gentrifiers and community improvement organizations also attempted to improve the condition of the neighborhood by purchasing and renovating row houses and apartment buildings. Specifically, the low- and moderate-income apartment building at 1415 Girard Street was one of the 1,611 housing units renovated using government funds. The 26-unit apartment building next door was also converted into transitional housing for the homeless.[735]

The opening of the Columbia Heights Metrorail station in 1999 was what ultimately kicked off a period of rapid construction.[736] In 2003 Mayor Anthony Williams set a goal of attracting 100,000 new residents to DC.[737] The Williams administration, after reviewing numerous neighborhood investment strategies drafted by the planning office, decided to use "financial incentives to encourage the private market to build dense housing, [and] retail and office space around transit corridors."[738] In Columbia Heights, the administration believed that the Metrorail, along with mixed-use developments, remodeled schools, a recreation center, and a civic plaza, would attract working adults to the neighborhood and boost city tax revenues.[739] This strategy was effective, and the population increased by six percent between 2000 and 2010.[740]

Since 2000, the median rent in Columbia Heights has increased by more than 50 percent and the median home price has more than doubled. This increase in rental costs and property taxes has forced many low- and moderate-income households, the majority African American, out of the area. Subsequently, as young, white, affluent residents drove up housing costs, the neighborhood began to rapidly gentrify. By 2012, Columbia Heights was named by the Fordham Institute one of the fastest-gentrifying neighborhoods in the country. Census records show that the population of Columbia Heights was 66 percent black in 1990, 53 percent black in 2000, and 38 percent black in 2010. Meanwhile, the white population increased from 11 percent in 1990 to 18 percent in 2000 and 31 percent in 2010. Therefore, while the white population quadrupled between 2000 and 2010, a quarter of black residents

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[734] Ward 1 includes Columbia Heights. See Nell Henderson, "Dealing With Diversity in Ward 1; A Multicultural Kaleidoscope Offers Residents a Life Filled With Optimism and Frustration," *Washington Post*, July 7, 1994, p. J1.

[735] Ann Mariano, "Renovation Revives Historic Columbia Heights Cooperative: D.C., Benefactors Bring New Life to Apartment Building," ibid., April 25, 1992, p. E1.

[736] J.B. Wogan, "Why D.C.'s Affordable Housing Protections Are Losing a War with Economics," *Governing: The States and Localities*, Feb. 2015 Online Gentrification Issue, accessed May 2018, http://www.governing.com/topics/urban/gov-washington-affordable-housing-protections-gentrification-series.html.

[737] Ibid.

[738] Wogan, "Losing a War with Economics."

[739] Ibid.

[740] Ibid.

and almost 2 percent of Latino residents were priced out of the neighborhood. The Latino population in Columbia Heights declined from 31 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2000 and 27 percent in 2010. The Asian population meanwhile increased from 1.6 percent in 1990 to 3.2 percent in 2000 and 4.4 percent in 2010.[741]



Figure 48: Photograph of the civic plaza in Columbia Heights and the adjacent DC USA complex (Library of Congress)

The cost of living in Columbia Heights continues to skyrocket, which has led many younger residents to crowd into shared arrangements and subleases.[742] Many millennials have also left the city. Of the 59,000 people who left the District in 2012, about 44 percent ranged from 20 to 34 years old."[743] The effects of gentrification play out elsewhere, such as on community soccer fields. In 2017, *DCist* reported that the black and Latino pick-up soccer players—who had been playing at the Tubman Elementary School field for many years—were forced out by the primarily white sports league, ZogSports. This caused an uproar in the community because, as one Latino soccer player put it, "this is our way of life. After work, everyone is here on the field. This field is our community."[744] After consulting with city officials, ZogSports relinquished the space and apologized for the disruption of the community's pick-up games.[745]

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[741] Ibid.; "DC Neighborhood Cluster Profile- Population," *Neighborhood Info DC*, accessed May 2010, http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/nclusters/Nbr_prof_clus2.html.

[742] Robert Samuels, "Millennials Consider Leaving Washington as the City Becomes More Costly," *Washington Post*, June 20, 2014, online, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1538361741?accountid=46320.

[743] Ibid.

[744] Rachel Sadon, "On a Columbia Heights Soccer Field, The Effects of Gentrification Play Out," *DCist*, July 20, 2017, online, http://dcist.com/2017/07/on_a_columbia_heights_soccer_field.php.

[745] Ibid.

Adams Morgan

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Adams Morgan was a racially and economically diverse neighborhood.[746] The northern and western parts of the neighborhood featured traditionally expensive turn-of-the-century row houses occupied by upper-income white residents."[747] East of 18th Street, the types of housing units were the same, but many were slums, and the population was mostly low-income blacks and Spanish Americans.[748] Real estate developers began to speculate and buy large chunks of land, sometimes entire blocks, in this area beginning in the early 1970s.[749] Adams Morgan quickly became "one of the hottest housing markets in the city,"[750] according to *The Washington Post*, as young white families and couples bought and restored row houses at ever-increasing prices.[751] These renovations, while beautifying the neighborhood, priced out many lower-income residents, thereby threatening the social and racial diversity that makes Adams Morgan attractive.[752]

The white, college-educated, and socially concerned newcomers were "threatening that very diversity [that attracted them to the neighborhood] by their presence."[753] African Americans and Latinos were being priced out of the neighborhood, the African American population in particular shrinking from 52 to 26 percent from 1970 to 1990.[754] The Adams Morgan Organization (AMO) (established in 1972) attempted to combat the growing development, housing, and displacement threat by supporting tenant ownership.[755] The AMO used the somewhat obscure "right to first refusal" clause from the district's 1974 rent control law, which said that if a landlord decided to sell, tenants had the right to match the offer for the property and purchase it, to their advantage. In 1976, the AMO filed two lawsuits on behalf of twenty-three families against development companies that did not offer tenants this right. After these lawsuits, the district government conducted investigations and several in-progress developer-landlord transactions were frozen. However, the tenants were still bought out by

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[746] Thomas L. Lippman, "Adams-Morgan: Community Divided: Residents Are Split on Whether Renovation Trend Is Desirable," *Washington Post*, March 25, 1974, p. C1.

[747] Ibid.

[748] Ibid.

[749] Tanvi Misra, "Forgotten Lessons from a 1970s Fight against Gentrification," *CityLab*, accessed May 2018, https://www.citylab.com/equity/2015/02/forgotten-lessons-from-a-1970s-fight-against-gentrification/385212/.

[750] Lippman, "Adams-Morgan: Community Divided."

[751] Ibid.

[752] Paul Lacy and Andrew P. Molloy, "Businesses Are Feeling Effects of Gentrified Property Value," *Washington Post*, May 14, 1984, p. 31–33.

[753] Lippman, "Adams-Morgan: Community Divided."

[754] Misra, "Forgotten Lessons from a 1970s Fight against Gentrification."

[755] Bill Ehart, "Politics of '60s Took Root in Adams Morgan," *Washington Post*, May 28, 1984, pp. 21–22.

the developers because they were "redlined," or refused home loans by banks and lending institutions on the basis of race and location.[756]

In the 1980s, the city government imposed controls to stabilize rents and real estate values, allowing the process of gentrification to slow.[757] Frank Smith, a former member of the AMO and the current director of the African American Civil War Museum in Washington, D.C., attributes the not-complete gentrification of Adams Morgan to "the anti-redlining campaign, the co-op movement that was financed by the anti-redlining campaign, and some of the subsidized housing."[758] Although gentrification did slow down, racial demographics had already shifted drastically. The population of Adams Morgan was 50 percent African American in 1970, 29 percent African American in 1990, and only 12 percent African American in 2010. The white population, meanwhile, increased from 51 percent in 1990 to 57 percent in 2000 and 68 percent in 2010. The Hispanic population also fluctuated from 16 percent in 1990 to 17 percent in 2000 and 13 percent in 2010.[759] Despite the migration of Latinos out of Adams Morgan, the Latino cultural presence remains strong. Mexican, Cuban, and El Salvadorian restaurants line Columbia Road and the Latino culture is celebrated annually during the Latino Festival (now the Fiesta DC).[760]

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[756] Misra, "Forgotten Lessons from a 1970s Fight against Gentrification."

[757] Jeff Barth and Mary Ann Grams, "Revitalization Puts Community at Crossroad of Change," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1984, p. 30.

[758] Misra, "Forgotten Lessons from a 1970s Fight against Gentrification."

[759] "DC 2012 ANC Profile Profile-Population: ANC 1C," *Neighborhood Info DC*, accessed May 2018, http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/anc12/Nbr_prof_anc3.html.

[760] New low-income Latino immigrants are increasingly choosing to "put their bags down" in the crowded "lower rent garden apartments inside the Beltway, in places like South Arlington, Arlandria, Langley Park, and Hyattsville." Meanwhile, Adams Morgan's Latino residents that have been forced out by development or condominium conversions have moved farther up 16th Street into neighborhoods such as Brightwood. See Cadaval, "Adams Morgan," 445–46; Lavanya Ramanathan, "Is Adams Morgan D.C.'s Last Funk Neighborhood? Or Is It Past Its Prime?," *Washington Post*, Sept. 9, 2017, p. C1.

Chapter 12

Meridian Hill Park: A Place for African American Social Contestation

Memorials, Rallies, and Demonstrations

In 1969, a year after the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., memorials and rallies were planned across the District in his honor.[761] The Metropolitan Community Aid Council sponsored four afternoon rallies, one at Meridian Hill Park.[762] During the 1969 rally at Meridian Hill Park, William Herman (Che) Payne, a "black militant," a fieldworker for SNCC, and a friend of Stokely Carmichael's, seized the microphone. Payne delivered some militant remarks and urged the demonstrators to "go home and get [their] guns—enough of this talking."[763] R. H. Booker, a member of the BUF, "urged an end to bickering over tactics to be used in the struggle for Negro rights" and gave a speech, proclaiming:

> We should not stand here in an open forum and talk about the revolutionary struggle. If you're talking about a revolutionary struggle, you're talking about an armed struggle. We don't kid ourselves that here in Malcolm X (Meridian Hill) Park, we're going to plan the liberation of black people.[764]

Author Michael Willrich writes that the earliest mentioned reference to Meridian Hill Park as Malcolm X Park was in the *Washington Evening Star* article "Solemn Rallies and Services Honor Memory of Dr. King" (1969). However, Willrich notes, most do not know when and who first referred to the park as Malcolm X Park:

> Artist/activist Freddy Reynolds recalls that people started calling the park after the Muslim leader in the wake of the Malcolm X Day rallies celebrated around

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761 "Memorial Rallies Urge Rededication to King's 'Dream,'" *Washington Pos*t, April 5, 1969, p. A1; Over the years, additional memorial services were held at Meridian Hill Park in honor of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. In 1974, about 200 Coolidge High School students walked out of school and held a memorial service at the park. This peaceful walk-out to demonstrate support for a resolution to make Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a holiday. See "Metro Notebook: District," *Washington Star*, Jan. 16, 1974, p. 29.

762 "Memorials and Rallies Planned for Dr. King," *Washington Evening Star*, April 2, 1969, p. B3; John Mathews and Barry Kalb, "Solemn Rallies and Services Honor Memory of Dr. King," ibid., April 5, 1969, sec. A.

763 Carl Bernstein, "2d Bel Air Car Bomb Victim Identified as SNCC Worker," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1970, p. A12.

764 Mathews and Kalb, "Solemn Rallies and Services Honor Memory of Dr. King."

> his birthday—May 19—staged there in the late '60s. [Howard University's E. Ethelbert Miller] says the neighborhood was a hotbed of black pride in those days, with the neighboring Drum and Spear Bookstore and the Center for Black Education receiving and sending out sparks of political energy.
>
> Nearly everyone agrees that the predominantly black makeup of the neighborhood in the '60s spurred feeling that the park should be named after a black leader.[765]

In another *City Paper* article Willrich followed up on his previous article, writing:

> The people involved in naming the park were activists involved in the black community,' says Booker. 'For those who weren't directly involved in those organizations or who weren't holding events in the park, it didn't surprise me that they did know [why Meridian Hill Park is commonly referred to as Malcolm X Park.]'
>
> As Booker tells it, the federal common—officially called Meridian Hill Park—was renamed after Malcolm X in the late '60s by the Black United Front, a coalition of grass-roots groups led by Booker, Stokely Carmichael, Marion Barry Jr., Walter Fauntroy, Willa Hardy, Rev. Douglas Moore, and Sterling Tucker. The group felt entitled to rename the park, Booker says, because neighboring Columbia Heights and Reed-Cooke was a bastion of black activism and community groups staged rallies in the park to support the Black Panthers, pan-Africanism, and myriad local causes.
>
> The coalition voted to rechristen Meridian Hill Park after a black leader as a show of black empowerment. 'As I remember, Malcolm X was the first name we considered to rename the park,' says Booker, 'because all of the people involved were admirers of Malcolm X and tried to follow his teachings.
>
> The Front's member groups spread the word in the community, and the nickname stuck.[766]

The BUF took no formal action to rename the park because, as Booker explained, "'We [the BUF] legitimized the name Malcolm X Park within the black community.'"[767] However, the following year, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell of Harlem, a politician and activist of African American decent, introduced a bill in Congress to rename the park. This bill

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765 Michael Willrich,"The Autobiography of Malcolm X Park," *City Paper*, Nov. 23–30, 1989.

766 Michael Willrich, "D.C. 101: How Malcolm X Park Got Its Name," ibid., Dec. 8–14, 1989. Brian Kraft writes in the "Columbia Heights Heritage Trail Guide" (2010) that Angela Davis unofficially renamed the park 1970. The Washington Parks & People website also notes that "The Malcolm X nickname came from Angela Davis, who, in a 1969 rally, called for the park to become a symbol of Black pride." However, the researcher found no evidence to support this claim.

767 Ibid.

was not enacted because Meridian Hill Park has a memorial to President James Buchanan and thus cannot be named for anyone else.[768]

Black nationalist groups continued to appropriate the park for a variety of events and rallies. In May 1969, the Malcolm X Memorial Committee organized a two-day celebration in honor of the late Malcolm X's birthday at Meridian Hill Park (which, according to the *Baltimore Afro-American,* was already "popularly called Malcolm X Memorial Park by many nationalist and community groups.")[769] On the second day of the celebration, the committee planned that "from 12 noon until sundown there will be cultural and political events, including art and book exhibits, dances, plays and a show by a jazz singer, Roberta Flack."[770] The committee also asked schools in the neighborhood to close on this day because "We want to educate black people to what Malcolm is all about."[771] Furthermore, on September 12, 1969, the Chicago and Oakland Black Panther leaders organized a rally to begin a drive to establish more community programs.[772] The Panthers encouraged the 200 or so black and white citizens attending the rally to "purge their hearts of racism and try to stamp out oppression."[773] Don Cox, the Field Marshal of the Oakland, California chapter, declared that "it's not black against white, it's the oppressed against the oppressor. You don't fight racism with racism." The police reported that there were no incidents during the Panther rally.[774]

The following year, another celebration was held in the park in honor of the late Malcolm X's birthday.[775] The BUF also held a neo-traditional African wedding ceremony in June 1970 with the support of the National Park Service's Summer in the Parks Program. Rev. Douglas E. Moore, the chairman of the BUF, initiated the wedding ceremony of BUF members Iantha Means and Frederick J. Gaylord, the chairman of the BUF's education committee. During the ceremony, Moore invoked "the presence of all our great ancestors in Africa and here," including Nat Turner, Booker T. Washington, Malcolm X, the 18th-century Zulu chief Chaka, and the slain Kenyan economic advisor Mboya.[776] The bride, groom, and the 125 or so guests wore African dress.[777] A month later, on July 15, 1970,

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[768] Director of the National Park Service to the Legislative Council of the House of Representatives, April 2, 1970, *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Volume I*, 141.

[769] John Lewis, "Black Voice," *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 10, 1969, p. 5.

[770] Ibid.

[771] Ibid.

[772] "1,700 Attend Black Panther Rallies Here," *Washington Evening Star*, Sept. 13, 1969, p. A22.

[773] Ibid.

[774] Ibid.

[775] "Star Photographer Cameras Taken," *Washington Evening Star*, May 20, 1970, p. C4. Another celebration for the late-Malcolm X's birthday was held at the park in 1971. See "School Boycott A Flop, D.C. Says," ibid., May 19, 1971, p. B4.

[776] "2 Wed Here in African-Oriented Rites: African Dress Worn," *Washington Post*, June 28, 1970, p. B2.

[777] Ibid.

Walter E. Fauntroy also held a rally in the park to protest the 3-cent fare increase for the D.C. transit system.[778]

The Black Panthers, with the permission of the National Park Service, held another rally in Meridian Hill Park on September 17, 1970. Elbert "Big Man" Howard, the Panther's deputy minister, told the predominately young white audience of approximately 3,000 "that they would stay in Washington for three days, or three months, if necessary, until they found a suitable convention hall [for the Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention]."[779] The following month, U.S. District Court Judge George Hart, Jr. waived the 15-day notice required by the Interior Department, granting the Panthers permission to hold a rally in the park. The purpose of this rally was to develop a plan to secure a location for the Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention.[780] The Panthers decided last-minute to hold the convention at Howard University, but the plans fell through the day before the convention. U.S. District Court Judge John Pratt issued a second order waiving the required 15-day waiting period for a permit to allow the Panthers to host another rally.[781] National Park Service attorney Richard Robbins also announced that the Black Panthers were permitted to use Meridian Hill Park provided "that they would use the occasion to tell their followers that 'the convention had been canceled and that they should go home. . .'"[782] However, the crowd was told during the rally that the convention was not canceled and that they should gather at the Church of St Stephen and the Incarnation for another meeting the next day. The crowd of 3,000 to 5,000 people, the majority white (60%), then enjoyed a rock concert by the Panther-oriented band "Lumpen."[783] "The session ended," according to *The Washington Post*, "with the formation of a coalition among the Panthers, Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation movement." The goal of this coalition was "to push for the issue of equal rights in the new [Panthers] constitution."[784]

After a teach-in was held at Howard University in March 1971, African Americans also began to increasingly participate in the anti-war movement.[785] The Third World Task Force Against the War in Southeast Asia held a rally at Meridian Hill Park on April 3, 1971 with the goal of gathering "black community support for the anti-war movement."[786] Once assembled,

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778 Walter Taylor, "Bus Fare Protests Directed at Capitol Hill: Fauntroy Leads 250 In March," *Washington Evening Star*, July 15, 1970, p. B4.

779 Trescott, "Panthers' Convention Is Still Seeking a Site."

780 Richard E. Prince, "Panthers, Armory Stalled on Rental," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, Oct. 10, 1970, p. B2.

781 Ivan C. Brandon and Jim Mann, "Panthers Hold Rockfest, Meet Today," ibid. Nov. 28, 1970, p. A3.

782 Ibid.

783 Ivan C. Brandon and Jim Mann, "Panthers End D.C. Convention," ibid., Nov. 30, 1970, p. C1.

784 Brandon and Mann, "Panthers Hold Rockfest, Meet Today."

785 "Antiwar Activities Backed by Blacks," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, March 30, 1971, p. C2.

786 "Peace Group Seeks Blacks In D.C. March," *Washington Evening Star*, April 3, 1971, p. A7; "'Third World' Protest: Blacks March against War," *Sunday Star*, April 4, 1971, p. D5.

the group of 50 to 75 demonstrators, mostly African American, marched down 14th Street to Lafayette Square. Along the way, they were joined by a group of Chinese-Americans who called themselves "Asian Americans for Peace."[787] On April 24, 1971, around 2,000 Task Force members and their supporters rallied again at Meridian Hill Park before joining the larger crowd of 200,000 anti-war protesters downtown.[788] On both occasions, Task Force members were protesting the United States' "racist" role in the war in Indochina.[789] That same year, Gaston Neal, a black poet, organized the "The Seven Days in August" festival. Neal hoped "to transform the principles of black nationalism into something tangible for the 'total black community'" through the creation of an African Peoples' Community Center.[790] To raise money for the proposed community center, festival events were organized across the District. Two events were held at Meridian Hill Park: a rally for the park's official name change and a sunrise service.[791]

A year later, on January 26, 1972, a group of about 30 young people marched from Meridian Hill Park to the White House in support of Angela Davis who had been imprisoned for her purported involvement in the armed seizure of a Marin County Courthouse in California.[792] The D.C. Committee to Free Angela Davis also celebrated the acquittal of Davis at Meridian Hill Park on June 4, 1972.[793] Prior to this celebration, a large crowd gathered at the park on May 17, 1972, for African Liberation Day (ALD). The ALD celebrations, organized by the National Black Political Convention, were a success. According to journalist Gerard Burke:

> At 9:30 that morning, there were already several thousand persons occupying the upper level of Malcolm X (Meridian Hill) Park… and they never stopped pouring in from the street as the morning wore on.
>
> Standing in groups, sitting on benches and park walls or just laying on the grass were people of all shades of color and from all areas of the country. They included tots, teenagers, young adults and older folk.[794]

After the rally at Meridian Hill Park, the group, headed by several prominent figures such as Queen Mother Moore, Dick Gregory, Amiri Baraka, Don L. Lee, and Walter Fauntroy, paraded through Embassy Row, through Rock Creek Park toward the State Department, and

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787 "Peace Group Seeks Blacks in D.C. March."

788 West, "200,000 March against War."

789 Bernstein and Valentine, "Rally Near White House Signals Renewed War Protests."

790 "Blacks' Festival Seeks $10,000 for Center Here," *Sunday Star*, August 22, 1971, p. A18.

791 Ibid.; Ivan C. Brandon, "War Protests Set for April," *Washington Post*, March 5, 1971, p. A20.

792 "Metro Wrap Up: The District: Angela's Birthday," *Washington Evening Star*, Jan. 27, 1972, p. B4.

793 "D.C. 'Free Angela' Group Holding Victory Rally Today," ibid., June 5, 1972, p. A6.

794 Gerard Burke, "African Liberation Day march draws thousands," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 3, 1972, p. 9.

to the Washington Monument grounds.[795] There, in front of an audience of approximately 35,000 people, Rev. Douglas Moore of the BUF spoke. Moore told the crowd that the purpose of the ALD is "to show love and concern for the Motherland, and solidarity with the brothers and sisters in southern Africa who are waging guerrilla-type wars of liberation to regain their homelands from European colonizers."[796] The group, in recognition of the slain Congolese premier Patrice Lumumba, symbolically renamed the Washington Monument grounds "Lumumba Square" during the rally downtown.[797]

In January 1973, the D.C. Coalition for Self-Government and Peace, a coalition of African American leaders, organized a rally at Meridian Hill Park to protest the loss of government funds for social services to the war effort. The rally was ultimately rained out and held at the All Souls Unitarian Church (16th and Harvard Streets, NW) in Columbia Heights.[798] The African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) also organized ALD celebrations at Meridian Hill Park on May 26, 1973. This year, rather than educate the public on the liberation wars in South Africa, the ALSC decided to focus on parallels between the situations in Africa and the United States. The day's activities, dedicated to Amílcar Cabrallcar Cabral, the slain leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, began with a rally at Meridian Hill Park. From the park, the group marched past the South African, British, and Portuguese Embassies, proceeded past the Rhodesian Information Center, and then headed back to the park.[799] ALD celebrations continue to be held annually in the District; however, the location changes.[800]

Another rally was held at Meridian Hill Park in the spring of 1973. Several hundred people gathered to protest the imprisonment of black political leaders in the United States

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[795] "Liberation Day demonstrations set for D.C., May 27," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 15, 1972, p. A10; Tom Stokes, "Blacks protest South Africa: 35,000 join rally," *Chicago Defender*, May 30, 1972, p. 4.

[796] Ibid.

[797] Richard E. Prince, "12,000 Blacks March to Support Africa," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, May 28, 1972, p. A1.

[798] This protest was part of the larger Rally Against Death, cosponsored by the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) and People's Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ). See Paul W. Valentine and Laura Kiernan, "18 Antiwar Congressmen to Shun Inaugural," *Washington Post*, Jan. 20, 1973, p. A6; "Metro Wrap Up: District: Inaugural Protest," *Washington Evening Star*, Jan. 16, 1973, p. B4; Calvin Zon, "A Protesting of the Protests," ibid., Jan. 17, 1973, p. Z5.

[799] Jacqueline Trescott, "Lib Day Links African and U.S. Problems," ibid., May 23, 1973, p. A12; "Metro Notebook: District," ibid., May 25, 1973, p. E6.

[800] "5,000 Note African Day," *Washington Star*, May 26, 1974, p. B2; Cynthia Gorney and Juan Williams, "A Great Day for Rallies," *Washington Post*, May 29, 1977, p. 53; Earl Byrd, "10,000 Demonstrate Peacefully Here," *Washington Star*, May 29, 1977, p. B6; "Display Ad 4-No Title," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 20, 1978, p. A3; "Thousands Rally for African Liberation Day," ibid., June 10, 1978, p. A2; Stephen King and Kathy Ragland, "Malcolm X Recalled at Ceremonies," *Washington Star,* May 20, 1979, p. C-2; Ayana Taylor, "DeeCee scene of African Liberation Day," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 26, 1979, p. 38; "African Liberation Day," *Washington Post,* May 25, 1980, p. C1; Desiree F. Hicks, "Freedom Rally Held: Apartheid Protested at Event for African Liberation Day," ibid., May 26, 1985, p. A32; "Celebration of African Unity," ibid., May 27, 1990, p. D3.

and white Africa. During the rally, Rev. Ben Chavis, a North Carolina civil rights leader and the director of the D.C. Commission for Racial Justice (an organization which works to free black political prisoners), told the crowd that the three African American men charged with the shooting of Mississippi senator John Stennis "are innocent, and are actually political prisoners in their own country."[801] C. Phillip Goodman, the chairman of the D.C. Support Committee for African Prisoners of War, declared that the purpose of the rally was to encourage protests in Jackson, Mississippi the following weekend.[802] The gathering also featured soul music by the D.C. group Aggression, as well as performances by the African Culture Drummers and Dancers.[803]

In September 1973, after the police murders of twelve African blacks in a mining town near Johannesburg, South Africa, a group of Pan-Africanist and other progressive black organizations met to plan a protest in the District. Stokely Carmichael, the head of the A-APRP, spoke to the more than 100 people in attendance about the growing number of black protests nationwide. Carmichael proclaimed: "When Israel is in trouble, Jews in this country come to its defense; when Ireland is in trouble the Irish respond. Africa has been in trouble and is becoming more under attack by its worldwide foes, including the U.S. and Africans in this country are rallying to its defense and support."[804] The group decided to assemble at Meridian Hill Park and march down 16th Street to Lafayette Park to demonstrate against the U.S. government and an unnamed corporation with South African ties.[805] No articles or permits have been identified that indicate that this plan was carried out.

The following year, members of the Workers League and the Young Socialists started their three-hour march through northwest Washington, D.C. at Meridian Hill Park. The 250 young marchers, many African American, chanted "Force Nixon out, build the labor party." In front of the headquarters of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) (16th and I Streets, NW), the demonstrators chanted "Hands off the unions, build the labor party." The march ended with a rally at Lafayette Park where speakers denounced President Nixon and George Meany, the president and founder of the AFL-CIO.[806] In May 1976, a public rally and program to support Rev. Ben Chavis and the Wilmington 10 was also held at Meridian Hill Park. This rally included live entertainment from the Exodus I gospel choir and the Family Jam Band. There were also speakers, exhibits, and poetry readings.[807] The following month, the *Washington Star* documents in

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801 "Sunny Spring: Flowers and People Blossom," ibid., March 25, 1973, p. A1.

802 Ibid.

803 Ibid.

804 "Progressive blacks: Rip killings in S. Africa," *Chicago Defender*, Sept. 20, 1973, p. 6.

805 Ibid.

806 Douglas B. Feaver, "Marchers Here Seek Ouster of Nixon," *Washington Post*, March 17, 1974, pp. B1, B4.

807 "Benefit Rally," *Washington Star*, May 28, 1976, p. 43.

the article "Blacks Protest at S. African Embassy" (1976), a coalition of groups rallied at the park to protest "the South African socio-economic practice of apartheid."[808] The protesters, mostly young and black, processed from Meridian Hill Park to the South African Embassy.[809] Additionally on May 19, 1979, the Arab Student Association and the A-APRP jointly demonstrated against "their respective 'oppressors,' the embassies of South Africa, Israel and Rhodesia."[810] After marching down Massachusetts Avenue, the 2,000 or so demonstrators proceeded to Meridian Hill Park for a rally and reggae performance.[811]

Black nationalist and black activist groups continued to appropriate Meridian Hill Park for rallies and demonstrations. On May 26, 1980, the NAACP, the Urban League, the Ministers' Conference, and the BUF sponsored a rally in support of the causes of the Miami riots.[812] The *Washington Post* also reported that A-APRP coordinated and hosted the annual African Liberation Day demonstration. On May 23, 1981, the demonstration began with a rallying cry from a loudspeaker attached to a car parked on 15th Street near the park. The voice shouted: "Fight against capitalism! It is a vicious system that oppresses you everyday. Fight against Zionism and racism . . .organize, organize, build the party. Build the All-African People's Revolutionary Party."[813] The 3,000 to 4,000 demonstrators, wearing white garments to symbolize uniformity, marched through Adams Morgan, Shaw, and downtown before returning up 16th street to the Park.[814] Once there "the demonstrators congregated in a festive, picnic-like mood, reclining on the grass, listening to speeches, talking politics and religion or strolling along the edge of the crowd, buying soft drinks, fruit, books and posters from street vendors. Beating drums and enthusiastically pumping clenched fists. . .the predominantly black crowd chanted a variety of slogans."[815] The 25th ALD celebration was held on May 29, 1983, attracting about 3,000 people.[816] Only 700 people attended the 1984 ALD celebration.[817]

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[808] Lynn Dunson, "Blacks Protest at S. African Embassy," ibid., June 27, 1976, p. E10.

[809] Ibid.

[810] Courtland Milloy and Athelia Knight, "African, Palestinian Marchers Join Forces on Mass. Ave," *Washington Post*, May 20, 1979, p. C3.

[811] Ibid.

[812] "District Calendar: Monday: Rally at Malcolm X Park," *Washington Star*, May 23, 1980, p. B2.

[813] Sargent, "3,000 Marches Celebrate African Liberation Day," p. D3.

[814] Ibid.

[815] Ibid.; Slogans included, "Africa must be free; build the A-APRP," "Hell no, we won't go; we won't fight for capitalism," Capitalist hands off the red man's land" and "Reagan is a fascist; we need socialism. Those participating were also representatives from more than twenty-five groups including, the American Indian Movement, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and El Salvador and Iranian student organizations.

[816] Courtland Milloy and Sandra Gregg, "Parades and Picnics Draw Stay-in-Towners," *Washington Post*, May 29, 1983, p. B5.

[817] Edward D. Sargent, "700 Celebrate African Liberation Day," ibid., May 27, 1984, p. B3.

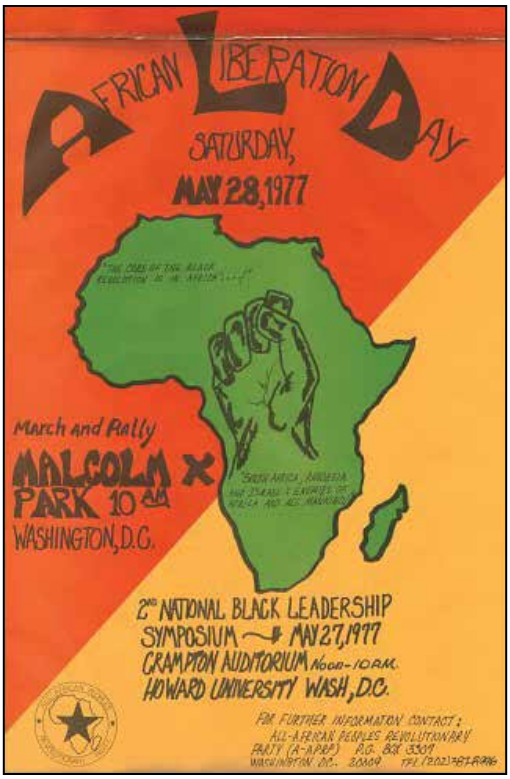


Figure 49: Poster for the 1977 African Liberation Day at Malcolm X Park/Meridian Hill Park (National Museum of African American History and Culture Collection)

In October 1983, several activist groups, including the A-APRP, protested the U.S. invasion of Grenada in front of the White House. These groups, which included the Black American Network for Disarmament, Peace and Justice, denounced the invasion as a "racist and futile act of aggression."[818] Stokely Carmichael, then known as Kwame Toure, expressed that the United States should instead "be going into South Africa and Namibia and driving out the oppressive forces there."[819] The Organization Opposed to the U.S. Invasion of Grenada, which organized the downtown rally, planned another demonstration at Meridian Hill Park on October 30, 1983. There is no other mention of this rally in the local newspapers.[820] In May 1985, the A-APRP also organized the annual ALD celebration at Meridian Hill Park. Around 2,000 people rallied at the park, "the largest group in recent years to attend the cultural and political commemoration of Africa and its diaspora."[821] The group, protesting South Africa's

[818] Edward D. Sargent, "Demonstrators Protest Invasion of Grenada," ibid., Oct. 27, 1983, p. A18.

[819] Ibid.

[820] Ibid.

[821] Desiree F. Hicks, "Freedom Rally Held: Apartheid Protested at Event For African Liberation Day," ibid., May 26, 1985, p. A32.

apartheid government, marched to the South African Embassy and returned to the park for a rally that included vendors and additional speeches.[822]

By the mid-1980s, black nationalists had ceased to appropriate Meridian Hill Park for rallies and demonstrations. However, despite the fall of the Black Panther Party and other black militant groups in the District, African Americans continued to appropriate the park for political and anti-war protests. In January 1991, about 300 members of the National African-American Network against U.S. Intervention in the Gulf rallied at the park. The group then proceeded downtown to join a larger rally sponsored by the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, a coalition of student, religious, labor, and human-rights groups.[823] Dick Gregory, an African American social activist, and several of his supporters called the Dignity Patrol, also set up camp at the park for "a winter-long protest against drug trafficking and alcohol consumption in Washington's neighborhoods."[824] On the first day of the camp-out, Gregory, the Dignity Patrol, and members of the Pan Afrikan Student Union collected bags of leaves and trash. The following day, Gregory was arrested for building a structure on public land. Gregory's efforts, and the efforts of the Friends of Meridian Hill, contributed "no alcoholic beverages" signs in the park (see Chapter 13 for more information on the Friends of Meridian Hill group).[825]

In October 2003, the Black Voices for Peace, a national network of black anti-war and justice advocates formed after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, hosted the Black Community March and Peace Fest at Meridian Hill Park. Before joining the larger demonstration at the Washington Monument grounds, the national black community mobilization met at Meridian Hill Park for two hours of events, including a rally and children's peace pavilion. Damu Smith, the founder and co-chair of Black Voices for Peace, explained during the rally that "the [black] mobilization is aimed at making a clear statement from the Black community that there is substantial opposition to the war and [President George W.] Bush's overall foreign and domestic policies."[826] Martin Luther King III, Rev. Walter Fauntroy, talk-show host Joe Madison, singer Ayanna Gregory, and several other civil and human rights activists were on the speaker's panel and performers rostrum.[827]

Nine years later, in 2012, Howard University students organized a march to protest the fatal shooting of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin by volunteer neighborhood watchman

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[822] Ibid.

[823] Paul W. Valentine, "Anti-War Movement Facing Test; D.C. Protest Saturday May Indicate Whether Sentiment Is Growing," ibid., Jan. 25, 1991, p. A31; Elsa Walsh and Paul Valentine, "War Protest Draws Tens of Thousands Here," ibid., Jan. 27, 1991, p. A1.

[824] Linda Wheeler, "Dick Gregory Is Arrested at NW Park," ibid., Oct. 13, 1993, p. D7.

[825] Patrice Gaines, "Group Vows to Reclaim NW Park: Meridian Hill Nice, Its Neighbor Says," ibid., Oct. 12, 1993, p. B5; Linda Wheeler, "No-Alcohol Signs Go Up in Four Federal Parks," ibid., Oct. 21, 1993, p. C6.

[826] "Martin Luther King III Joins National Iraqi War Protesters," *Atlanta Daily World*, Oct. 16, 2003, p. 1.

[827] Ibid.

George Zimmerman. This march was not only organized to seek justice for Martin, but also to protest the justice system that allowed for "racial profiling and [the] wrongful deaths of too many young black Americans."[828] On the day of the march, approximately 100 people met at Meridian Hill Park and marched the two miles to the Freedom Plaza. Along the way, the protesters chanted "Trayvon Martin, Emmett Till: How many more youth will you kill?" [829] In 2013, when court ruled in favor of Zimmerman, activists gathered at the park again for a prayer vigil.[830] The following year, after the fatal police shooting of an unarmed 18-year-old named Michael Brown, hundreds of demonstrators, many young and African American, gathered at the park for another vigil.[831] These demonstrators shouted slogans such as "Hands up! Don't shoot!" and "Black Lives Matter."[832] At the end of the vigil, hundreds lingered in the park and exchanged ideas for action. Some proposed organizing an economic boycott, joining a civil rights organization, or organizing a protest themselves.[833]



Figure 50: A moment of silence during the vigil for Michael Brown at Meridian Hill Park ("Vigil in U.S. honor victims of police brutality," *Japan Times*, Aug. 15, 2014)

In June 2016, after the fatal police shooting of several African American men in Louisiana and Minnesota, a group of fifty people gathered at Meridian Hill Park to express their frustration about police shootings and the slow movement toward racial equality. Johari

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[828] Emma Brown, "Marchers Repeat Calls for Justice for Martin," *Washington Post*, April 8, 2012, p. C4.

[829] Ibid.

[830] Jenna Johnson, "George Zimmerman Found Not Guilty: Live updates (Posted 2013-07-16 18:47:21)," ibid., July 16, 2013.

[831] Victoria St Martin, "Howard U. Students Take Stand in Ferguson Shooting, Pose for Picture that Goes Viral," ibid., Aug. 15, 2015.

[832] Clarence Williams, "Vigil Draws Peaceful but Angry Crowd of Demonstrators to D.C. Park," ibid., Aug. 15, 2014, p. A10.

[833] Ibid.

Stewart-Perry, a 24-year-old YMCA wellness coach, organized the event with 22-year-old Howard University student Addison Sarter. The organizers intended for the event to be a community forum, a place where the community could express ideas for action. After several speeches, a small group gathered beneath a tree in the park to talk about solutions. Sarter, who once believed in militancy to protect the black community, reportedly "said he now thinks that fighting the government physically is far-fetched."[834] Leteria Bailey, a 23-year-old from Silver Spring, agreed with Sarter, stating that "The goal is not to kill police or kill anybody. That's not what we need, more killings on top of others."[835] Steward-Perry agreed that "You don't drive out darkness with darkness. You drive darkness out with light."[836]

Although the surrounding neighborhoods are no longer predominately African American, black Washingtonians continue to gather at Meridian Hill Park for rallies and events. The connection of the black community to the park remains strong, as evidenced in the continued use of the name Malcolm X Park. In 2012, *DCentric* polled their readers, asking what they called the park and why. The results showed split opinions (65 votes for Meridian Hill Park, 57 for Malcolm X Park, and 37 for both), the opinion slightly in favor of Meridan Hill Park. Several readers explained their reasoning in the comments section of the article. A woman named Mrs. T wrote:

> As a life long citizen of DC, having survived the '68 riots I have known it as both Meridian Hill and Malcolm X Park. However, I perfer Malcolm because during the years immediately following the riots it became a cultural meeting place for the city's Black residents who had the conciousness of mind to plan and strategize ways to hold our communities together; to serve, educate and uplift a group of people who had just lost their champion for justice. How fitting that when one man of vision has fallen, another would symbolically rise in his place to as a sanctuary of vision and hope.[837]

Music, Theatre, Dances, Festivals, and Church Events

Concerts, theater performances, dances, and festivals featuring African American artists were also held in the park. In 1972, the National Park Service, as part of its Summer in the Parks program, organized African Heritage Day. This event drew thousands, and included "a miscellany of African artifacts, clothes and earrings for sale and amateur art."[838] The Ghana Cultural Workshop, a drum and dance ensemble, also gave a demonstration and free samples

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[834] Mary Hui, Elise Schmelzer, Moriah Balingit, and LaVendrick Smith, "'You Don't Drive out Darkness with Darkness': Local Groups Discuss Ways Forward after Violent Week," ibid., online, July 9, 2015.

[835] Ibid.

[836] Ibid.

[837] Elahe Izadi, "Meridian Hill Park or Malcolm X Park? (Poll)," *DCentric*, accessed 2019, http://dcentric.wamu.org/2012/05/meridian-hill-park-or-malcolm-x-park/index.html.

[838] Meryle Secrest, "The Day of the Crowd," ibid., Aug. 14, 1972, p. B3.

of cooking specialties were handed out.[839] The performances by Sir Joe and Free Souls (a local soul-rock band with a new record hit called "I Got So Much Trouble On My Mind"), Frankie and the Spindles (a soul band from Baltimore), and the Bar Keys and Malombo (a South African soul-rock group combo) drew many black youths to the event.[840] African Heritage Day was celebrated again in August 1975.[841]

A "Soul Special" was scheduled to take place at Meridian Hill Park on Sunday, July 8, 1973 with Millie Jackson, The Manhattan's Arron & Freddie, The Fathers Children, and other soul musicians scheduled to perform.[842] In May 1975, during the week-long mini-Bi-centennial celebration, numerous events were also planned across the District. The Ghana Festival, which featured Ghanaian films and a concert by the Ghana Cultural Band Ensemble, was to take place at Meridian Hill Park.[843] The following month, the District's black community demonstrated the link between black American and African and the Caribbean cultures during the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife. The events at Meridian Hill Park included a performance of "Daybreak Dreams" by the D.C. Black Repertory Company, street singing, gospel music, and children's games.[844]

During the summer of 1978, Caribbean Festivals Inc., a group of Caribbean nationals primarily from Guyana, hosted the 5th annual Caribbean Summer in the Parks program at the park. Fifteen groups performed including, the Trinidad & Tobago Baltimore Steel Orchestra, Carifolk Singers, and the Licyndiana Haitian Band. The Brazilian Folklore group also drummed, danced, and sang in celebration of their cultural origins.[845] By the late 1970s the Caribbean festivals began to outgrow the Park and organizers considered a move downtown.[846] Some members of the community resisted this move to predominantly white downtown as a "sell out."[847] The Caribbean Summer in the Parks celebration ultimately moved downtown where there was more space and the potential to expose more people to Caribbean culture.[848]

The All African Cultural Festival was hosted in Meridian Hill Park in May 1981 and 1982. The festival featured local African dance and music groups, crafts, food, and literature.

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[839] "Calendar: August 11-August 17: In the Parks," ibid., Aug. 11, 1972, p. B5.

[840] Secrest, "Day of the Crowd."

[841] "In Today's Washington Post: Front Page," *Washington Post*, Aug. 10, 1975, p. A2.

[842] "Sunday and Monday in Washington: Music," *Washington Evening Star*, July 7, 1973, p. 3.

[843] Betty James, "Mini-Bi-centennial Starts Here Today," *Washington Star*, May 3, 1975, p. B2.

[844] "Listings: Experimental Theater," ibid., July 20, 1975, H10; Boris Weintraub, "Gearing Up for the Folk Festival," ibid., June 1, 1975, p. H-9.

[845] "A Caribbean Celebration," *Washington Star*, July 14, 1978, p. B7; Courtland Milloy, "Food, Sun, Music: Direct From Caribbean," *Washington Post*, July 20, 1981, p. B1.

[846] Milloy, "Food, Sun, Music."

[847] Ibid.

[848] Ibid.

"Information officers" from nearby embassies were available to answer questions and local groups working on African issues were available to explain their efforts.[849] In September 1982, the Washington, D.C. Reggae Festival, Inc. held its first Reggae Festival in Meridian Hill Park.[850] The festival was held again in September 1983 and featured bands such as the Determination, the Mighty Invaders, Unconquered People, Ashantis, Carl Malcolm, the Positive Vibration Band, and special guests from Jamaica.[851] The musical guests in 1984 included the local bands of Infinity, Iwabo, Unconquered People, Determination, Carl Malcolm, Positive Vibration, and Smapp, a Jamaican band via Pittsburgh.[852] In the Summer of 1984, Howard University students also organized and sponsored a black pride program at the park. The event, called "Afro-Centric Unity," featured local bands, prominent speakers, and sidewalk vendors.[853]

In addition, black Washingtonians also appropriated Meridian Hill Park for a variety of religious events. On Good Friday and the first anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church (16th and Newton Streets, NW) "mark[ed] the first station of the cross by joining a neighborhood tribute to Dr. King" after a three-hour service at the church.[854] In 1971, the Church of God, founded by the late Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux, sponsored an Old Fashioned Gospel Revival at Meridian Hill Park. From Sunday, September 12th, through Friday, September 17th, the church held nightly services at the park.[855]

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[849] "Monday: Fairs and Festivals," *Washington Star*, May 22, 1981, p. B2; Martin Weil, "Holiday May Bring Area 90-Degree Day," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1981, p. A2.

[850] Smithsonian Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture, *Black Washingtonians*, 324.

[851] "Openings," *Washington Pos*t, Sept.18, 1983, p. G8; "A Festive Time in Northwest," ibid., Sept. 19, 1983. P. D3.

[852] "Critic's Picks: Pop Music," ibid., Sept. 16, 1984, p. D16.

[853] "Photo Standalone 1--No Title," ibid., Aug. 26, 1984, p. 37.

[854] Russell Chandler, "Good Friday Services Listed: Three-Hour Service," *Washington Evening Star*, April 2, 1969, p. B6.

[855] "Advertisement," ibid., Sept. 17, 1971, p. A14.

CHAPTER 13

MERIDIAN HILL PARK: A PARK IN DECLINE AND ADDITIONAL USES

THE DECLINE AND REVITALIZATION OF MERIDIAN HILL PARK

The close proximity to illegal drug dealing centers affected Meridian Hill Park's condition and use from the late 1960s to the late 1980s.[856] The park was littered with broken glass, the benches were too dirty to use, the fountains collected garbage, and the statues had been allowed to turn a bluish shade of green.[857] *The Washington Post* documented these undesirable elements in 1981:

> [Meridian Hill Park] is an ordinary city park by day with picnicking families and cavorting teen-agers. And in the evening a group of Rastafarians, their hair in dreadlocks, often sits in the park, listening to Reggae music.
>
> But late at night, Meridian Hill Park changes. The families and the children leave, and the faintly lit grounds become a realm of dim figures, a trysting place of homosexuals and a trading center for illicit drugs.[858]

A park policeman shared a similar opinion, describing the criminal element in Meridian Hill Park as follows:

> [T]he park changes four times a day. From sunrise until 3 in the afternoon, it is the best park in the world. After 3, we get the school kids and the evening people. After dark the criminal element comes in. About 10 or 11 o'clock it changes again. Then the morally undesirable element comes along—you know, the guys and the women come here to be picked up and they are here until 6 in the morning. . .
>
> It is this element that keeps people out of the park at night. And the trees that make it pleasant by day, make it dangerous at night.[859]

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[856] See Chapter 2: Neighborhood Developments, *The Renaissance of Columbia Heights*.

[857] Earl Caldwell, "Much of the Park's Beauty is Hidden," *Washington Star*, Oct. 16, 1977, p. C2.

[858] Linda Wheeler, "Dark Side of a Park: Meridian Hill's Formal Gardens Are Nightly Haunts of Drug Dealers," *Washington Post*, Aug. 30, 1981, p. B1; "Washington's notorious illegal drug dealing centers" were at Chapin Street, 14th and U Streets, 14th and V Streets, and 7th and T Streets.

[859] Caldwell, "Much of the Park's Beauty is Hidden," C2.

The policeman also told the *Washington Evening Star* that the park is a reflection of the neighborhood and Washington as a whole. Specifically, "it is a city park and it is a reflection of the city and the neighborhood. And in the blocks around it you see the plight and promise of Washington. . . .The park is like Washington. It is changing. And now like the neighborhoods around it, it is about to be refurbished."[860]

The park was about to be "refurbished" because Meridian Hill Park was included in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The approaching Bicentennial Celebration in 1976 also created a renewed interest in the maintenance and rehabilitation of Meridian Hill Park.[861] Ira J. Hutchinson, former superintendent of the National Capital Parks-East, sought the involvement of the local community in the rejuvenation efforts because "the best way to make the park safe . . . would be not only to restore the park to its former glory, but also to restore neighborhood pride in it."[862] The Crescent Street Block Club, the Meridian Hill Civic Association, and the Ontario Lakers, a sports club, volunteered to rejuvenate the park. By the end of May 1976, the walkways and steps had been repaired, brighter lights had been installed, and the plumbing had been fixed. A seven-man maintenance crew was also permanently assigned to the park and the U.S. Park Police established regular patrols. Meanwhile, children from neighborhood schools were recruited to be "Junior Rangers" and "Volunteers in the Parks," or "VIPS." These recruits met once a week for nature studies and other activities that helped keep the park clean and enjoyable.[863]

Despite the efforts of the National Park Service, the U.S. Park Police, and the local community, Meridian Hill Park continued to have issues with crime until the late 1980s.[864] On January 23, 1980, William R. Devereaux, the Department Commander of the D.C. chapter of the American Legion, was shot and killed in the park. Devereaux, who was cutting through the park on his way to the 16th Street bus, was thought to have been the victim of a robbery gone wrong.[865] The following year, *The Washington Post* reported an increase in drug trafficking and violent crimes, such as robberies and homicides. *The Washington Post* attributed the increase to a recent drug crackdown on nearby streets.[866] According to the U.S. Park Police, there had already been 27 arrests for narcotics and 160 narcotic-related reports at the

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860 Ibid.; For fear of using the park at night: Robert J. Lewis, "The Roosevelt: Quiet Amidst Hustle and Bustle," *The Washington Evening Star*, March 12, 1969; For crime during the day: "President Moves to Protect Diplomats," *Washington Post*, April 3, 1969, p. B3.

861 Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 63.

862 "Malcolm X Park," *Washington Post*, May 21, 1976, p. A24.

863 Ibid.; *Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Volume I*, 143; Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 63.

864 Wiley, "Meridian Hill-Malcolm X Park," 64.

865 Jim Brooke, "Rewards Are Posted in Murder of Legion Commander," *District Star*, Jan. 25, 1980, p. B3; "$5,000 Reward Posted in Search for Killer of D.C. Legion Official," *Washington Star*, March 13, 1980, p. B4.

866 Wheeler, "Dark Side of a Park."

time that *Post* article was published. These reports represented more than two-thirds of all the reports written for Meridian Hill Park.[867] By the end of the year, the National Park Service and the U.S. Park Police had decided to close the park at 9 p.m. from January 6th to April 30th, 1981. *The Washington Post* article "Meridian Hill Closing Set" (1981) documents that Edward D. Sargent describes this as "a last-ditch effort to curb the after-dark crime that… plagued the park."[868]

The institution of a curfew did not put an end to the criminal element in Meridian Hill Park. In 1989 a number of violent crimes occurred in addition to Saunders murder."[869] The same year, Meridian Hill Park also earned a new name. John Barrat, a District resident, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Washington Post* stating that the park should be renamed "Crack Park" on account of the nighttime drug market and "the recent discovery there of the bullet-riddled body of a young man."[870] Courtland Milloy, a *Washington Post* journalist, agreed, writing in the article "The Capital of Crack" that "Crack Park" was an accurate name because "people congregate [there] throughout the night to deal in crack. They smoke it, sell it, trade sex for it, and, when push comes to shove, pull out guns for it."[871] Milloy also noted that the U.S. Park Police was "hopelessly outnumbered by… [the] drug users that had flooded the place from nearby streets and apartment buildings."[872]

Meridian Hill Park was not, in fact, a crack market. Although some crack was sold there, it was primarily a "booming open-air *marijuana* market," writes Michael Willrich (1989) in "The Autobiography of Malcolm X Park."[873] Willrich documents that 95 percent of the 135 drug arrests in 1989 were for marijuana distribution or possession. People congregated there day and night to smoke and sell marijuana. They sold "it to Jamaicains from Columbia Heights," writes Willrich, "and white college kids from Columbia, Maryland; and, when the Park Police [came] running, they stash[ed] it under leaves and behind trees."[874] Henry Berberich, the head of the undercover narcotics division of the U.S. Park Police for the national capital area, was furious about Milloy's article. He told Willrich, "If [Milloy] wants to call if Reefer Madness up there that's one thing. Call it Ganja Madness, but don't call it a Crack Park…. The crack dealers are *outside* of the park, just a half a block away" on Euclid

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867 Ibid.

868 Edward D. Sargent, "Meridian Hill Closing Set," *Washington Post*, Dec. 25, 1981, p. B16.

869 Michael Willrich, "The Autobiography of Malcolm X Park," *City Paper,* Nov. 24–30, 1989.

870 John Barrat, "Letter to the Editor: Call It 'Crack Park," *Washington Post*, Aug. 15, 1989, p. A18.

871 Courtland Milloy, "The Capital of Crack," ibid., Aug. 24, 1989, p. DC1.

872 Ibid.; In an article from 1987, one couple interviewed notes, however, that crime and drug dealings appear to be tapering off after a decade. The park has become a neutral zone while drugs are sold outside of the park, around the corner. See Terry Downs, "Inside/Out: Divided It Stands," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1987, p. 37.

873 Willrich, "Autobiography of Malcolm X Park."

874 Ibid.

and Newton Streets.[875] Lt. Berberich also noted that the rise in marijuana dealing was linked to the decline of robberies and assaults in the park over the last ten years. A 21-year-old marijuana dealer echoed this analysis, telling Willrich: "Ain't nobody getting shot, stabbed, or beat up… This park is getting a bad rap. That's all it is. This ain't no bad park. It's just the area."[876]

Dorn McGrath, an urban planning professor at the George Washington University, presented a similar idea to Willrich, stating that "dangerous parks are nothing more than an obvious symptom of a sick city or a sick neighborhood."[877] In the case of Meridian Hill Park, the source of its sickness was Columbia Heights, the poor, neglected, and drug-ridden neighborhood to the east of the park. McGrath, in "The Autobiography of Malcolm X Park," notes that the condition of the neighborhood did not inherently make the park unsafe. Rather, because parks in poor areas fall under heavy usage, they tend to need more maintenance. Oftentimes, however, the demands on these facilities are too high and there are insufficient resources to maintain the park. In such cases, McGrath recommends community involvement or "adopt-a-park" programs. This approach, adopted by the National Park Service and several neighborhood organizations in the mid-1970s, failed to take hold at the park. McGrath theorized that this was because "it's a very formal, high-cost facility… not a neighborhood triangle at the intersection of two streets. It's beyond the capabilities of the neighborhood to keep it up."[878] Rolland Swain, former superintendent of Rock Creek Park, also noted that those living in the neighborhood did not see it as their park. He told Willrich, "I get no calls about



Figure 51: Civil War reenactment at Meridian Hill Park
(National Park Service)

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[875] Ibid.

[876] Columbia Heights, due east of the park, was the scene of twenty-one murders during a 42-month period ending in July 1988. Ibid.

[877] Ibid.

[878] Ibid.

Meridian Hill. I hear from the neighbors of Glover-Archbold, Fort Reno, Rock Creek Park. . . . They are quick to call us for anything they think is wrong."[879]

Meridian Hill Park continued to deteriorate because the National Park Service had neither the funds nor the personnel to support such a large and crime-ridden park. Darwina Neal, former chief of the Cultural Resource Preservation Services, National Capital Region, National Park Service, told *The Washington Post* that what the park needed were "some friends to look out for it."[880] Steve Coleman, inspired by the article and the recent murder in his housing complex near the park, founded Friends of Meridian Hill along with three African Americans, Rev. Morris Samuel, Howard Coleman, and Josephine Butler.[881] Coleman stated that the only way "to reclaim the park [was] to get people to use it."[882] Coleman later established a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service and organized restoration projects. One of the first projects organized by the Friends group was a massive cleanup on Earth Day, April 22. About 100 neighborhood residents participated and filled up 250 trash bags and planted five dogwoods and dozens of red geraniums. Coleman and the 400 or so members of the Friends also raised $5,000 for a Civil War reenactment and a concert on the Fourth of July.[883] Additionally, the Friends group encouraged other organizations to organize activities in the park. In 1990, the Columbia Heights Neighborhood Coalition began sponsoring an annual Easter Promenade at Meridian Hill Park. This event featured an Easter Bunny and contests for the cutest infant and best Easter bonnet.[884] Steve Coleman commented on the importance of this event, telling *The Washington Post* that "Even though it's [Meridian

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[879] Ibid.

[880] Linda Wheeler, "Washington's Jewel of a Park Losing Its Luster to Vandalism," *Washington Post*, Feb. 24, 1990, pp. B1, B3.

[881] Linda Wheeler, "Reclaiming Park's Lost Glamor; Friends of Meridian Hill Team with Officials to Clean Up Area," ibid., March 29, 1990, p. D7; Linda Wheeler, "Friends Help Meridian Hill Park," ibid., June 4, 1990, p. D5. Information of Josephine Butler from the Washington Parks & People website: Butler was the co-founder and former chairwoman of the D.C. Statehood Party. She was also the "Daughter of sharecroppers and granddaughter of people who were enslaved… Josephine Butler (1920-1997) was one of inner-city Washington's most respected community leaders, who helped shape nearly every major social change initiative in Washington since the 1930's. She started America's first-ever union of black women laundry workers, she helped lead the integration of the Adams and Morgan Schools, she educated thousands of children about the hazards of air pollution a generation before the environmental movement began, she was a lifelong leader in pressing for health care reform, and she co-founded the statehood movement for the District of Columbia. She became a champion of park revitalization to give our communities a place to come together, our children a safe outdoor place to learn about the world, and our city a place to champion true home rule for the lands we call home. Led by Ms. Butler at the time of her death, Washington Parks & People named the historic building at 2437 15th Street, NW, after her -- in the heart of the community in which she lived and worked for 63 years." See "Our Mission & Track Record," *Washington Parks & People,* accessed 2019, https://washingtonparks.net/mission/.

[882] Wheeler, "Friends Help Meridian Hill Park"; Cohn D'Vera, "D.C. Residents Dig In To Reclaim Their Park; Tree Planting Spruces Up Meridian Hill," *Washington Post*, Oct. 21, 1991, p. D3.

[883] Wheeler, "Friends Help Meridian Hill Park."

[884] Sari Horwitz, "Dapper Youngsters Step into Spring at Easter Promenade," *Washington Post*, April 16, 1990, pp. D1, D5.

Hill Park] fallen on hard times, we want to see this park once again be for all the people."[885] Brigid Forcey, the organizer of the second annual Easter promenade, told journalist Carlos Sanchez that "It's not anything formal. We're here to have fun and to strut our stuff in our Easter finest. We have it here because it's the most gorgeous park in the city and the more we use it, the more it becomes the neighborhood's again."[886]

Roland Swain, the park superintendent, recognized the importance of the National Park Service's working relationship with the Friends group. Swain told *The Washington Post* that "I am definitely hopeful the neighbors will help us turn the park around. It is a community park and it is community people who are going to have to reclaim it."[887] Swain also responded to this increased interest in the park by reorganizing his staffing priorities, bringing more workers to the park and opening the abandoned police substation in the park to the Friends group. The U.S. Park Police increased patrols, adding K-9 officers, plainclothes officers, and mounted officers to the patrol schedule. U.S. Park Police Lt. Jeffrey Davis, the commander of the Rock Creek Station, told *The Washington Post* that already "we are having an effect because we are making fewer arrests and are getting fewer complaints."[888]

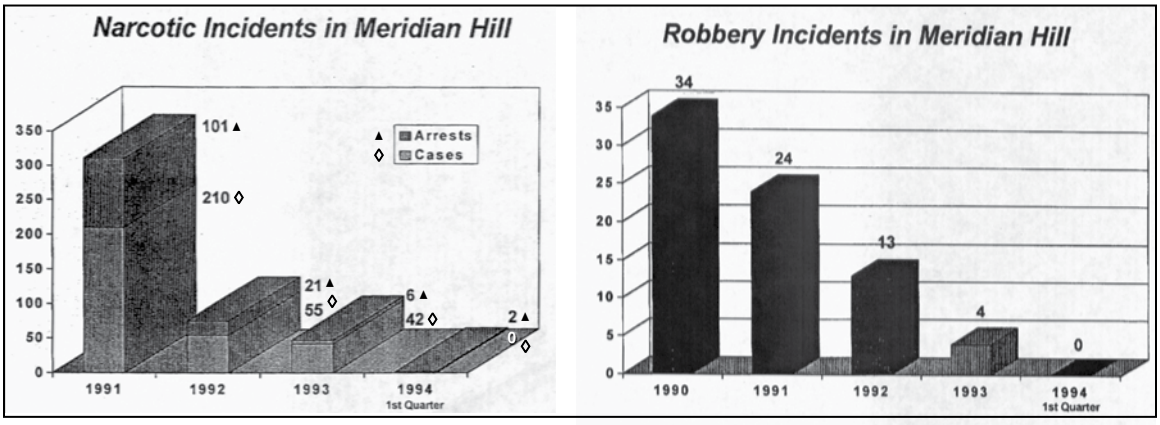


Figure 52: Graphs illustrating the decline in crime in Meridian Hill Park from 1991 to 1994 (Rock Creek Park Files, Museum Resource Center)

The Friends group continued to organize revitalization efforts in cooperation with the National Park Service."[889] Some of the events that the Friends group organized to help bring life back to the park included additional cleanups, graffiti removal, poetry readings, walking

[885] Ibid.

[886] Carlos Sanchez, "Delivering a Message on Both Sides of Pulpit; Protest, Promenade Mark Easter Sunday," ibid., April 1, 1991, p. B1.

[887] Linda Wheeler, "Reclaiming Park's Lost Glamor; Friends of Meridian Hill Team With Officials to Clean Up Area," *Washington Post*, March 29, 1990, p. D7.

[888] Ibid.

[889] Cohn D'Vera, "D.C. Residents Dig In To Reclaim Their Park; Tree Planting Spruces Up Meridian Hill," ibid., Oct. 21, 1991, p. D3.

tours, and summer concerts. In 1992, the Friends group actually planned a walk to raise funds to buy a tent concert pavilion for summertime concerts.[890] They also organized a celebration to celebrate the 580th birthday of the French saint, Joan of Arc, and the $15,000 donation from the New York-based Jeanne d'Arc Foundation's for the restoration and relocation of the park's Joan of Arc statue.[891]

By 1993, Meridian Hill Park was devoid of drug dealers and neighborhood residents no longer avoided the park for fear of robbery or assault. U.S. Park Police Lt. Henry Berberich reported that the number of robberies had dropped from 34 in 1990 to 13 in 1992. In 1991, there were 210 drug cases which resulted in 101 arrests. The following year, the number of drug cases fell to 55 and the number of arrests to 21. This was an 82 percent decrease in criminal activities at the park.[892] Lt. Berberich attributed this decrease to a combination of factors including, the identification "of recidivists who were habitually selling drugs" in the park. Over three years, the U.S. Park Police was able to build up enough cases against these repeat offenders to put them in jail. Lt. Berberich also assigned an officer to the park each day and established round-the-clock patrols. The enthusiasm of the 900 or so Friends of Meridian Hill members was another contributing factor as they helped address park safely issues, such as inadequate lighting and overgrown shrubbery. The retaking of Meridian Hill Park was thus the joint effort of the Friends of Meridian Hill, the National Park Service, the U.S. Park Police, and other local businesses and associations, which provided outside funds.[893]

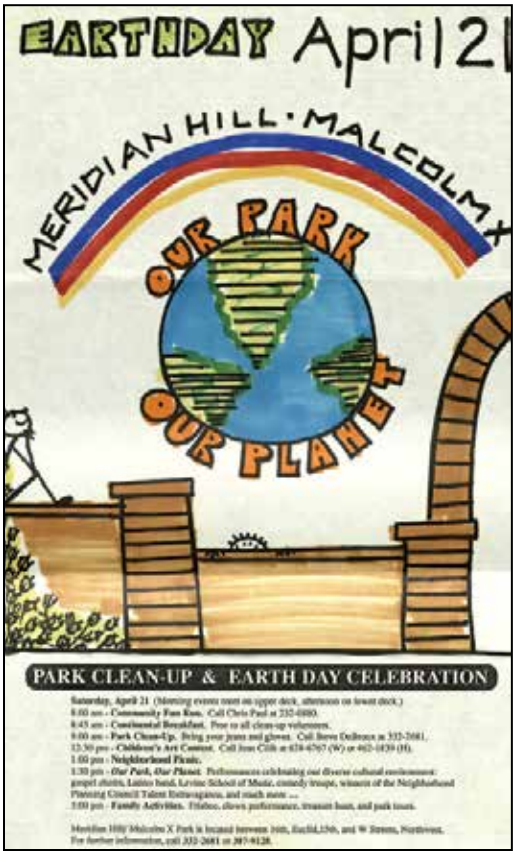


Figure 53: Flyer for Earth Day (Rock Creek Park Files, Museum Resource Center)

In 1994, Meridian Hill Park was designated a National Historic Landmark.[894] President Bill Clinton also delivered an environmental address at the park on Earth Day, 1994. In front of an estimated 500 people, Clinton praised the work of Friends of Meridian Hill, calling their efforts "absolutely unbelievable, and a great, incredible tribute to the

[890] Catherine O'Neill, "How About a Walk for a Park?," ibid., April 7, 1992, p. 18.

[891] "Personalities," ibid., Jan. 10, 1992, p. D3.

[892] Linda Wheeler, "Meridian Hill Park Wrestled Away From D.C. Drug Dealers," ibid., March 15, 1993, p. B6; "The Retaking of Meridian Hill," ibid., Aug. 15, 1993, p. C6.

[893] "The Retaking of Meridian Hill."

[894] Clem, *Images of America,* 124.

people of this community."[895] He went on to applaud what community activism could accomplish and encouraged the audience "to recognize the power of the ordinary citizens."[896] The following month, Clinton presented Steve Coleman and Josephine Butler, the Friends' vice president, with the National Park Foundation Partnership Award in a ceremony at the White House.[897]



Figure 54: Photograph of former President Bill Clinton
at Meridian Hill Park for Earth Day 1994
(Rock Creek Park Files, Museum Resource Center)



Figure 55: Photograph of former President Bill Clinton
at Meridian Hill Park for Earth Day 1994
(Rock Creek Park Files, Museum Resource Center)

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[895] Linda Wheeler, "President Stops to Smell The Flowers; Clinton Lauds Revival of Stately District Park," *Washington Post*, April 22, 1994, p. A3.

[896] Wheeler, "President Stops to Smell The Flowers; Clinton Lauds Revival of Stately District Park."

[897] "In the News: Meridian Hill Friends Win National Award," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1994, p. DC3.

The Friends of Meridian Hill's partnership with the National Park Service began to falter in 1995 when the Park Service did not renew the cooperative agreement."[898] In 2000, the relationship frayed further when around 100 neighborhood activists gathered at the park to protest what they said was the National Park Service's failure to revive the property by acting on the Friends pre-approved projects, including the addition of a community center and playground.[899] The recently issued Cultural Landscape Report, commissioned by the National Park Service, also put pressure on the relationship as it included a plan to restore the park to its 1936 appearance. The Friends of Meridian Hill criticized the plan for emphasizing that the Park was a historical artifact and not a living part of the community. In their opinion, the addition of playground equipment, a year-round concert stage, and nighttime fountain lighting were projects better suited to a neighborhood park.[900] Despite the strained relationship, the Friends group celebrated the restoration of the park's decorative lighting in September 1995. During the event, the fountain lights alternated colors for the first time since World War II, and the Monumental Brass Quintet "played popular music representing the history of the area, including a salute to American Indians and Civil War soldiers who camped there. Their selections also marked the rise of jazz in the nearby Shaw neighborhood and the arrival of Latino immigrants to the community." (For flyers of the various events organized by Friends of Meridian Hill refer to Appendix C. 3 to Appendix C. 10.)[901]

In 1998, Friends of Meridian Hill merged with the Friends of District of Columbia Parks and Recreation to form Washington Parks & People. The Friends of District of Columbia Parks and Recreation was a friends group founded in 1992 by Arthur "Chip" Fawcett, an outdoorsman, trained lawyer, and former administrator of policy planning and evaluation in the District's Department of Recreation and Parks.[902] As Washington Parks & People, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the group "is the capital's hub for activating public lands & waters for broad community revitalization – through partnership, innovation, discovery, and workforce development. [Their] mission is to grow city-wide park-based community health & vitality by nurturing innovation & partnerships."[903] According to the Washington Parks & People website, the group now spearheads "four major initiatives to develop the health, economic viability, and sustainability of [the District]: Green Corps uses parks and green spaces to counter poverty and entrenched unemployment, spurring

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[898] Linda Wheeler, "Meridian Hill's Great Divide; Park Service, Community Group Differ on Park's Future," ibid., Feb. 3, 2000, DC1.

[899] "Metro In Brief: The District: Protesters Call for Park Improvements," ibid., Jan. 16, 2000, p. C3.

[900] Wheeler, "Meridian Hill's Great Divide; Park Service, Community Group Differ on Park's Future."

[901] Linda Wheeler, "Adding Bursts of Color To Meridian Hill Park: Fountains Lighted for the First Time Since World War II," *Washington Post*, Sept. 28, 1995, p. DC1. In September 2000, "choral and theatrical performances [were] held in Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park in conjunction with the Friends of Meridian Hill Park." See "Metro In Brief," ibid., Sept. 15, 2000, p. B3.

[902] Patricia Sullivan, "Arthur Fawcett Jr.; Lawyer Led Park and Boating Groups," ibid., Nov. 29, 2018, p. B4.

[903] "About Us," *Washington Parks & People*, accessed May 2019, https://washingtonparks.net/about/.

self-reliance and economic recovery for our neighborhoods through green jobs training. Community Harvest puts that green-job training to work developing systems of sustainable, industry-scale, local agriculture on public lands. Heart & Soul uses the outdoors to develop holistic health for all—body, mind, and spirit. Education & ParkArts encourages all DC residents to take advantage of the cultural, educational, and arts opportunities offered by the parks."[904]

Additional Park Uses—Rallies and Demonstrations

Meridian Hill Park was also a rallying spot for other political groups and community activist organizations. In September 1972, about 800 primary and secondary school teachers rallied at the park while on strike over teacher pay, class size, and reductions in the teacher force. The main purpose of this rally was to find out when checks would be available and where to go for strike benefits during the temporary immobilization of the District's public-school system.[905] The following year, the *Washington-Star News* reported that the D.C. Coalition for the Survival of D.C. Prisoners sponsored a rally to educate the community about "the inhumane treatment of prisoners" in the D.C. prison system. About 300 people attended the rally at Meridian Hill Park and Bill Brown, a former jail inmate who had organized a prison rebellion, spoke about the D.C. jail system's "lack of an attentive and competent administration."[906] Other speakers included activist Julius Hobson and his son, Julius Hobson Jr.[907] That same year, more than 200 Korean-Americans rallied at Meridian Hill Park to protest the abduction and house arrest of Korean politician Kim Dae Jung in South Korea. The peaceful group not only called for the release of Jung, but also the expulsion of four Korean Central Intelligence Agency operatives and the Korean ambassador to Washington, Dang Jo Kim, from the United States.[908] In addition to these union and political rallies, the American Veterans Movement also gathered at the park on July 4, 1974, for the Second Bonus March. The group, which consisted of about 300 veterans and their supporters, processed down 16th Street from the park to a rally at Lafayette Park. Two wounded veterans in wheelchairs led the procession.[909]

In June 1978, a community outreach program was also held at the park. City and federal bureaucrats and members of the Mayor's Commission on Food, Nutrition, and

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[904] "What We Do," ibid.

[905] Andrew Barnes, "Union, Teachers Fines Ordered; Schools Open," *Washington Post*, Sept. 26, 1972, p. A1; Martin Weil, "City Plans to Open Schools, Union Leader Tells Teachers to Stay Out," ibid., Sept. 25, 1972, p. A1.

[906] Jacqueline Bolder, "Jail Rape Victim Rips System," *Washington Star-News*, Sept. 9, 1973, p. B6.

[907] Ibid.

[908] Jaehoon Ahn, "Koreans Hers Seek Politician's Release," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug. 20, 1973, p. A14.

[909] Michael Satchell, "Calm Climax: Hot, Weary Vets Vow to Return," *Washington Star-News*, July 5, 1974, sec. B.

Health organized a public hearing on food stamp regulations; unfortunately, no one from the community showed up.[910] One month later, 2,000 Native Americans and their supporters arrived in the district after an almost 3,000-mile cross-country trek. "The Longest Walk," and the following week-long series of protests, demonstrations, and religious ceremonies, was organized by the American Indian Movement for a twofold purpose. First, to protest legislation that would abolish various land, fishing, mineral, and other Native American treaty rights.[911] If passed, the legislation would have made lands held in trust for Indians more easily available for private development.[912] Second, the organizers hoped to educate non-Native Americans about Native culture and spiritual life through a variety of educational workshops. Upon arriving in the district, the group first rallied at Meridian Hill Park. The diverse crowd, which had swelled to 3,000 people, listened to a range of speakers, including comedian Dick Gregory, movie star Marlon Brando, and city council member Douglas Moore.[913] In the *Washington Star* article "Indians Coming to Renew Many of 1972 Demands" (1978), journalist Rick MacArthur notes that Meridian Hill Park was selected as the site for this rally because the organizers hoped "to win substantial support from the black community."[914]

In May 1980, The Revolutionary Communist Party, a Maoist organization, rallied at the park. *The Washington Post* documents that the group, a mix of 75 to 150 African American and white demonstrators, then marched "through the riot corridors of black Washington" accompanied by 100 D.C. and U.S. Park Police officers. During the march, the Maoist demonstrators urged passersby to overthrow the U.S. government, shouting: "no work, no school, let's put an end to the rich man's rule."[915] Two years later, the March 27 Coalition, a group of sixteen committees opposed to U.S. policy in El Salvador, rallied at Meridian Hill Park before preceding through Adams Morgan, a largely Hispanic neighborhood, to a rally at Lafayette Park. More than 10,000 people were expected to attend the demonstration.[916]

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[910] Thomas Morgan, "District Holds A Public Hearing, but Nobody Came: Public Hearing Lacked Only the Public," *Washington Post*, June 15, 1978, p. C1.

[911] Duncan Spencer, "Indian Walk Ends; Protest Begins This Week," *Washington Star*, July 16, 1978, pp. A1, A12; Paul W. Valentine and Patricia Camp, "End of Trek for 'Survival': Indians March Into Capital," *Washington Post*, pp. A1, A12; Forrest C. Canteberry, "Legislative Scene: Abernathy Preaches; Ali hypes fight; Brando, Buffy, Dellums, Gregory, Havens, SCLC and Stevie Aid Native Americans," *New York Amsterdam News*, Oct. 7, 1978, p. 11.

[912] Valentine and Camp, "End of Trek for 'Survival.'"

[913] Ibid.; Spencer, "Indian Walk Ends."

[914] Rick MacArthur, "Indians Coming to Renew Many of 1972 Demands," *Washington Star*, July 11, 1978, sec. B.

[915] Paul W. Valentine and Mike Sager, "Communist Groups Here Stage May Day Protests," *Washington Post*, May 2, 1980, p. B3; "Today's News In the Region: Justice Invaded by Communists," *Washington Local Star*, May 2, 1980, p. B1.

[916] Caryle Murphy, "Critics of U.S. Policy in El Salvador to Rally," *Washington Post*, March 27, 1982, p. A22.



Figure 56: Photographs of The Longest Walk rally at Meridian Hill Park (courtesy of Jo Freeman)

By 1983/1984, Meridian Hill Park was a designated First Amendment Space. Under special regulation 36 CFR 7.96, these rallies, or special events and First Amendments rights demonstrations, required a permit from the NCR Parks Program Office.[917] In 1983 the Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade began at the Park.[918] The parade, which went along a two-mile northwest route, lasted two hours and ended at the P Street beach for a six-hour celebration. More than 20,000 people participated in the event, which was organized by the P Street Festival group, and the event was said to be the largest gay festival in its 14-year history.[919] The Muslim Students Association rallied at Meridian Hill Park four years later. The group, composed of Muslim fundamentalists loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini, were responding to a call issued by Khomeini five years prior. Khomeini had asked all people in the world to use the last Friday of Ramadan to draw attention to what he called the occupation of Jerusalem (called Quds by Muslims). After assembling at the park, the 500 demonstrators proceeded down 16th Street to the Islamic Center on Massachusetts Avenue, NW. The group shouted, "Long live Khomeini" and "Zionism is racism" while they marched.[920]

In November 1986, the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament ended in the district after a nine-month cross-country trek. The day after the arrival of the 1,000 or so marchers, Mayor Marion Barry and emcee Betty Thomas of "Hill Street Blues" spoke to the marchers at Meridian Hill Park. The group then processed down 16th Street to two separate concerts, the first at Lafayette Park and the second at the Lincoln Memorial.[921] On October 12, 1996, Columbus Day, the Coordinadora 96/Campaign 96, a coalition of pro-immigrant community groups from across the country, also organized in the District for an immigrant's March. Julie Edo, the executive director of the African Peoples Council, a nonprofit immigrant services group based in Manhattan, told *Newsday* that the "The purpose of this march is for us to go and protest the anti-immigrant sentiments" of California Proposition 187, which

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[917] Spec. Reg. 36 CFR 7.96, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2013/06/24/2013-15005/general-regulations-national-park-system-demonstrations-sale-or-distribution-of-printed-matter

[918] John Mintz, "Gay Festival of Celebration Draws 20,000," *Washington Post*, June 20, 1983, p. B3.

[919] Ibid.

[920] Lyle V. Harris, "Supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini Stage Six-Hour Protest March Here," *Washington Post*, June 30, 1984, p. B4.

[921] "Weekend's Best: The Longest Walk," ibid., Nov. 14, 1986, p. WK3.

denied social benefits to illegal immigrants.[922] The day-long protest commenced at Meridian Hill Park and ended at the Lincoln Memorial[923]

The Mobilization for Global Justice also kicked off their week-long campaign against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in April 2000 with a concert at Meridian Hill Park. A group of several dozen activists led a march featuring oversized puppets of President Clinton and other politicians to the Park, where about 500 people heard an afternoon program of speakers and music.[924] The following year, the Washington Peace Center and the District office of the American Friends Service Committee planned another march protesting the World Bank and IMF. However, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the march became a civil display of anti-war sentiment. Prior to the march, a crowd of about 3,000 protesters gathered at the park to eat and listen to speakers.[925]

In March 2003, CodePink Women for Peace sponsored a march to protest the prospect of war with Iraq. The march began with a morning rally at Meridian Hill Park where authors Alice Walker (*Meridian*) and Maxine Hong Kingston, singer Michelle Shocked, and nuclear disarmament activist Helen Caldicott, gave speeches. Those in attendance wore pink boas, slips, and wigs because "code pink" was the mantra of the day. The name "code pink" was inspired by the government's color-coded terror alert system and President George W. Bush calling "Code Red" in response to Iraq possibly possessing banned weapons of mass destruction.[926]



Figure 57: Photographs of the CodePink Women for Peace rally at Meridian Hill Park (courtesy of Jo Freeman)

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[922] Mae M. Cheng, "The New Yorkers/Marching on D.C.," *Newsday,* Oct. 2, 1996, p. A31.

[923] Ibid.

[924] Dan Eggen and Avram Goldstein, "The Protest's Prosaic Side: Food, Housing; 'Big Pots Are the Key,'" *Washington Post*, April 9, 2000, p. C1.

[925] The Washington Peace Center was a resource center for peace activists and the district office of the American Friends Service Committee was the social service branch of the Quakers. See Manny Fernandez, "War Protesters Take to Neighborhoods; D.C. Demonstrators Get Mixed Reception," ibid., Oct. 1, 2001, p. B3.

[926] Sylvia Moreno and Lena H. Sun, "In Effort to Keep the Peace, Protesters Declare 'Code Pink,'" ibid., March 9, 2003, p. C1.



Figure 58: Photograph of the "the giant spine" erected by activists on President Barack Obama's second inauguration day (*Washington City Paper*)



Figure 59: Photograph of a mock drone erected by activists immediately outside of the park (*Washington City Paper*)

Numerous other rallies have been held, and marches commenced, at Meridian Hill Park. Some of these events include the D.C. Anti-War Network's Counter-Inaugural, the annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade, a march for Latino and immigrant rights, rallies against strict immigration proposals in Congress, CIA involvement in Nicaragua, the election of President George W. Bush for a second term, and the U.S. financial bailout.[927] Meridian Hill Park was even used as a staging area for law enforcement during the 1991 Mount Pleasant riots.[928] In more recent years, demonstrations have included a May Day protest, a rally against child trafficking, and protests of anti-war causes (drone warfare, the National Defense Authorization Act, the imprisonment of Chelsea Manning) and the election of Donald Trump. The latter was

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[927] Sandra G. Boodman, "Gay Pride Day: AIDS Brings Sense of Purpose; 'Increasingly It Is a Celebration of Support,'" ibid., June 17, 1987, p. B1; Patrice Gaines-Carter, "Gay Pride To Celebrate Secrets Told: Gays to Celebrate in Day of Pride," ibid., June 19, 1988, p. D1; Lynda Richardson, "On Gay Pride Day, a Sense of Family: Record Crowd Finds Cause to Celebrate at 16th Annual Parade in Northwest," ibid., June 24, 1991, p. D1; "Putting Gay Pride On Parade; Festival Organizers Emphasize Visibility," ibid., June 22, 1992, p. D1; Anna Borgman, "Latinos Prepare to March on Washington; Organizers Reveal Seven-Point Immigrant Rights Platform," ibid., Oct. 3, 1996, p. B1; Joel Achenbach, "Inaugural Bash; On J-20, Assorted Protesters Will Be Rising Up---and Then Partying Down," ibid., Jan. 15, 2005, C1; Darryl Fears and Krissah Williams, "Boycott Gives Voice to Illegal Workers; The Day's Impact on Economy Unclear," ibid., May 2, 2006, p. A1; Sue Ann Pressley, "2,000 March Here in Protest of U.S. Policies," ibid., Oct. 26, 1986; Tara McKelvy, "Prince William Folly: Northern Virginia Nativists (Some Racist, Some Republican, Some Both) Are Hell-bent on Driving Undocumented Immigrants Away. With Demonstrations and Lawsuits, the Immigrants are Fighting Back," *American Prospect*, Nov. 18, 2007, p. 29, eLibrary; Karin Brulliard and Krissah Williams, "After Rallies, Planners Look Ahead; Organizers Help to Unite Factions, Push for Political Change," *Washington Post*, May 3, 2006, p. B3; Theola Labbe-DeBose, "Critics of U.S. Bailout Are Expected to Join Weekend's Protesters," ibid., April 24, 2009, p. B2.

[928] John Woodrow Cox, "In a Changing D.C., a 12-Acre, People-watching Paradise Could Be in Peril," *Washington Post*, Aug. 17, 2015, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1704738380?accountid=46320.

organized by Occupy Inauguration and the speakers included the 2016 Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein. After rallying at Meridian Hill Park, the group marched to the White House where they were joined by members and supporters of Democratic Socialists of America.[929]

Additional Park Uses—National Park Service Sponsored Activities

From 1968 until the U.S. bicentennial celebration in 1976, the National Park Service hosted its Summer in the Parks program, organizing a series of regularly scheduled events and activities at twelve of the federally owned parks in the National Capital Region. At Meridian Hill Park, the scheduled activities ranged from movies to dances and concerts to special programs for kids, including magic shows.[930] The Community Art Happening, which featured an art show and contest, craft demonstrations, and live entertainment, was also held annually at the park.[931] In 1976, when the Summer in the Parks program came to an end, the Tomorrow's World Art Center (TWAC) moved its art festival (which was launched in the parking lot of a Giant Food store in 1967) to Meridian Hill Park. The TWAC continued the tradition of summertime art shows, organizing the 13th annual Community Art Happening in 1979 with the support of the D.C. Recreation Department.[932] The 21st-annual Community Art Happening, renamed Art in the Park, was similarly sponsored by the TWAC, though it was funded by the D.C. Commission on the Arts and the Humanities and the D.C. Committee to Promote Washington.[933] In 1991 the Art in The Park program celebrated its silver anniversary at Meridian Hill Park. This event, documents a news release entitled "A Very Special Sunday, In the Park!," included "a professional jazz ensemble, a gospel choir, African dances and drummers, a "Big Band" and d.j. music." The news release continued, stating that "The 1991 festivities will take on a distinctly international flavor, in recognition of the many immigrant cultures that have blended together to create our vibrant and vital District of Columbia."[934]

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929 Will Sommer, "At Meridian Hill Park, Inauguration Protesters Bring the Right Props," *Washington City Paper*, Jan. 21, 2013, https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/city-desk/blog/13066722/at-meridian-hill-park-inauguration-protesters-bring-the-right-props); David Weigel, "For Trump. Democrats Park Welcome Wagon in the Barn," *Washington Post*, Jan. 20, 2017, p. A14; Patrick May, Guess Who's Coming to the Trump Protest Party: A Slew of Rallies and Marches is Planned for Trump's Inauguration," *Mercury News*, Jan. 19, 2017, https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/01/19/guess-whos-coming-to-the-trump-protest-party/.

930 "Sunday Magazine," *Washington Star*, July 5, 1970; "Special Events: Meridian Hill Park," ibid., Sept. 12, 1976, p. G13.

931 The live entertainment varied from Latin American and gospel music to performances by the Music Carry-Out Jazz Ensemble and the Black Ravens. Dance performances were given by the D.C. Dance Ensemble and the Melvin Deal African Dance Troupe. See "Listings: Special Events: Continuing," ibid., Sept. 21, 1973, p. H19.

932 "District Calendar: Sunday: Community Art Happening," ibid., Sept. 7, 1979, p. B2.

933 Sari Horwitz, "Art Show Proves as Pleasant as Walk in Park; 21st Annual D.C. Event Provides Showcase for Many Disciplines," *Washington Post*, July 20, 1987, p. B3.

934 Tomorrow's World Art Center, Inc. News Release, "A Very Special Sunday, In The Park!" May 10, 1991, Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center.



Figure 60: Photograph of a Zumba class that was part of the first National Park Rx Day at Meridian Hill Park in 2016 (National Park Service)

In 2013, the National Park Service began a collaborative effort with the Institute at the Golden Gate and the National Recreation and Parks Association. As documented on the Parks Rx website, they convened "a group of practitioners to discuss the emerging trend of prescribing nature to improve mental and physical health."[935] Recognizing the importance of Park Prescriptions, the group developed the National Park Rx initiative. The ultimate goal of the ParkRx program is to encourage the use of public lands for the improvement of public and individual health as well as "create future stewards for our national public lands and to strengthen the relevance of national parks." In April 2016, on the last day of National Park Week, the first National Park Rx Day was held at Meridian Hill Park. The event included a Zumba class, gardening, dog walking, and bike rides.[936]

Additional Park Uses—Cultural Uses

The multi-ethnic, multi-racial character of the neighborhoods surrounding Meridian Hill Park is not only represented in the diversity of park patrons, but also the wide range of park uses and the double naming of the park.[937] This suggests that in addition to the landscape architect, the local community also plays a significant role in defining and shaping the park. In a 1982 *Washington Post* article, Doug Menuez wrote of this idea from the viewpoint of the park:

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[935] "About the Park Rx movement," *Park Rx*, accessed 2018, http://parkrx.org/about.

[936] Ibid.

[937] For more on racial diversity in Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan, see pt. 4, ch. 2. Leah Y. Latimer, "Ward 1: Heart of City: Housing, Employment, Real Estate Speculation, Development, Crime Affect Diverse population," *Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1982, p. DC1.

> Within the last 20 years . . . I've become a different park, now most widely known as Malcolm X Park, as I've adapted to a change of attitude and a turnover of ideas, as practiced by a multi-ethnic hodgepodge of Africans, Hispanics, and black Americans who have cast me in a different light and given me many new roles to play.[938]

These roles have ranged from a strategic rallying point for political protests to a soccer field for players from a range of countries including, El Salvador, Colombia, Argentina, Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, and Nigeria. Menuez wrote of the park's other uses, further highlighting the diversity of park users:

> Lovers and joggers love me. We greet the sun and the moon together. Many different languages sail across my terrain during moments of exultation and exercise… My people come from all over the city to be with me, to perpetuate my reputation as the United Nations of Parks.[939]

Because of this diversity, Meridian Hill Park has been called "everyone's playground" and "a virtual Bruegel painting of the human tableaux that represents the adjacent neighborhoods of Adams-Morgan, Mount Pleasant, Columbia Heights and Shaw."[940] The Fourth of July festivities at the park further reflected this diversity as a neighborhood child read excerpts from Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?," a powerful oration given by Douglass on July 5, 1852. A recording of Maya Angelou reading her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" was also played.[941]

On a daily basis, park patrons of all ethnicities and races walk their dogs in the park, run the steps from the lower to upper terrace, and lounge on one of the parks numerous benches. Children meanwhile ride around on bikes or scooters and explore the parks numerous nooks and crannies.[942] Since 2000, the upper terrace has often been transformed into a soccer field in the late afternoon, reflecting the game's popularity among the increasingly Latinx population around the Park. [943]

However, as more Latinos moved into the surrounding neighborhoods, soccer came to prevail. Similarly, as more middle-class white residents arrived in the early 2000s, games of Frisbee began to be played on the fringe of the makeshift soccer field. This diversity, which made the park so unique, bred some tension, particularly in the drumming circle.[944]

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938 Doug Menuez, "People's Park," *Washington Post, District Weekly*, May 26, 1982, pp. DC1, DC9.

939 Ibid.

940 Sylvia Moreno, "The District: View of Fireworks from a Cliff in City: Park Celebration Scenic, Multicultural," *Washington Post*, July 1, 1999, p. MD5.

941 Ibid.

942 Camille Connolly, "A People's Park to Appreciate," ibid., Oct. 18, 2001, p. T3.

943 Ibid.

944 Ibid.

Additional Park Uses—Drumming in Meridian Hill Park

In 1965, after the assassination of Malcolm X, Baba Nogoma, the house drummer at the Howard Theatre, began to drum alone in Meridian Hill Park. As the fight for equality gained momentum in the district, black Washingtonians joined Ngoma, forming a drumming circle to commemorate their fallen leader, to express their African heritage, and to release tension.[945] The drumming circle became a weekend fixture and "an expression of black consciousness during the height of the civil rights movement."[946] One drummer described the situation in the 1980s: "this park was for black people. We were here when no white would have ever come in here."[947] However, as the neighborhood gradually transformed, people of all races, nationalities, and backgrounds began to join the drumming circle. Ngoma said in an interview with *The Washington Post* that "anyone that has a drum, or any kind of instrument, [now] tends to come… and join into an open free-form."[948] "Now," said another drummer, "we have white guys playing with us."[949] "It hasn't always been that way," proclaimed Ngoma, "When it started out, it was more of a sacred thing. It was a cultural expression, and it had a religious connotation. Now, sometimes it is very driving and motivating, and other times it is just a bunch of cacophony" of sounds as different drumming styles compete.[950]



Figure 61: A diverse group of drummers at the weekly drum circle (Elahe Izadi, "Malcolm X or Meridian Hill Park: On Symbolism and Accuracy," DCentric, May 3, 2012)

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[945] Vera Carothers, "Why Some Meridian Hill Park Drummers Say The Beat Isn't What It Used to Be," *WAMU 88.5*, Nov. 6, 2015, https://wamu.org/story/15/11/06/why_some_meridian_hill_park_drummers_say_the_beat_isnt_what_it_used_to_be/.

[946] Sylvia Moreno, "By the Beat Divided; D.C. Drumming a Spiritual Joy for Some, Noise for Others," *Washington Post*, Sept. 17, 2000, p. C1.

[947] Ibid.

[948] Ibid.

[949] Ibid.

[950] Ibid.

Competing drumming styles (African, Afro-Cuban, Latino, West African, etc.) and the transformation of the drumming circle has created "a musical free-for-all and a tourist attraction" that has been a source of frustration for some longtime members.[951] William Caudle, a District native and member of the circle for more than 40 years, expressed in an interview that once the circle "was a good therapy for African Americans . . . [and it was] spiritual for me, it's good for my heart . . . it's an art form. It was what God gave mankind to communicate with him . . . [Now,] I feel a little beat down at the circle, ignored. I want it to be spiritual, I want it to be holistic, and that's not happening . . . It's too much frolic going on, it's no realness, unity. The electricity is not really flowing, honestly . . . [and there's] no respect of seniority in knowing technique."[952] Longtime djembe player, Obar Moyo, age 60, similarly said in an interview that the drumming circle was like a Sunday service to him, but as the neighborhood and park gentrified, his experience has been negatively impacted. Moyo proclaimed: "Brothers need a way to heal. This influx of other people that think they can just jump in here and make this thing happen. This thing has been going on for 40 years and you need to fit in. The circle belongs to the Africans and Native Americans."[953]

The drumming circle has also been affected by gentrification in that two petitions were circulated in the park in the summer of 1999. One called for a 6 p.m. curfew on drumming and the other called for banning drumming in the park altogether. According to one drummer, "the whole tradition of the African drums is very, very important to our culture. [The drumming circle creates a] sense of community. We meet our neighbors and friends here. There are regulars who always show up."[954] In the summer of 2000, the issue of the drumming "disturbing the peace" came up again when the tenants of the Park Square apartments, formerly a Howard University women's dormitory, issued a noise complaint. The U.S. Park Police responded to this complaint by evicting the drummers from their long-held spot along the 15th Street/Columbia Heights side of the park and moving them to the 16th Street/Adams Morgan side. The U.S. Park Police also began to enforce a nighttime curfew on drumming.[955]

Despite this friction, the circle's different stakeholders have been able to come together to combine drumming styles, pass down traditions, and create art which, at times, is a cacophony of sounds. Neighborhood residents Julia and Dan Ticona told a reporter that they have found the circle to be "a rare place where people from different backgrounds [that don't normally mix much on the streets] can encounter each other."[956] Dan Ticona, originally from

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[951] Carothers, "Why Some Meridian Hill Park Drummers Say The Beat Isn't What It Used to Be."

[952] Ibid.

[953] Lillian Andemicael, "This African Drum Circle is like a Church for Some D.C. Residents," *Diamondback*, online June 14, 2017, http://www.dbknews.com/2017/06/15/african-drum-circle-washington-dc-columbia-heights/.

[954] Moreno, "By the Beat Divided; D.C. Drumming a Spiritual Joy for Some, Noise for Others."

[955] Ibid.

[956] Carothers, "Why Some Meridian Hill Park Drummers Say The Beat Isn't What It Used to Be."

Peru, also expressed that "when you see different [people] on the street, you don't usually stop and stare or comment on it and learn about it, but at the park it almost feels like you enter the park and that weirdness or feeling uncomfortable around difference is out the door."[957] To new drummers and passersby, the circle is thus a way to let loose and learn about the district's diverse residents. According to Julia Ticona, the circle is also a place to learn about the history of the civil rights movement in the national capital. Ticona explained, "As a white person living in this city, the park and the drumming circle in particular is a space that lets me understand a bit more about the long history of the city and the history of the Civil Rights struggle in this area, which is such an important part of history. I don't think I would have ever understood that if I hadn't come to the drum circle and been like, 'Oh hey, this has been going on for how long? Why?'"[958]

In regard to the circle being a place to let loose, the once small, sacred drumming circle now draws hundreds from all backgrounds, age groups, and walks of life, and has been described by one journalist as a "human circus" and "safety valve for the mental health of the city."[959] Reporter John Woodrow Cox further described the scene in August 2015:

> On a lawn filled with picnickers, people watchers and a 6-foot-2 guy wearing nothing but daisy-white dreadlocks and a loincloth -- a young black woman nervously inched across a slackline, each hand on the shoulders of two lanky white men serving as her spotters. Nearby, a little blond boy in a Captain America T-shirt mimicked the elegant dance-fighting of two capoeiristas. And all around, hula-hoopers gyrated, dancers grooved, chalk artists sketched, yogis stretched, children toddled, dog walkers strolled and joggers darted. This is Meridian Hill Park on a summer Sunday. Fueled by the beat of the renowned weekly drum circle, the 12-acre stretch of fountains and trees a mile and a half north of the White House serves, in a changing and sometimes divided city, as a gathering place for the District's disparate tribes: white and black, rich and poor, young and old, immigrant, and local, gay and straight, boring and bizarre.[960]

The adaptability of the park in recent years has been a source of concern for some park patrons.[961] One woman lamented how the park has been "yuppified."[962] Another woman—white, married to a black man, and a neighborhood resident since 1959—said she has found herself wondering "Where the hell am I?" "The large African American families

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[957] Ibid.

[958] Ibid.

[959] Heather Murphy, "Drawn Into a Circle of Drum-Driven Rhythms," *Washington Post*, Sept. 22, 2005, p. T56.

[960] John Woodrow Cox, "In a changing D.C., a 12-acre, people-watching paradise could be in peril," ibid. online, Aug. 17, 2015, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1704738380?accountid=46320.

[961] Montgomery, "A Walk in the Park with a Past."

[962] Cox, "In a Changing D.C., a 12-Acre, People-watching Paradise Could Be in Peril."

who once regularly populated the park" are now rarely seen, writes Montgomery. Older minority residents and some black teenagers have also abandoned the park.[963]



Figure 62: A game of chess in Meridian Hill Park (Elvert Barnes, "Sundays at Meridian Hill Park/ Washington DC Project," Flckr, published June 21, 2015)

Despite these changes, Meridian Hill Park has remained a public forum and rallying space since the civil rights era. Under special regulation 36 CFR 7.96, these rallies, or special events and First Amendments Rights demonstrations, require a permit from the NCR Parks Program Office. This regulation has likely been in effect since 1983 since the CFR was codified in 1983/1984.[964] Neighborhood organizations such as Washington Parks & People, formerly Friends of Meridian Hill, also continue to bring life to the park, hosting a concert series similar to the Starlight Chamber Music series.[965] Furthermore, Meridian Hill Park is still significant to the district's African American community. This is evident in both the continued appropriation of the park by black Washingtonians and the park's double naming. Regardless of its unofficial status, the fact that many refer to the park as Malcolm X Park indicates that African Americans successfully reclaimed the park in the late 1960s. Meridian Hill Park, or Malcolm X Park, is thus significant not only for its neoclassical design but also for its historical and cultural ties to the district's African American community.

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[963] Ibid.

[964] 36 CFR 7.96, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2013/06/24/2013-15005/general-regulations-national-park-system-demonstrations-sale-or-distribution-of-printed-matter

[965] "Opera Outside: A co-presentation of Washington Concert Opera and Washington Parks and People," *ConcertOpera.org*, accessed 2018, http://concertopera.org/outside.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Conclusion

Meridian Hill Park is a microcosm of the district. The park's development and design, as well as its various uses, reflect the changing social and political climate of the city. During the American Civil War, escaped enslaved African Americans fled north, many finding safety and work at one of the Union's numerous encampments. One such encampment, Camp Cameron, was located on Meridian Hill. After the American Civil War, a black community developed at the site of Camp Cameron, particularly along Columbia Avenue (modern-day 15th Street) between Chapin and Euclid Streets. This community grew to include approximately thirty-five frame dwellings and several stores. Nearby, a school for African Americans was established. As documented in the U.S. Census, those living in Meridian Hill worked a variety of skilled and unskilled jobs, including, cook, dressmaker, laundress, servant, schoolteacher, and day laborer. The census records also indicate that the majority of the residents were renters; however, nine African American families owned their homes.

While an African American community developed in Meridian Hill, the City Beautiful Movement of the late 1890s took hold in Washington's wealthy and politically elite community. This movement (which sought to improve cities both physically and morally) and the renewed interest in the overall design of the capital (which was spurred by the impending celebration of the capital's centennial in 1900) inspired Mary Foote Henderson, a socialite and woman with an acute business acumen, to purchase land in Meridian Hill. Henderson, the wife of former Missouri senator John B. Henderson, planned to transform 16th Street into the district's "Embassy Row" or "Presidents Avenue," something on par with the Champs-Elysées in Paris. Henderson had mansions and embassies constructed on Meridian Hill in an attempt to attract her desired resident. The frame dwelling occupied by African Americans likely did not fit her vision, which she wrote about in her booklet *Remarks about Management of Washington in General and Sixteenth Street in Particular*. Specifically, she wrote of her desire that "Whatever there is of present civic incongruities will be wiped out."

Henderson actively campaigned for the development of 16th Street, urging for the development of the proposed park outlined in Senate Report No. 166, or the 1901 McMillian Report. This park was to be located on Meridian Hill between 15th and 16th Streets. By 1910, Congress had purchased the land and by 1912 the Chief of Engineers had been granted permission to remove the condemned homes fronting 15th and Euclid Streets. The African American families residing in these homes were forced to move out, many moving to the western area of the Hall and Elvans' subdivision (est. 1867) into the modern-day Reed-Cooke neighborhood. There was no mention of the displacement of these families in the local

newspapers; and, ironically, African American laborers were hired to construct the park. Therefore, the land that was once a safe haven for escaped enslaved African Americans during the American Civil War, and later a free African American community, was transformed into an exclusive park meant to serve Washington's white elite community.

In the years following, racial tensions escalated. Segregation pervaded in the District and petition covenants were added to the deeds of homes, restricting African Americans from white neighborhoods. In Columbia Heights, the neighborhood to the east of the park, African Americans were restricted to the area east 13th Street. The neighborhood to the west of the park, the future Adams Morgan, appears to have been segregated by de fact segregation rather that petition covenant. Despite segregation in the surrounding neighborhoods, photographic and textual evidence indicates that that African Americans were permitted to frequent Meridian Hill Park under the Office of Public Building and Grounds (PB&G) and later the National Park Service. Letters on file at the Washington National Records Center in Suitland, Maryland indicate that some white park users were unhappy with this policy. One letter even suggested establishing a separate park for African Americans. NPS policy remained inclusive, and some non-segregated events were actually held in the park. The Starlight Chamber Music series (1941–1943) and the Washington Theatre Festival (1949) were two programs that showed the practicability of desegregation.

The social and racial demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods shifted as policies were passed prohibiting housing discrimination (*Hurd v. Hodge*, 1948) and the segregation of schools (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). African Americans, no longer restricted by petition covenants, crossed the 13th Street divide into white Columbia Heights. Columbia Heights, Adams Morgan, and neighboring Shaw/Greater U Street became predominately African American neighborhoods. Black nationalist and black activist groups established their headquarters in these neighborhoods during the civil rights era. These groups, including the Black United Front and Black Panther Party, adopted Meridian Hill Park for rallies and demonstrations as the park was at the heart of black Washington. After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, black Washingtonians also formed a drumming circle in the park to honor their African heritage and the legacy of Malcolm X. Then, during a rally in 1969, the BUF symbolically liberated Meridian Hill Park, renaming it Malcolm X Park. Meridian Hill Park, established by the white elite for the white elite, was thus reclaimed during the civil rights movement.

While the ruling of the Supreme Court in *Hurd v. Hodge* (1948) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) opened previously restricted neighborhoods and schools to African Americans, the Court's ruling also led to the exodus of many white families to the suburbs. In short, "white flight" led to the shrinking of the district's tax base and an increase in crime and poverty. By the mid-1980s, there was a thriving drug market south of Meridian Hill Park at 14th and U Streets and to the east of the park at 14th and Euclid Streets and 14th and Clifton Streets. The condition of the neighborhood affected park use, many choosing to avoid the park due to crime. The Friends of Meridian Hill group, formed in 1991, actively worked

with the National Park Service and the U.S. Park Police to bring life back to the park. Their combined efforts resulted in a decrease in crime and the revitalization of the park. The Friends group, formed by Steve Coleman and several African American neighborhood residents, exemplifies shifting neighborhood demographics and social attitudes. After years of segregation and racial unrest, neighborhood residents united to rehabilitate their shared park for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

The transformation of Meridian Hill Park from a white elite park to a public forum for black activists and later to a shared space for all to enjoy suggests that it is the community, rather than the landscape architect, that truly defines the park. Today, as the neighborhood has transitioned into a more multi-ethnic, multiracial community, Meridian Hill Park has been redefined by new attitudes and a changeover of ideas. The once small, sacred drumming circle has expanded to include white millennials and drummers of various other ethnic backgrounds. Those who have been a part of the drumming circle since its establishment have felt some frustration with these changes. However, they have adapted and now combine drumming styles and pass down traditions. Although adapting, elements of the past remain. Specifically, the double naming of the park illustrates the continued importance of Meridian Hill Park to the District's African American community. The name Malcolm X Park is a tie to the past and the struggle of black Washingtonians to gain equal rights. The park is essentially a symbol or unofficial memorial to the civil rights movement. Furthermore, this history of using the park as a public forum continues to influence park use today as various student, ethnic, and political groups appropriate the park as a First Amendment space.

Recommendations

While this Special Resource Study explores the relationship of African Americans to Meridian Hill Park, there were several topics researched by the author that lacked additional information and documentation on the African American perspective.

First, there is very little documentation on the African American experience during the early history and development of Meridian Hill Park. Although the local newspapers documented the condemnation of the African American residences on Meridian Hill, there was no mention of how the African American community felt about this forced relocation. Furthermore, once the park was open to the public, white neighborhood residents sent letters to the Office of PB&G/PB&PPNC and later the National Park Service complaining about African American park use. There were, however, no letters presenting the African American perspective at the referenced archives. Newspaper archives were also consulted, but the articles presented only the perspective of white park users. It is recommended that oral histories be conducted, though it is unlikely that anyone with a connection to the park survives today. If individuals or relatives can be identified, oral history interviews are recommended. Suggested topics to explore in the oral history interviews are:

1) How did the African American community feel about their homes being condemned for the construction of Meridian Hill Park? Did this influence their sentiments toward the park?
2) From the 1930s through the 1940s, how did African Americans experience the park? Did they face discrimination? What were their sentiments toward the park and how did they use it?
3) The Starlight Chamber Music Series and the Washington Theatre Festival were non-segregated events hosted in the park. Did those in attendance face any sort of discrimination? Was the seating separated by administrative design or de facto segregation?

Second, while the author was able to identify newspaper articles and other documents that provided insight into African American park use from the Civil Rights era to present day, it is still recommended that oral histories be conducted. Suggested topics to explore in the oral history interviews are:

1) It is known that black activist and black nationalist groups appropriated Meridian Hill Park because it was at the heart of black Washington. Were there other reasons?
2) How did these individuals feel about Meridian Hill Park? Was there a feeling of having reclaimed the park? A feeling of having reclaimed the land on which enslaved Africans once found safety?
3) Identify persons who attended black activist and black nationalist rallies and demonstrations at Meridian Hill Park to get a first-hand perspective on these events, which were only documented in the local newspapers and in permits requests sent to the National Park Service.
4) Interview longtime drumming circle members about the origins of the circle and how they feel about the gentrification of the circle and the park overall.
5) Interview younger African American district residents about their knowledge of the history of Meridian Hill Park. Was this history passed down from generation to generation? Does this history influence their perception of the park and how they identify the park (Meridian Hill or Malcolm X Park)?

Bibliography

Primary Resources

Repositories

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

There is a significant amount of historical material on the funding, site procurement, and various plans and designs for Meridian Hill Park at the National Archives Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. However, there was very little material on Meridian Hill Park during the civil rights movement. These files are also unorganized, making research at this location extremely difficult.

Progress in the Movement to Guarantee Equal Rights for All Citizens in the National Capital, pg. 6, Record Group 48, Box 3838, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

Washington Washington National Records Center, Suitland Maryland

The documents on file at the Washington National Records Center in Suitland, Maryland, were extremely valuable as they provided insight into park use from the 1930s through the civil rights movement. The files, which included letters to the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (PB&G) and later the National Park Service, also documented the sentiments of neighborhood residents toward African American park use. The National Park Service responded to some of these letters, reiterating their non-discriminatory policy.

In addition, there were numerous permit applications on file requesting permission to use Meridian Hill Park for religious services and political/activist rallies and demonstrations. Several applications had an associated letter from the National Park Service approving the permit. During the civil rights era to the late 1970s, black activist groups also requested permission to use Meridian Hill Park for rallies. Unfortunately, the boxes containing these documents (boxes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 under accession number 79-79-7700002) are missing. These boxes were checked out by Thaddeus McKay on September 23, 1999, and remain missing. For a full list of the missing documents refer to Appendix C. 2.

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Museum Resource Center

The National Park Service, National Capital Region Museum Resource Center houses a significant number of newspaper clippings on various topics including, the Henderson Castle and the early history of land on which the park was constructed. There were also flyers produced by the Friends of Meridian Hill, which were extremely informative in regard to park use. Of particular interest were the crime reports documenting the decrease in crime, as well as the specific crimes that took place, between 1990 and 1994. The speech that President Clinton gave at the 1994 Earth Day celebration, as well as several photographs of the president at Meridian Hill Park, are also on file.

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Appendix A

Timeline of Major Events

1632	King Charles I of England grants an expansive tract of land to Cecil Calvert, 2nd Lord Baltimore. This land, which he names the Province of Maryland includes the Territory of Columbia
17th century	James Langworth was the first landholder in the area. He was granted and passed down through the English land grant system an expansive tract of land that he named Widow's Mite
1714	The Langworths sold their tract to Thomas Fletchall
1725	Thomas Fletchall, Jr. sold sixty-two acres of the larger tract to John Bradford
1730	The tract was sold to John Flint, a yeoman/mid-level farmer. Flint expanded his tract, which he named Flint's Discovery, in 1735. The tract was a few hundred acres in size with the future Meridian Hill Park in its northern section and S Street in its southern section
1760	Robert Peter purchased Flint's Discovery and named it Mount Pleasant. The section located on the prominent hill overlooking the city he named Peter's Hill (the future Meridian Hill)
1790	The new national capital was established at the confluence of the Potomac and Eastern Branch Rivers
1800	By 1800, the federal government had moved into the new national capital and agreed to enforce Maryland laws, making slavery legal in the District
1811	Robert Peter's son, Thomas Peter, sold the Mount Pleasant tract, including Peter's Hill, to Washington Bowie
1816	Bowie sold 110 acres of the tract to Commodore David Porter. Porter, a successful navigator who had acquired a significant amount of "prize money" during the War of 1812, named the estate Meridian Hill
1820	Commodore Porter was severely in debt and he mortgaged the property to his fellow commander, John Rodgers. Rodgers leased the Meridian Hill mansion to former president John Quincy Adams who had lost his reelection bid to Andrew Jackson
1829	The property is sold to J. Florentius Cox and "deeded to Phillip Landscape for life with a remainder to Eliza Cox

1830	In 1830, slavery peaked in the City of Washington with enslaved African Americans representing twelve percent of the city's 19,000-person population. As recorded in the 1830 Census, 6,152 free African Americans and 6,119 enslaved African Americans lived in the city
1840	The majority of Africans in the national capital were free
1850	The Compromise of 1850 outlawed the domestic slave trade in the City of Washington. In 1850, 11,131 free Africans and 3,185 enslaved African Americans lived in the city. In Washington County, there were 3,320 free and enslaved African Americans
1856	The Cox family sold the Meridian Hill estate to Colonel Gilbert L. Thompson and William Dorsey. Thompson and Dorsey sold the estate to Josiah Sturges that same year
1858	Sturges sold the land to Oliver Pettit of New York. Although Pettit owned the land, "Col. Thompson" was indicated as the property owner on the 1861 Boschke map of the District of Columbia
1860	Among Washington City's 61,000 residents, there were 9,200 free blacks, about 15 percent of the population, and fewer than 1,800 slaves, less than 3 percent of the total. In Washington County, of the 5,200 residents, 800 were enslaved African Americans
1860	A *Washington Evening Star* ad reported than a man named Henry Wilden operated the Porter mansion as a pleasure park
1860-1865	The city's population increased from 75,000 to 131,000 between 1860 and 1865
1861-1865	During the American Civil War, Meridian Hill was appropriated by the Union Army. The encampment was called Camp Cameron and the Porter mansion was used as a hospital and headquarters. Free and enslaved African Americans found safety work and employment there
1861	On August 6, 1861, the Confiscation Act was passed. This act classified runaway enslaved African Americans as "contraband" if they had been put to work to aid the Confederate cause. Those classified as "contraband" were freed and sent to live in government-organized housing locations
1862	On April 16, 1862, Lincoln signed the D.C. Compensation Emancipation Act, immediately freeing Washington's 3,100 enslaved African Americans
1863	There were approximately 10,000 refugees in the national capital
1864	There were approximately 40,000 refugees in Washington
1865-1876	The United States entered into the Reconstruction Era (1865–1876), a time during which the federal government attempted "to build a nation of free and equal citizens." Twenty African American men were elected to the House of Representatives and one black man was elected to the Senate during the Reconstruction Era

1865	By the end of the American Civil War an African community had been established on Meridian Hill
1866	Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1866, extending citizenship to African Americans, and declares them "entitled to equality of treatment before the law, any statue to the contrary notwithstanding." Congress also passed a bill for universal male suffrage
1867	Colonel Isaac E. Messmore purchased the land on Meridian Hill and established the Hall and Elvan subdivision. The subdivision consisted of 22 squares between Florida Avenue, Columbia Road, and 15th and 18th Streets
1871	Washington City, Washington County, and Georgetown are combined under one territorial government. African Americans are also appointed to the city council and other government positions.
1874	Congress abolishes the three-year Territorial Government to deal with the city's debt. This debt was the result of the Board of Public works city improvement efforts that were carried out under Commissioner Alexander "Boss" Shepherd. There is some speculation that the end was also influenced out of fear of growing black political power
1877	The "Hayes Compromise" was passed, which removed the remaining federal troops from the south and allowed southern Congressmen to regain their voice in Congress. In retaliation against rising black political power, Southern Congressmen began to promulgate more restricting racial attitudes and practices, such as segregation.
1881	Former Ohio Senator John Sherman bought 121 acres between 11th and 14th Streets, Boundary Street, and Park Road and established the Columbia Heights subdivision. The deeds for these homes did not include racially restrictive covenants
1883	The Supreme Court rules that requiring places of public accommodation to service African Americans is a violation of the rights of private property
1887	Development in the Hall and Elvan subdivision was most heavily clustered along the two-block stretch of 15th Street between Chapin and Euclid Streets. These houses were two-story, two-bay weatherboard-clad, flat-fronted dwellings occupied exclusively by working-class African Americans
1888	Former Missouri senator John B. Henderson and his wife, Mary Foote Henderson, acquired six adjacent lots on the west side of 16th St. (Lots 1-6 of Block 3), just above Florida Ave.
1896	The Supreme Court rules in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and established the "separate but equal principle"
1900-1920	African Americans begin to coalesce around U Street due to heightened racial discrimination
1900	Lanier Heights subdivision established

1901	When Congress codifies District laws, it does not incorporate the civil rights provisions into the new municipal code. Segregation is once again entirely legal in the district
1901	The City Beautiful Movement was codified in the McMillan Commission Plan, which sought to improve cities both physically and morally through civic engagement, sanitation, and beautification projects. Mary Henderson sought to remove the "unsightly shacks" along 16th Street and replace them with monuments, grand mansions, and foreign legations
1910	Congress passed an act to purchase twelve acres on Meridian Hill for park use. Assessment records indicate that only one of the lots condemned for government acquisition was owned by Mrs. Henderson (Lot 2 of Square 2573). The other owners were of African Americans
1910-1933	Meridian Hill Park was under the supervision of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (PB&G). The Office of PB&G was under "exclusive control of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army."
1910	The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) was established on May 17 and guided all matters concerning design and construction
1910	African Americans were restricted by petition covenant to the area east of 13th Street in Columbia Heights
1912	The Chief of Engineers granted authority for the removal of the buildings on the property. The residents of these homes, which fronted along 15th and Euclid Streets, were primarily African American. They were forced to move west into the Reed-Cooke neighborhood
1913	Woodrow Wilson inaugurated as president, ushering in a new era of segregation in federal agencies
1914	Landscape architect George Burnap, a former Cornell professor employed by the Office of PB&G, developed the first plans for the park
1919	The African American pressed called the summer of 1919 the "Red Summer" because racial violence was rampant across the country
1925	The Office of PB&G was renamed the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital (PB&PPNC). The Office of PB&PPNC was an independent office and not under the jurisdiction of the United States Army; however, the office was responsible directly to the president of the United States
1926	Racially restrictive covenants became legally enforceable after the 1926 landmark case of *Corrigan v. Buckley*
1930	The population of Adams Morgan was 33% African American and African Americans were concentrated in the Reed-Cooke neighborhood

1930	Forced by racially restrictive covenants into certain neighborhoods, African create a self-sufficient community in the Shaw/Greater U Street neighborhoods. U Street became the community's main corridor and was known nationally as "Black Broadway"
1933	The Office of the PB&PPNC was absorbed into the "newly designated office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, Department of Interior (previously known as the National Park Service)." The park was non-segregated under the National Park Service
1934	The office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, Department of Interior was renamed the National Park Service (its original name, established in 1916). The National Capital Parks (NCP), a local division of the National Park Service, was also established
1934	The neighborhood to the east of 13th Street was 81 to 100 percent non-white and the neighborhood to the west of 13th Street was 21 to 40 percent non-white
1937	The Henderson Castle was converted into a "high-class rooming house," signaling a change in neighborhood demographics
1937	The D.C. Court of Appeals upheld racially restrictive covenants in *Grady v. Garland* because racially restrictive covenants effectively created a "barrier against the eastward movement of [the] colored population into the restricted area"
1941	Executive Order 8802 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This order instructed "all government agencies involved with 'vocational and training programs for defense production' to 'assure that such programs are administered without discrimination' and to include in all defense contracts 'a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker.'"
1941	The Meridian Hill Hotel was built by the federal government to house women brought to the city to fill government jobs
1941	An African American couple, Frederick F. and Mary Gibson Hundley, were sued by their neighbors when they purchased a home in Columbia Heights (2530 13th Street) that had a racially restrictive covenant in the deed. The Hundleys, although not the only African American family on the block, lost the case and were forced to relocate. A year later, in *Hundley v. Gorewitz* the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the covenant was unenforceable due to significant changes in the neighborhood's racial demographics
1941-1945	The Starlight Chamber Music Series offered regular concerts in the park during the summer months. These concerts were non-segregated
1943	The National Park Service transferred the duty of issuing permits for the Recreation Department; however, the department refused to follow the Department of Interior's non-discriminatory policy

1945	In *Mays v. Burgess*, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that "covenants against colored ownership and occupancy of property are still valid and enforceable by the injunction in the District of Columbia, unless there has been a constant penetration of colored persons into a white neighborhood"
1948	The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Hurd v. Hodge* that restrictive covenants were unenforceable, citing the Civil Rights Act of 1866
1948	Due to complaints of noise disturbances, the National Park Service discontinued using permits "for any other purposes other than those for which the area is primarily devoted"
1949	An agreement was reached between the Recreation Department and the NPS after months of negotiation: the board was permitted to manage about 20 federal areas (e.g. Fort Dupont, Rock Creek Park, and West Potomac Park) and "determine all questions of general policy" if they conformed to federal regulations that all sites are "open to use by all people irrespective of their race, creed, color, or national origin."
1949/51	Many white neighborhood residents moved to the suburbs because of the post World War II suburban housing boom. This left the formerly all-white Cardozo High School at 13th and Clifton Street with few students. Activists pressed for the school to become a school for black students and in 1950 it became a black business high school.
1949	After the refusal of the National Theatre to desegregate, the non-segregated Washington Theatre Festival was opened at Meridian Hill Park
1950	Neighborhood demographics shifted after the 1948 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Hurd v. Hodge*. African Americans moved west across the 13th Street divide and the African American population on Meridian Hill increased from 9 to 11 percent from 1940 to 1950
1952	Queen Juliana of the Netherlands presents a temporary carillon in a ceremony at Meridian Hill Park to President Truman. Art Brown of Radio Station WWDC starts a carillon concert series at the park
1954	The Supreme Court rules in the case of *Brown v Board of Education* that "separate but equal educational facilities are inherently unequal, mandating the end of segregation in public schools
1955	The Supreme Court rules that the integration of public schools must process "with all deliberate speed"
1957	The first massive civil rights demonstration in Washington is led by A. Philip Randolph, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., and other religious leaders
1959	The area around Meridian Hill Park "generated enough serious crime in the last year to place this fourth-smallest of the city's precincts fifth from the top in the vice parade"
1960s	Columbia Heights population predominately African American

1963-1965	The University Neighborhoods Council sponsored a summer concert series. They also planned art shows in the park
1964	President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act prohibited segregation in public spaces and forbade the federal government from working with businesses practicing racial discrimination. It furthermore "prohibited tactics to limit voting; guaranteed racial and religious minorities equal access to public accommodations; outlawed job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; continued the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission."
1965	After the assassination of Malcolm X, African Americans formed the drumming circle in the park to commemorate Malcolm X and to celebrate their African heritage
1967	Meridian Hill Park considered the second most dangerous park in terms of crime
1968	After the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., riots erupt across the United States. U Street was the epicenter of the riots in the District, though there were millions of dollars of damage to business along 14th Street in Columbia Heights
1968	In effort to ease racial tensions and bring life back to the District's parks, the National Park Service commenced their Summer in the Parks program. The opening ceremony was held at Meridian Hill Park and park-specific programs included T concerts, art programs, and puppet shows
1968	The Summer in the Parks program brought Meridian Hill Park into the good graces of black national groups such as the Black United Front (BUF). These groups, headquartered nearby in the Reed-Cooke neighborhood, appropriated Meridian Hill Park for rallies
1969	The Black United Front (BUF) holds a rally in the park and symbolically liberates it, renaming the park Malcolm X Park
1969	The Black Panther Party, which had yet to establish a chapter in the District, held a rally at the park and urged black and white citizens to "purge their hearts of racism and try to stamp out oppression"
1970s–1980s	Black national groups continued to hold rallies in the park
1970	A ceremony is held in the park in honor of the late Malcolm X
1971	The Third World Task Force, a member a national anti-war coalition, attempted to gather black community support for the anti-war movement. Some 50 demonstrators marched from Meridian Hill Park to a rally at Lafayette Square
1971	A rally was scheduled at the park to launch a campaign to have the parks named officially changed to Malcolm X Park

1972	About 30 young people marched from park and picketed the White House, carrying signs reading "Happy Birthday, Angela" and "Free Angela, Jail Nixon"
1972	All-African People's Revolutionary Party (A-APRP) was founded and organized African Liberation Day each year to reunite party members from across the country and persuade more people to join in party efforts to create a black constituency in America that can influence American policy toward Africa. Kwame Toure (Stokely Carmichael), was the party's chief spokesman
1972	The D.C. Committee to Free Angela Davis scheduled a victory rally at the park to celebrate the acquittal of Davis of all charges in connection with the 1970 Marin County (Calif.) courthouse shooting
1972	Teachers strike in the park over pay, class size, and reductions in teacher force. About 800 teachers rallied in the park to hear when checks will be available and where to get strike benefits, etc.
1973	African American Heritage Day, a day-long festival sponsored by the Anheuser-Busch Company and the National Park Service, was held in the park as part of the "Summer in the Parks" program
1973	A coalition of black leaders (D.C. Coalition for Self-Government and Peace) schedule Rally against Death at the park to protest how needed government funds for social services are lost to the war effort. The group also demands self-determination for both Vietnam and the District. The speakers were mostly African American
1973	The African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) planned African Liberation Day to protest any form of oppression but concentrated on the struggles in South Africa. The group rallied at Meridian Hill Park and then marched to the Southern African, British, and Portuguese Embassies, and Rhodesian Information Center
1973	Several hundred protest the imprisonment of black political prisoners both in this country and white Africa
1973	The D.C. Coalition for the Survival of D.C. Prisoners sponsored a rally in the park to inform the community about what it feels are inhuman conditions in the D.C. prison system. About 300 people attended
1973	The All-African People's Revolutionary Party assembled at the park to demonstrate against killings in South Africa
1974	Protest scheduled at Meridian Hill Park to make Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a legal holiday. 200 Coolidge High School students participated in a school walk-out and held memorial services for King at the park

1974	Augustana Lutheran and Sts Paul and Augustine Catholic Church conduct a joint palm blessing on Palm Sunday
1974	"Pan African Day" was held at the park. Stokely Carmichael addressed a crowd of 12,000 to 15,000
1974	5,000 celebrate the annual African Liberation Day observed each year nationwide to highlight ties between black Americans and the people of Africa. From Meridian Hill Park the group marched to the White House
1974	The American Veterans Movement, consisting of about 300 veterans and their supporters, organized at Meridian Hill Park and joined the larger march organized by the Vietnam Veterans against the War–Winter Soldier Organization on their way to Lafayette Park
1975	As a part of a mini bicentennial celebration, the Ghana Festival was held at Meridian Hill Park. This event included Ghanaian films and a twilight concert by the Ghana Cultural Band Ensemble
1976	Tenth Annual Community Art Happening held
1978	10,000 marches rallied in Washington for the African Liberation Day celebrations. There was a pre-march program at Meridian Hill Park which included music from the Wild Bunch Band of Chicago and speeches by the Union of Tigray, the Iranian Students Association, and the Association of Eritrean Students of North America. The first speaker was activist and comedian Dick Gregory
1978	The fifth-annual Caribbean Summer in the Park took place at Meridian Hill Park. It was hosted by Caribbean nationals in the Washington area and included performances by groups such as Trinidad & Tobago Baltimore Steel Orchestra, Caifolk Singers, and the Licyndiana Haitian Band
1978	The Longest Walk rallied at Meridian Hill Park before the final descent to the Monument grounds. The group hoped to win substantial support from the black community
1979	The All-Africans People Revolutionary Party (A-APRP) organized the African Liberation Day program at Meridian Hill Park. The event included a symposium, concert, march, and rally. Speakers included representatives from the Iranian Student Movement, the American Indian Movement, and the Chicano Movement. Stokely Carmichael also spoke
1979	Thirteenth-Annual Community Art Happening
1980	The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League, the Ministers' Conference, and the United Black Organization sponsored a mass rally in support of the causes of the Miami riots

1980	The Revolutionary Communist Party, a Maoist organization, marched from Meridian Hill Park through the Shaw area and Howard University. There were approximately 75 marchers, a mix of blacks, whites, and several Iranians
1981	The All-African People's Revolutionary Party (A-APRP) rallied at MHP to protest capitalism, Zionism, and racism. The crowd was predominantly black and there were representatives from more than 25 groups (American Indian Movement, Palestine Liberation Organization, El Salvador and Iranian student organizations)
1981	The first-annual All African Cultural Festival was held at MHP and included local African dance, music groups, crafts, food, and literature. Members of local groups were available to answer questions and to explain their efforts
1981	High levels of crime in the park. The Park Police report 27 arrests as of August and 160 narcotics-related reports
1981	Starting the first week of the new year MHP was scheduled to close nightly to curb after dark-drug dealing, gambling, and robbery
1982	The Washington, D.C. Reggae Festival Inc. features its first Reggae Festival in MHP
1983	25th-annual African Liberation Day attracts 3,000 people
1983	The Organization Opposed to the U.S. Invasion of Grenada organized a rally at MHP to protest the "racist and futile act of aggression" that was the U.S. invasion of Grenada
1984	700 attended the annual African Liberation Day celebration at MHP. This year's event that focused on the "historical struggle" of blacks and the "legacy" of American slavery and "oppression." This was the ninth-annual celebration organized by A-APRP
1984	The Muslim Students Association, whose members supported Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini, organized a protest at MHP that coincided with the end of the Muslim holy month Ramadan. The protest was to draw attention to the occupation of Jerusalem and the Islamic struggle against Zionism, imperialism, and oppression. March began at the MHP, and about 500 people attended
1985	Several hundred people marched to the South African Embassy on African Liberation Day to protest the country's apartheid government and to voice their support for the people under the regime. There were speakers and vendors peddling jewelry, clothing, and food at MHP
1986	The Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament ended in Washington. Activities began at MHP with remarks from Mayor Marion Barry and emcee Betty Thomas (of *Hill Street Blues*). The group then walked down 16th St to Lafayette Square

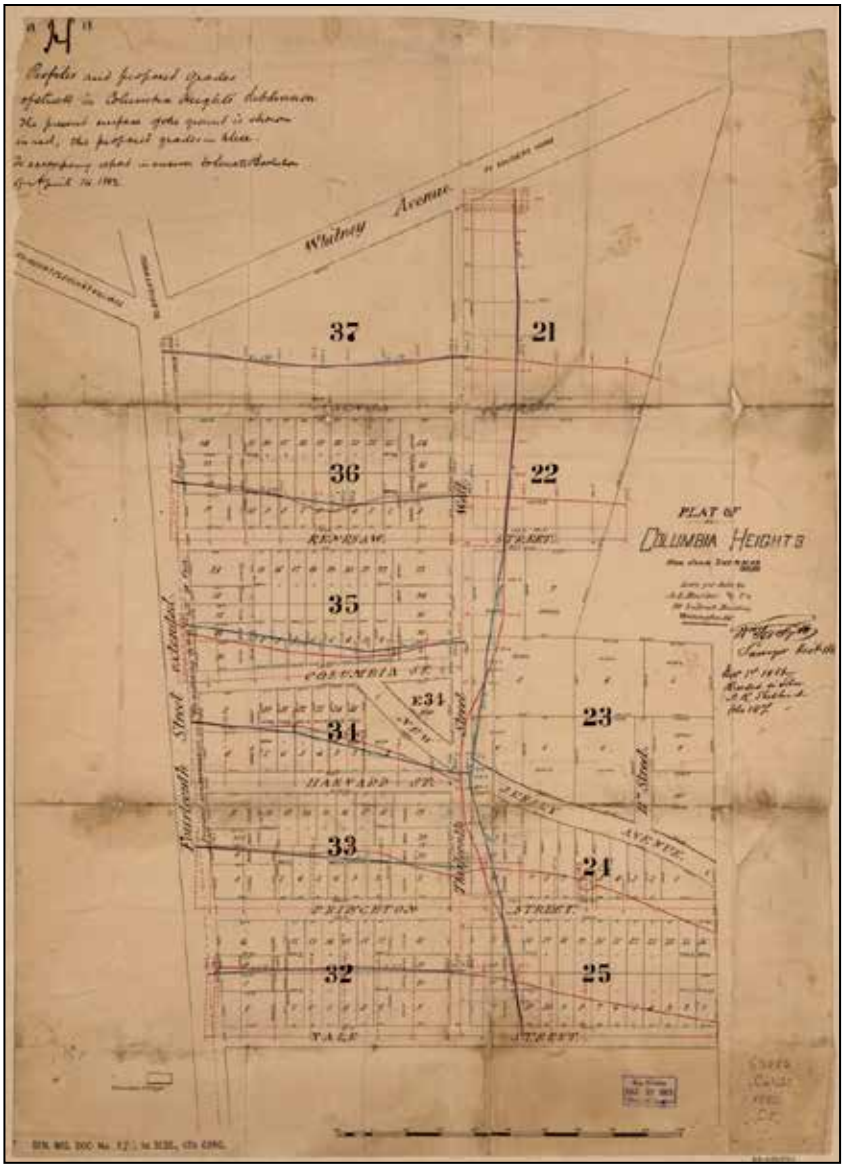
1987	21st-annual Art-in-the-Park festival. The daylong celebration featured rhythmic music, local dance troupes, and about 40 artists. The event was sponsored by Tomorrow's World Art Center and funded in part by the D.C. Commission on the Arts and the Humanities and the D.C. Committee to Promote Washington
1988	The District's 13th annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Day began at MHP and featured several floats and marching bands
1989	MHP referred to as a "crack park" in the *Washington Post*
1990	A-APRP hosts African Liberation Day in MHP
1990	The Friends of Meridian Hill Inc. was formed after a *Washington Post* story described the condition of MHP. Founder Steve Coleman organized a clean-up on Earth Day, April 22. 100 people showed up as well as Secretary of Interior Manuel Lujan Jr.
1990	Columbia Heights Neighborhood Coalition held its first Easter Promenade
1991	A group called the National African-American Network Against U.S. Intervention in the Gulf assembled at MHP and then marched to 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW to join the main group of anti-war demonstrators (anti-war in the Middle East)
1991	16th Annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade commenced at MHP
1991	The Columbia Heights Neighborhood Coalition sponsored its second annual Easter Promenade at MHP
1991	Park Police Lt. Henry Berberich said his officers made 210 drug cases, resulting in 101 arrests
1992	The Park Police made improvements to its patrols and reports of robberies dropped from 34 in 1990 to 13. The number of drug cases fell to 55 and arrests to 21
1993	The Friends of Meridian Hill held its 60th concert in MHP. The Levine School of Music performed to a mixed audience of blacks, whites, and Hispanics.
1993	Park Police Lt. Henry Berberich said police have reduced crime in the park by 82 percent.
1993	Activist Dick Gregory and a group called the Dignity Patrol set up tents in MHP to reclaim the park from drug pushers. Gregory was arrested
1994	President Clinton speaks highly of the Friends of Median Hill group in his Earth Day address at MHP
1999/2000	A petition was submitted for a 6:00 p.m. curfew on the drumming circle and another petition asked for a ban on drumming in MHP altogether
1999	The Columbia Heights Metro opened, fueling a wave of gentrification.

2000	About 100 neighborhood activists staged a public demonstration at MHP to protest what they said was the National Park Service's failure to revive the property.
2000	Campaign against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund: Several dozen activists led a march of drummers, bicyclists, and oversized puppets of President Clinton and other political figures to nearby Meridian Hill Park, where about 500 people heard an afternoon program of speakers and music. The concert was the official kickoff of the Mobilization for Global Justice. At MHP rock, salsa and hip-hop groups played on a stage in front of a statue of Joan of Arc astride a horse
2001	The Washington Peace Center (WPC) rallied at MHP and members included religious leaders, Kurdish activists, and a widow of an officer who was killed in the Pentagon attack, among others. The group marched to join an ongoing Kurdish vigil at the scene of a recent racist attack in Sheridan Circle
2003	The Black Voices for Peace hosted a "Black Community March and Peace Fest" at MHP/ The group was a national network of black antiwar and justice advocates formed in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Two hours of events were scheduled including, a protest of the Bush demonstrations foreign and domestic politics. Martin Luther King III was to attend
2003	CodePink Women for Peace sponsored a rally and march to protest the looming war with Iraq. The event coincided with International Women's Day. At MHP, the group rallied, and the various speakers included, authors Alice Walter and Maxine Hong Kingston
2005	The D.C. Anti-War Network rallied at MHP as part of the Counter-Inaugural, a protest of the inauguration of Bush and the war in Iraq
2006	As the neighborhoods surrounding MHP gentrify, longtime drumming circle members have been forced to adapt. "The energy is the same, but it has taken on a life of its own"
2006	More than 1,000 people rallied at MHP to protest strict immigration proposals in Congress
2012	Howard University students organized a rally at MHP to protest the shooting of Trayvon Martin and the wrongful deaths of many young blacks due to racial profiling
2013	Activities organized a prayer vigil at MHP following the Ferguson shooting
2016	Howard University students organized a community forum at MHP to discuss how to address the police shootings of black men

Appendix B

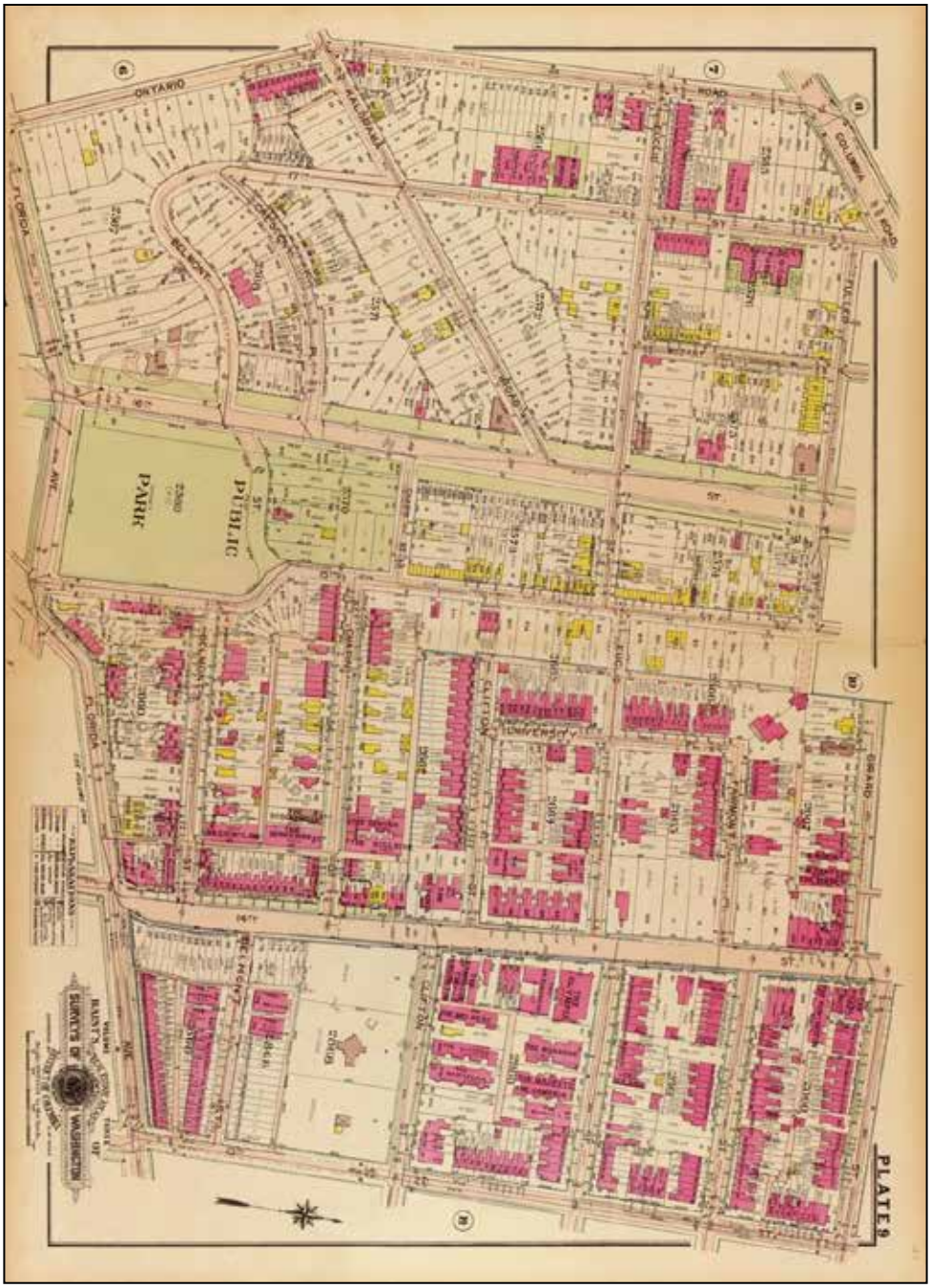
Maps

Appendix B. 1 Plat of Sherman's Columbia Heights subdivision



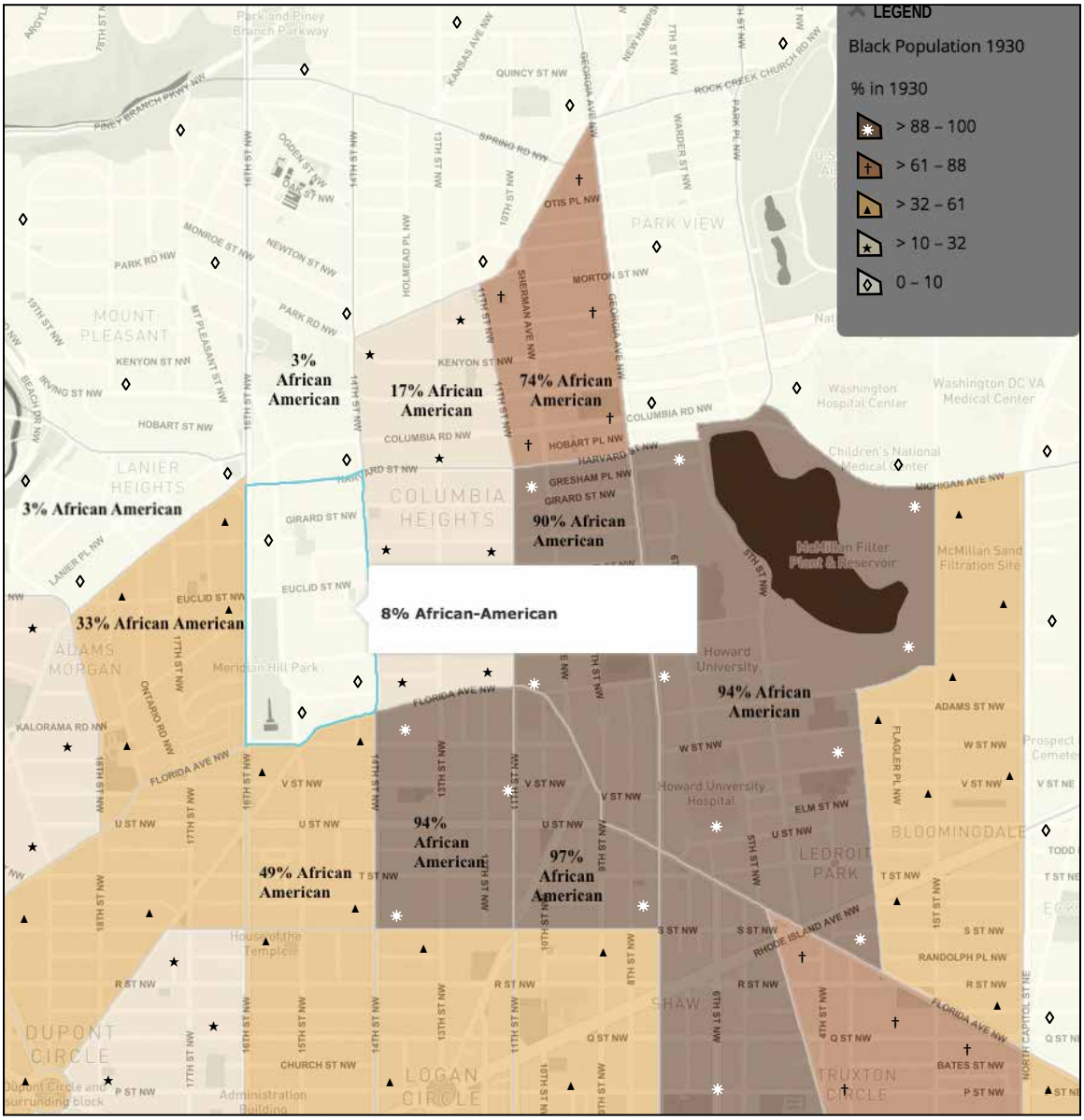
District of Columbia. Office of the Surveyor, William Forsyth, John Sherman, and A. L. Barber And Co. Plat of Columbia Heights: Hon. John Sherman, trustee. [Washington: U.S. Senate, 1882] Map. Library of Congress.

Appendix B. 2 Baist Map illustrating the development of the Hall and Elvans subdivision



Baist, G. Wm, W. E Baist. Baist's real estate atlas of surveys of Washington, District of Columbia: complete in four volumes, Map, Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1909<1911>, From the Library of Congress: Library of Congress Geography and Map Division.

Appendix B. 3 Edited Story Map made by Prologue DC and JMT illustrating the African American population in 1930



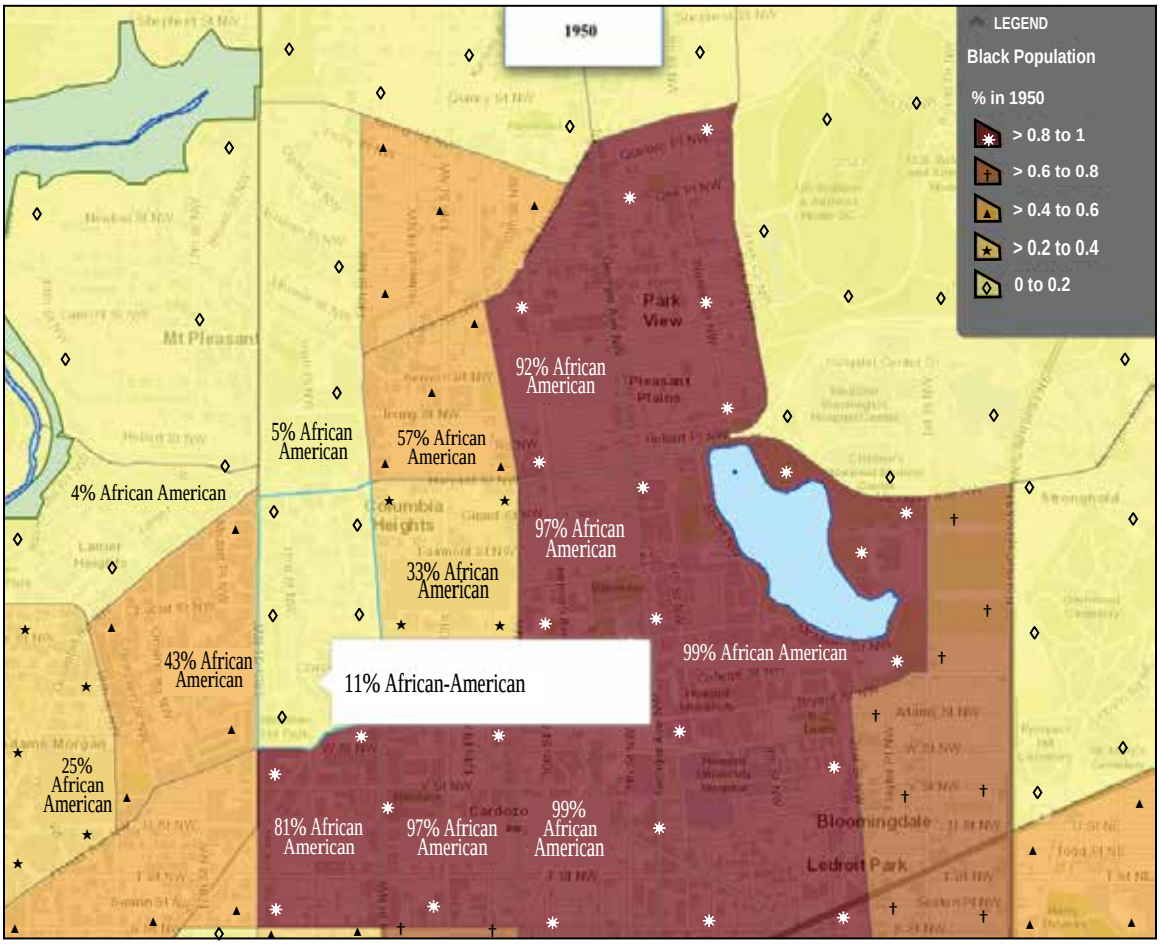
"Mapping Segregation in Washington DC: Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC." Prologue DC. Accessed Nov. 2017. http://jmt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=061d0da22587475fb969483653179091.

Appendix B. 4 Edited Story Map made by Prologue DC and JMT illustrating the African American population in 1940



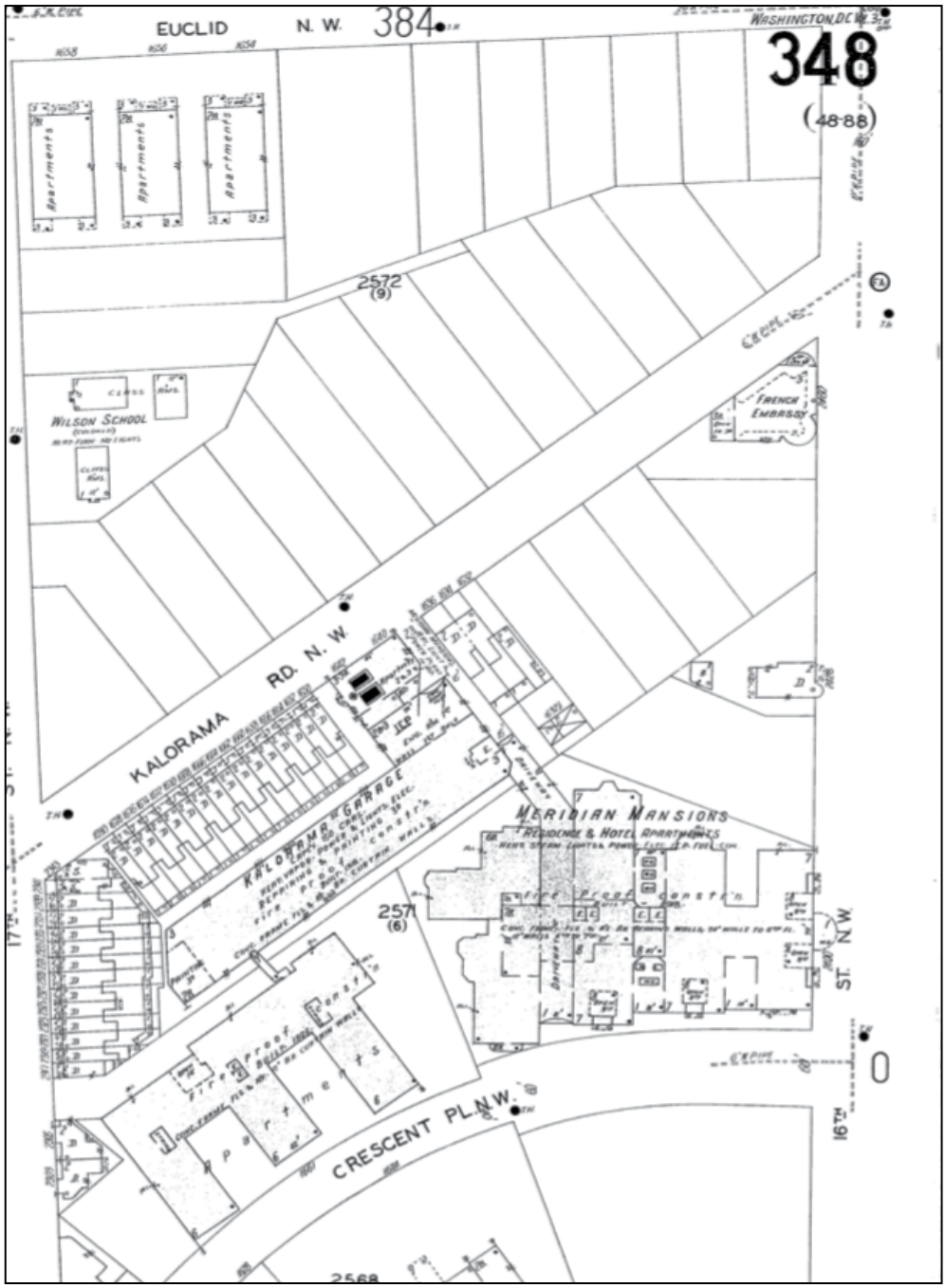
"Mapping Segregation in Washington DC: Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC." Prologue DC. Accessed Nov. 2017. http://jmt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=061d0da22587475fb969483653179091.

Appendix B. 5 Edited Story Map made by Prologue DC and JMT illustrating the African American population in 1950



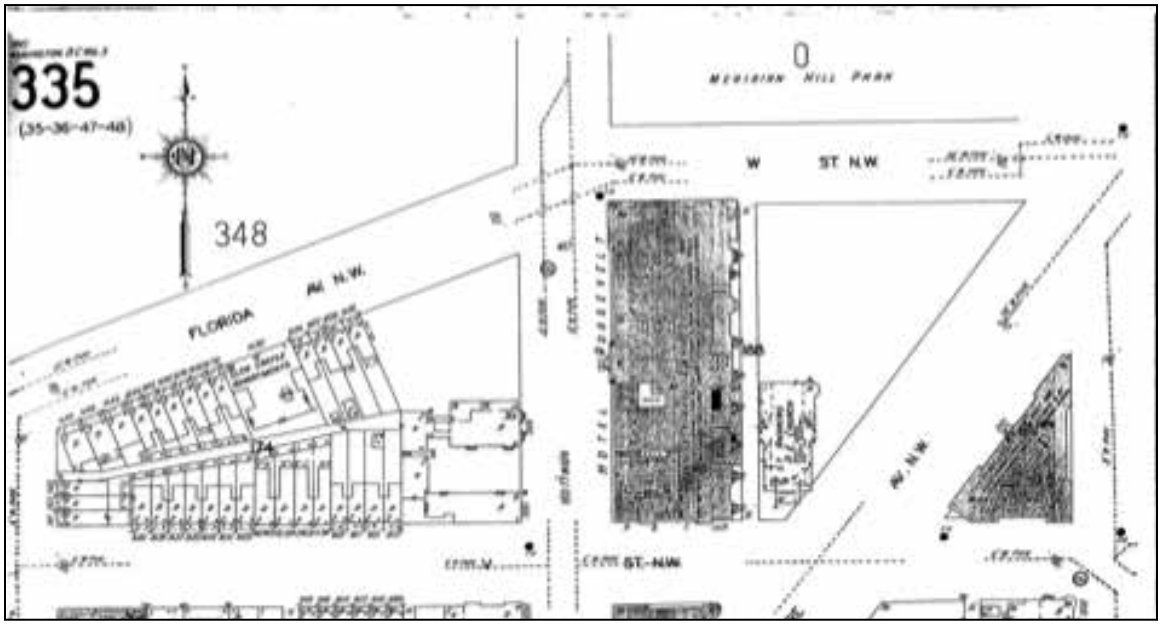
"Mapping Segregation in Washington DC: Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC." Prologue DC. Accessed Nov. 2017. http://jmt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=061d0da22587475fb969483653179091.

Appendix B. 6 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing Meridian Mansions, one of the first luxury apartment buildings constructed on Meridian Hill



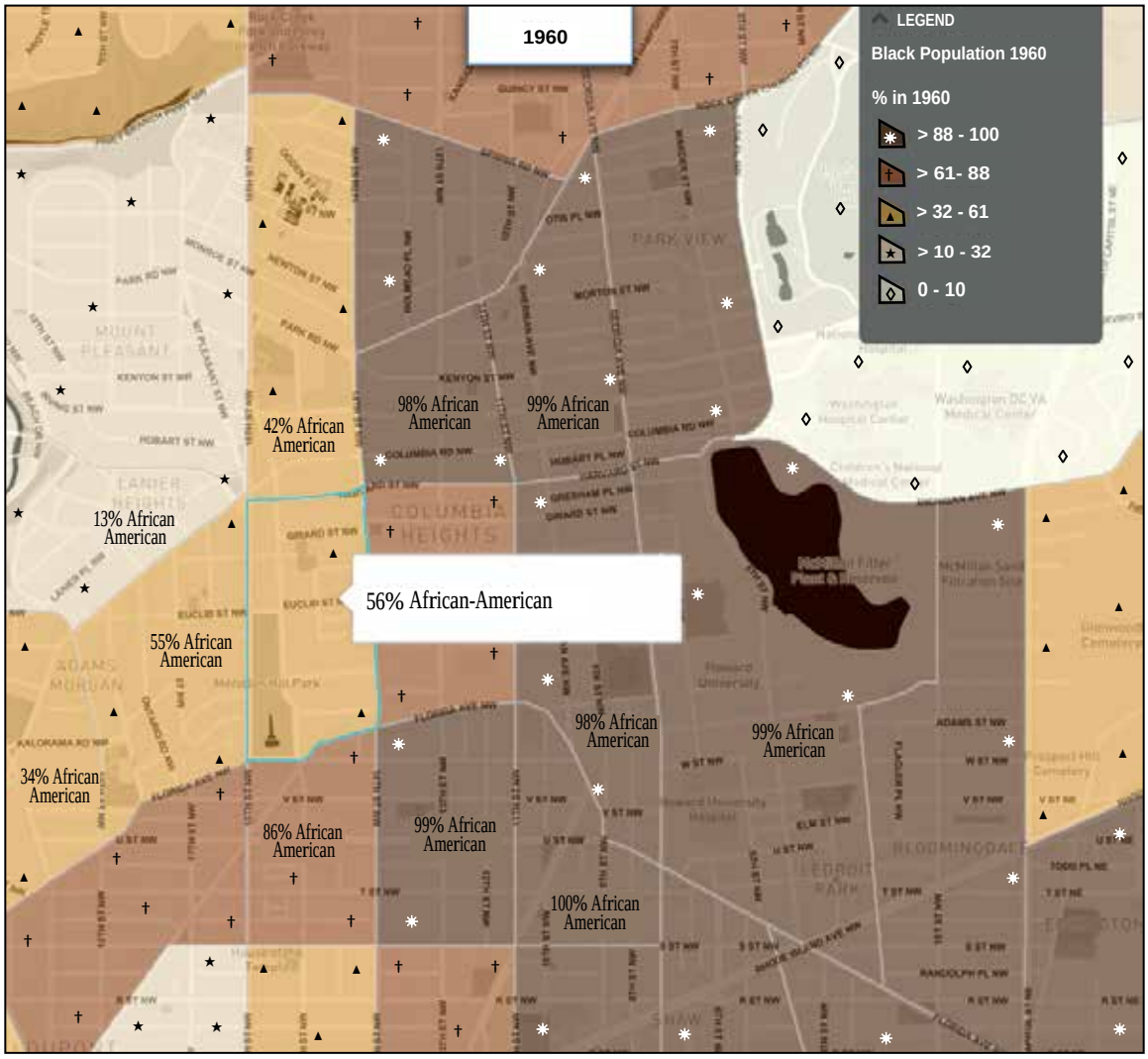
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Washington, District of Columbia, District of Columbia. Sanborn Map Company, 1927–1928 Vol. 3, Sheet 348. Map.

Appendix B. 7 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the Roosevelt Hotel, previously the Hadleigh, one of the early luxury apartment buildings constructed on Meridian Hill



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Washington, District of Columbia, District of Columbia. Sanborn Map Company, 1927–1928 Vol. 3, Sheet 335. Map.

Appendix B. 8 Edited Story Map made by Prologue DC and JMT illustrating the African American population in 1960

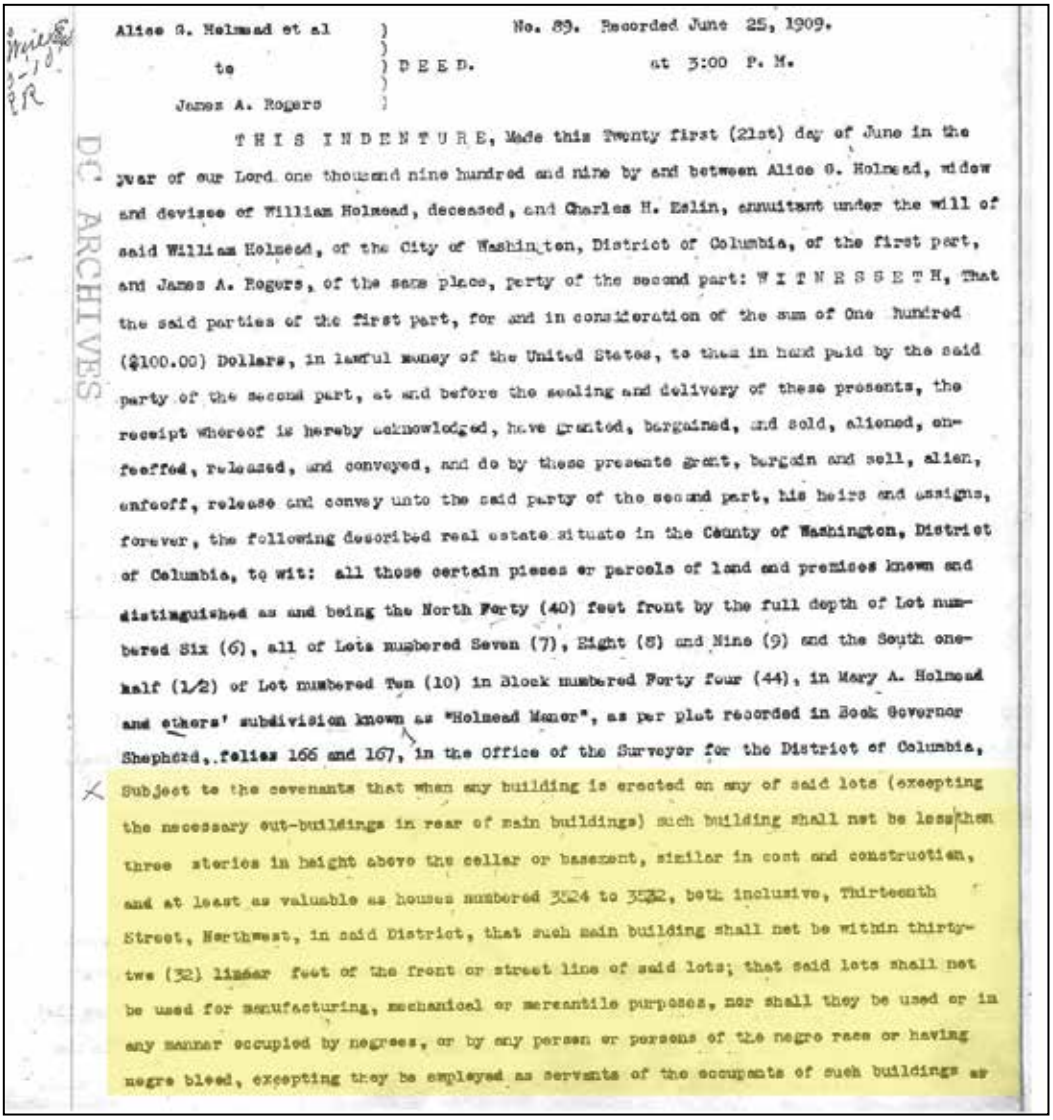


"Mapping Segregation in Washington DC: Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants: The End of Legal Segregation in Washington DC." Prologue DC. Accessed Nov. 2017. http://jmt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=061d0da22587475fb969483653179091.

Appendix C

Additional Documents

Appendix C. 1 Deed for 3521–3543 Thirteenth St NW, in DC's Columbia Heights neighborhood, recorded June 25, 1909



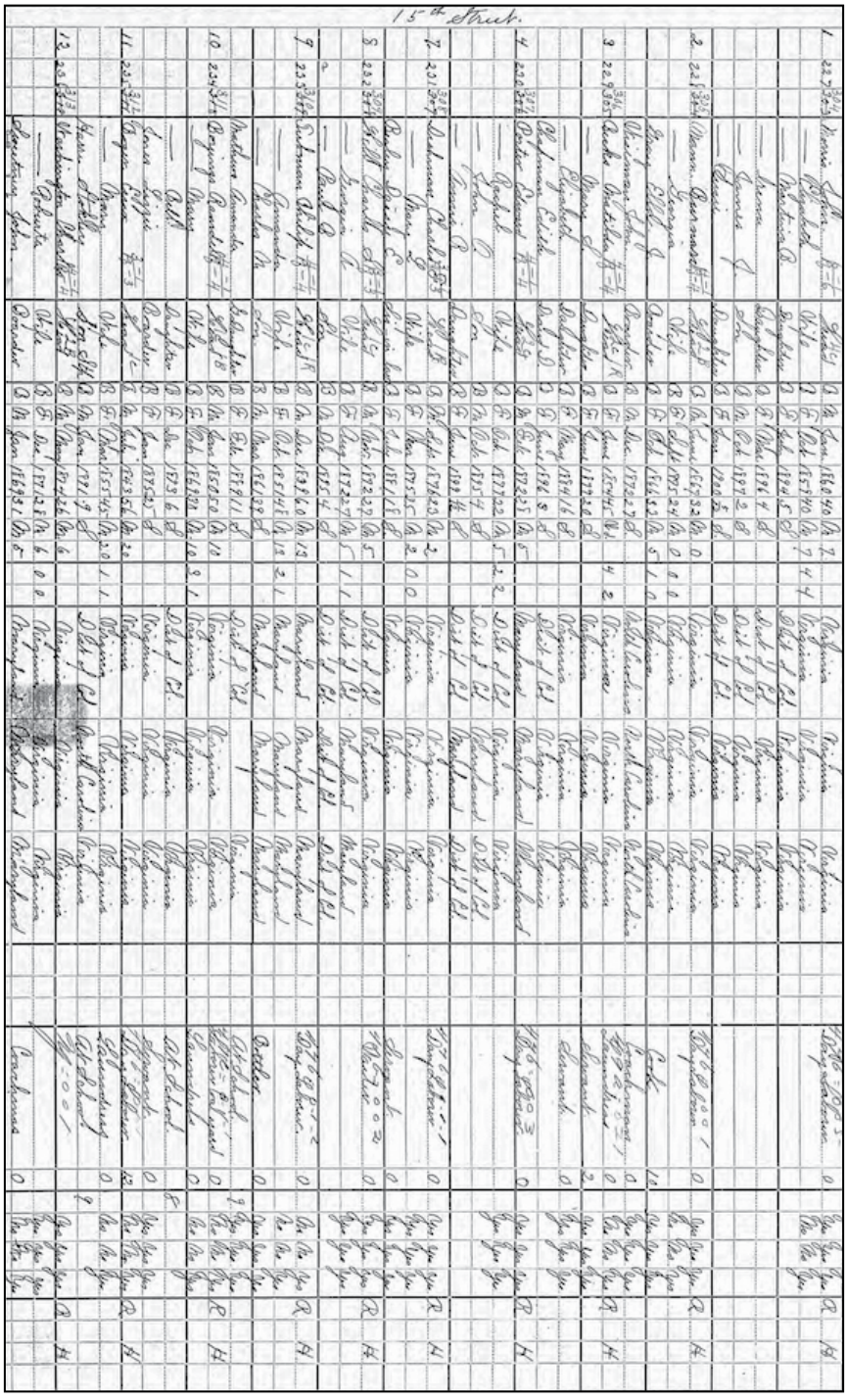
Alice G. Holmead et al) No. 89. Recorded June 25, 1909.
) at 3:00 P. M.
to) D E E D.
)
James A. Rogers)

THIS INDENTURE, Made this Twenty first (21st) day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and nine by and between Alice G. Holmead, widow and devisee of William Holmead, deceased, and Charles H. Eslin, annuitant under the will of said William Holmead, of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, of the first part, and James A. Rogers, of the same place, party of the second part: W I T N E S S E T H, That the said parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of One hundred ($100.00) Dollars, in lawful money of the United States, to them in hand paid by the said party of the second part, at and before the sealing and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have granted, bargained, and sold, aliened, enfeoffed, released, and conveyed, and do by these presents grant, bargain and sell, alien, enfeoff, release and convey unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns, forever, the following described real estate situate in the County of Washington, District of Columbia, to wit: all those certain pieces or parcels of land and premises known and distinguished as and being the North Forty (40) feet front by the full depth of Lot numbered Six (6), all of Lots numbered Seven (7), Eight (8) and Nine (9) and the South one-half (1/2) of Lot numbered Ten (10) in Block numbered Forty four (44), in Mary A. Holmead and others' subdivision known as "Holmead Manor", as per plat recorded in Book Governor Shepherd, folios 166 and 167, in the Office of the Surveyor for the District of Columbia,

Subject to the covenants that when any building is erected on any of said lots (excepting the necessary out-buildings in rear of main buildings) such building shall not be less than three stories in height above the cellar or basement, similar in cost and construction, and at least as valuable as houses numbered 3524 to 3532, both inclusive, Thirteenth Street, Northwest, in said District, that such main building shall not be within thirty-two (32) linear feet of the front or street line of said lots; that said lots shall not be used for manufacturing, mechanical or mercantile purposes, nor shall they be used or in any manner occupied by negroes, or by any person or persons of the negro race or having negro blood, excepting they be employed as servants of the occupants of such buildings or

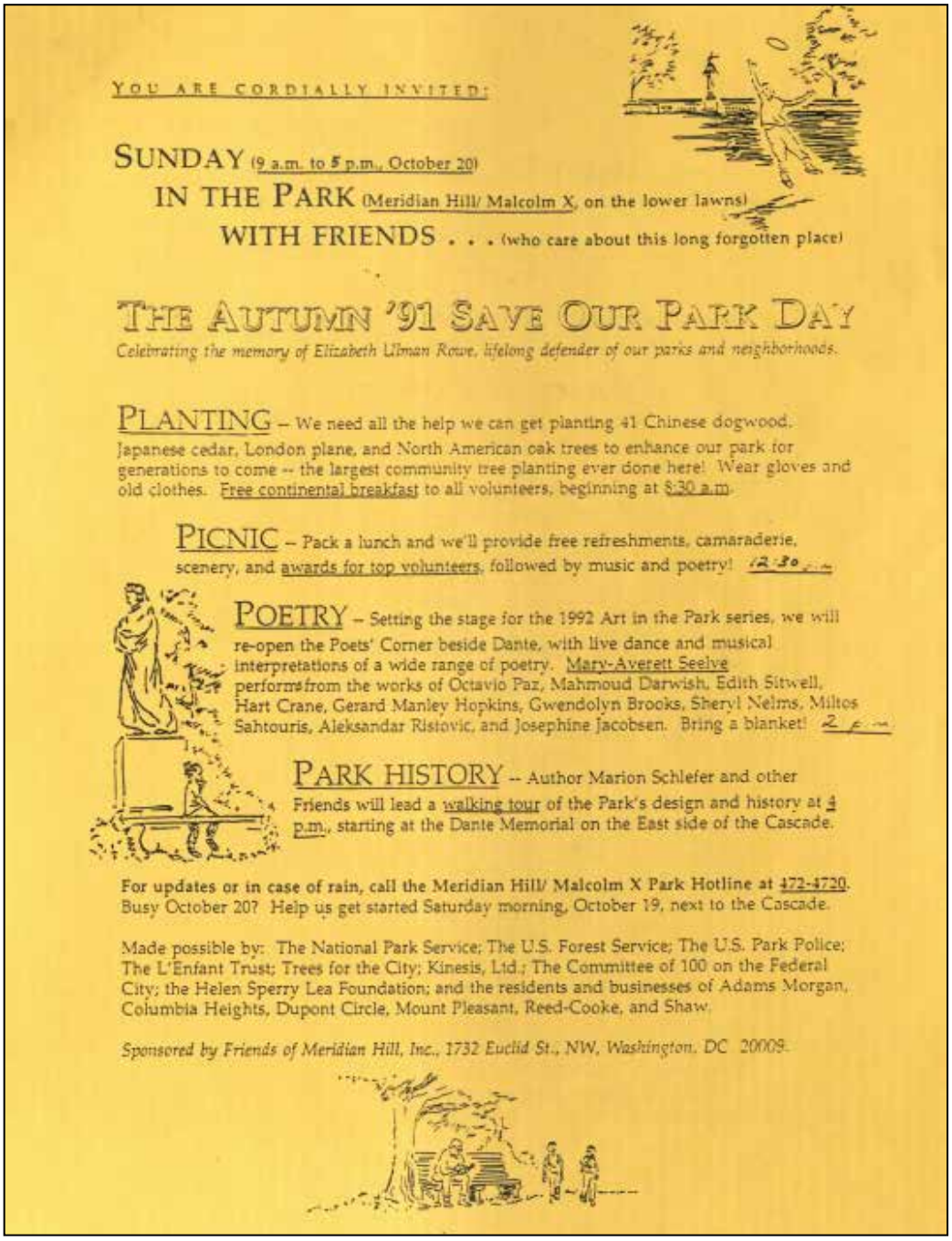
"Mapping Segregation: Deed for 3521-3543 Thirteenth St NW, in DC's Columbia Heights neighborhood, recorded June 25, 1909: DC Archives." Flickr. Accessed Nov. 2017. https://www.flickr.com/photos/131635569@N05/18142744992/in/album-72157651781502916/.

Appendix C. 2 Section of the 1900 U.S. Census data documenting African American residents on 15th Street on Meridian Hill and their occupations, which include servant, day laborer, cook, and coachman



1900 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., District 12, Sheet 15.

APPENDIX C. 3 FLYER FOR "SAVE OUR PARK DAY," AN EVENT ORGANIZED BY THE FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL IN 1991



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED:

SUNDAY (9 a.m. to 5 p.m., October 20)
IN THE PARK (Meridian Hill/ Malcolm X, on the lower lawns)
WITH FRIENDS . . . (who care about this long forgotten place)

THE AUTUMN '91 SAVE OUR PARK DAY

Celebrating the memory of Elizabeth Ullman Rowe, lifelong defender of our parks and neighborhoods.

PLANTING – We need all the help we can get planting 41 Chinese dogwood, Japanese cedar, London plane, and North American oak trees to enhance our park for generations to come -- the largest community tree planting ever done here! Wear gloves and old clothes. Free continental breakfast to all volunteers, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

PICNIC – Pack a lunch and we'll provide free refreshments, camaraderie, scenery, and awards for top volunteers, followed by music and poetry! 12:30 p.m.

POETRY – Setting the stage for the 1992 Art in the Park series, we will re-open the Poets' Corner beside Dante, with live dance and musical interpretations of a wide range of poetry. Mary-Averett Seelye performs from the works of Octavio Paz, Mahmoud Darwish, Edith Sitwell, Hart Crane, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sheryl Nelms, Miltos Sahtouris, Aleksandar Ristovic, and Josephine Jacobsen. Bring a blanket! 2 p.m.

PARK HISTORY -- Author Marion Schlefer and other Friends will lead a walking tour of the Park's design and history at 4 p.m., starting at the Dante Memorial on the East side of the Cascade.

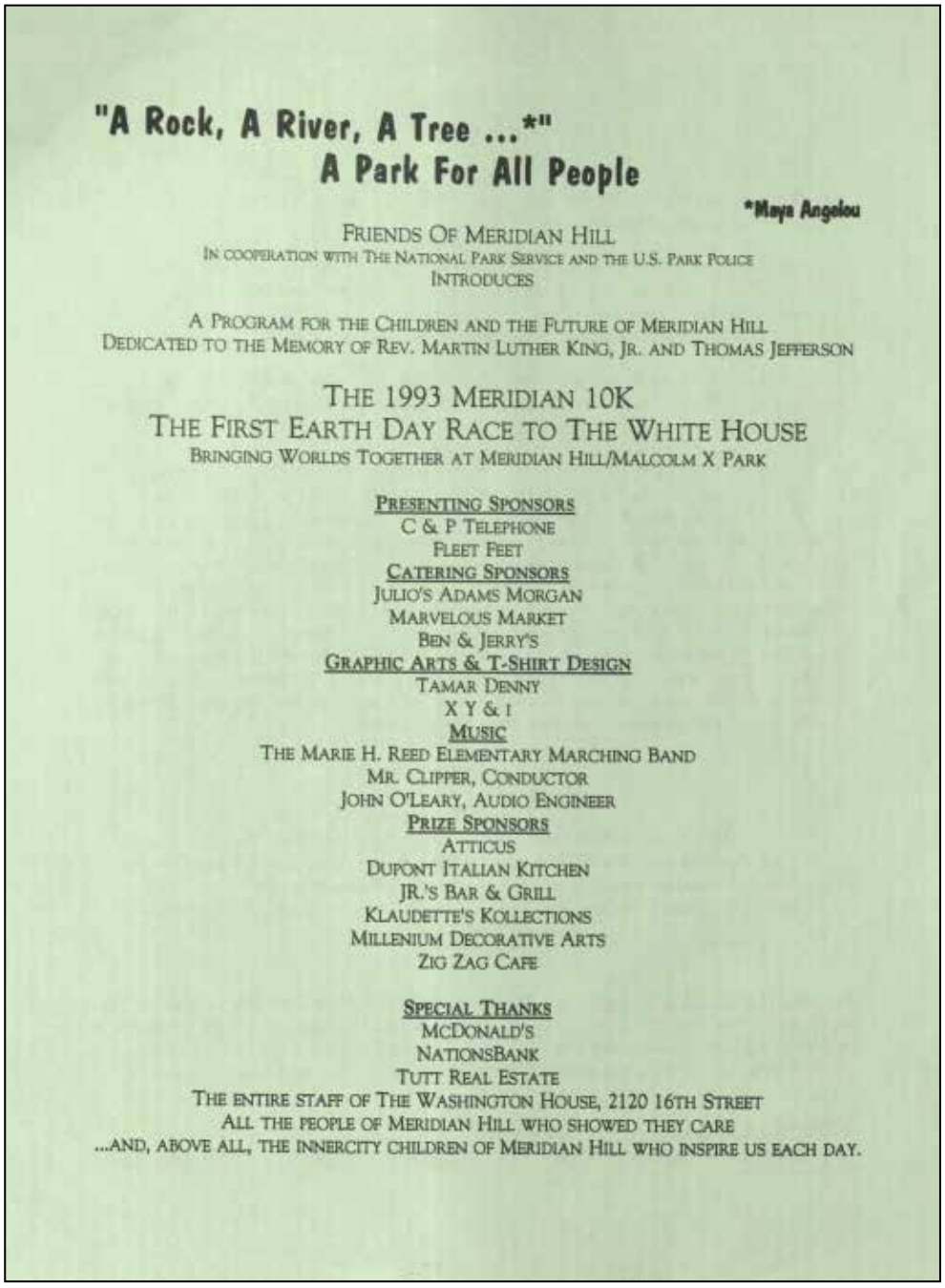
For updates or in case of rain, call the Meridian Hill/ Malcolm X Park Hotline at 472-4720. Busy October 20? Help us get started Saturday morning, October 19, next to the Cascade.

Made possible by: The National Park Service; The U.S. Forest Service; The U.S. Park Police; The L'Enfant Trust; Trees for the City; Kinesis, Ltd.; The Committee of 100 on the Federal City; the Helen Sperry Lea Foundation; and the residents and businesses of Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Dupont Circle, Mount Pleasant, Reed-Cooke, and Shaw.

Sponsored by Friends of Meridian Hill, Inc., 1732 Euclid St., NW, Washington, DC 20009.

Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 4 FLYER FOR THE FIRST EARTH DAY RACE TO THE WHITE HOUSE, AN EVENT ORGANIZED BY THE FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL IN 1993



"A Rock, A River, A Tree ...*"
A Park For All People

*Maya Angelou

FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL
IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE U.S. PARK POLICE
INTRODUCES

A PROGRAM FOR THE CHILDREN AND THE FUTURE OF MERIDIAN HILL
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND THOMAS JEFFERSON

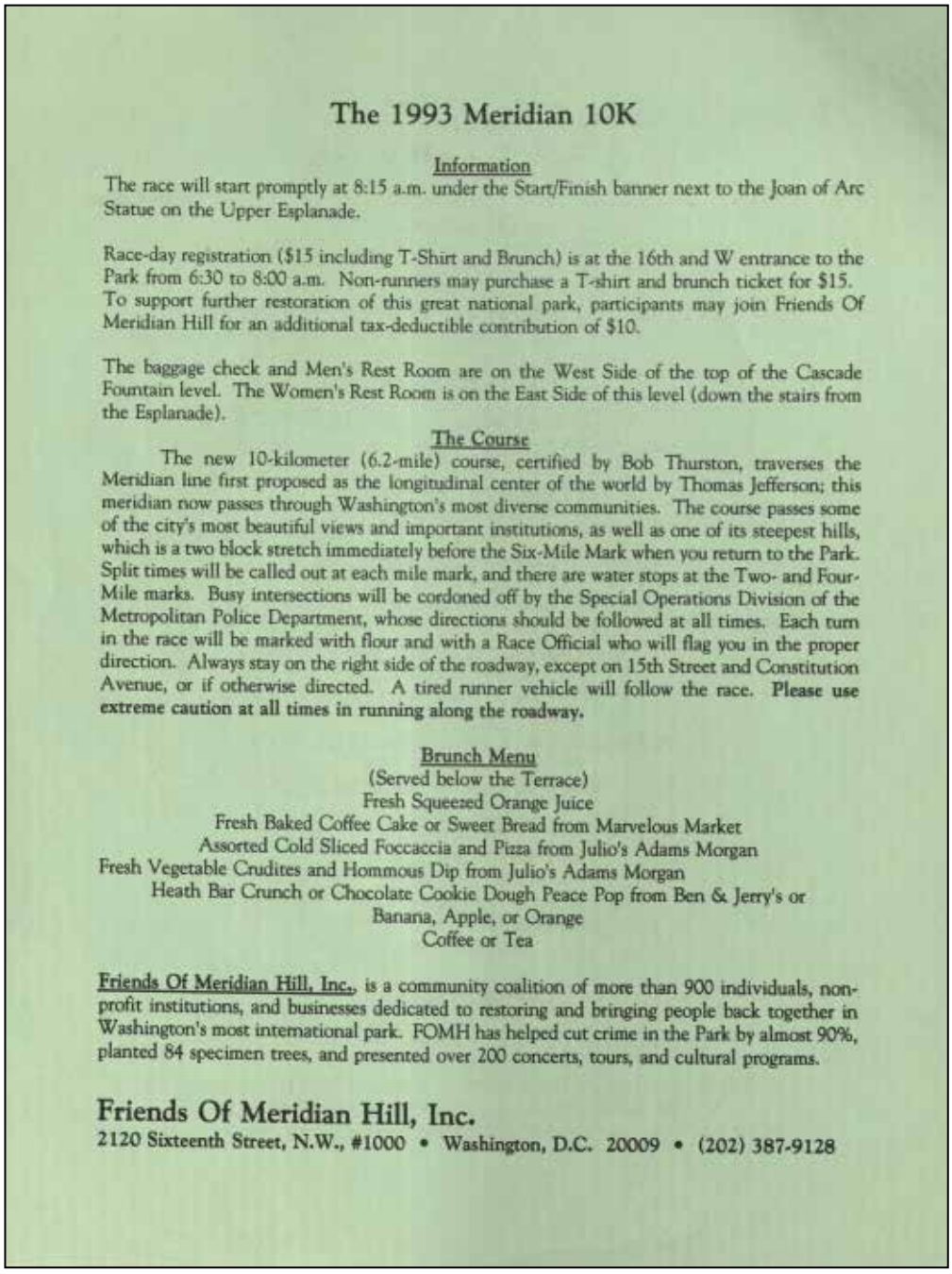
THE 1993 MERIDIAN 10K
THE FIRST EARTH DAY RACE TO THE WHITE HOUSE
BRINGING WORLDS TOGETHER AT MERIDIAN HILL/MALCOLM X PARK

PRESENTING SPONSORS
C & P TELEPHONE
FLEET FEET
CATERING SPONSORS
JULIO'S ADAMS MORGAN
MARVELOUS MARKET
BEN & JERRY'S
GRAPHIC ARTS & T-SHIRT DESIGN
TAMAR DENNY
X Y & I
MUSIC
THE MARIE H. REED ELEMENTARY MARCHING BAND
MR. CLIPPER, CONDUCTOR
JOHN O'LEARY, AUDIO ENGINEER
PRIZE SPONSORS
ATTICUS
DUPONT ITALIAN KITCHEN
JR.'S BAR & GRILL
KLAUDETTE'S KOLLECTIONS
MILLENIUM DECORATIVE ARTS
ZIG ZAG CAFE

SPECIAL THANKS
MCDONALD'S
NATIONSBANK
TUTT REAL ESTATE
THE ENTIRE STAFF OF THE WASHINGTON HOUSE, 2120 16TH STREET
ALL THE PEOPLE OF MERIDIAN HILL WHO SHOWED THEY CARE
...AND, ABOVE ALL, THE INNERCITY CHILDREN OF MERIDIAN HILL WHO INSPIRE US EACH DAY.

Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 4 CONT'D



The 1993 Meridian 10K

Information

The race will start promptly at 8:15 a.m. under the Start/Finish banner next to the Joan of Arc Statue on the Upper Esplanade.

Race-day registration ($15 including T-Shirt and Brunch) is at the 16th and W entrance to the Park from 6:30 to 8:00 a.m. Non-runners may purchase a T-shirt and brunch ticket for $15. To support further restoration of this great national park, participants may join Friends Of Meridian Hill for an additional tax-deductible contribution of $10.

The baggage check and Men's Rest Room are on the West Side of the top of the Cascade Fountain level. The Women's Rest Room is on the East Side of this level (down the stairs from the Esplanade).

The Course

The new 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) course, certified by Bob Thurston, traverses the Meridian line first proposed as the longitudinal center of the world by Thomas Jefferson; this meridian now passes through Washington's most diverse communities. The course passes some of the city's most beautiful views and important institutions, as well as one of its steepest hills, which is a two block stretch immediately before the Six-Mile Mark when you return to the Park. Split times will be called out at each mile mark, and there are water stops at the Two- and Four-Mile marks. Busy intersections will be cordoned off by the Special Operations Division of the Metropolitan Police Department, whose directions should be followed at all times. Each turn in the race will be marked with flour and with a Race Official who will flag you in the proper direction. Always stay on the right side of the roadway, except on 15th Street and Constitution Avenue, or if otherwise directed. A tired runner vehicle will follow the race. **Please use extreme caution at all times in running along the roadway.**

Brunch Menu

(Served below the Terrace)
Fresh Squeezed Orange Juice
Fresh Baked Coffee Cake or Sweet Bread from Marvelous Market
Assorted Cold Sliced Foccaccia and Pizza from Julio's Adams Morgan
Fresh Vegetable Crudites and Hommous Dip from Julio's Adams Morgan
Heath Bar Crunch or Chocolate Cookie Dough Peace Pop from Ben & Jerry's or
Banana, Apple, or Orange
Coffee or Tea

Friends Of Meridian Hill, Inc., is a community coalition of more than 900 individuals, non-profit institutions, and businesses dedicated to restoring and bringing people back together in Washington's most international park. FOMH has helped cut crime in the Park by almost 90%, planted 84 specimen trees, and presented over 200 concerts, tours, and cultural programs.

Friends Of Meridian Hill, Inc.
2120 Sixteenth Street, N.W., #1000 • Washington, D.C. 20009 • (202) 387-9128

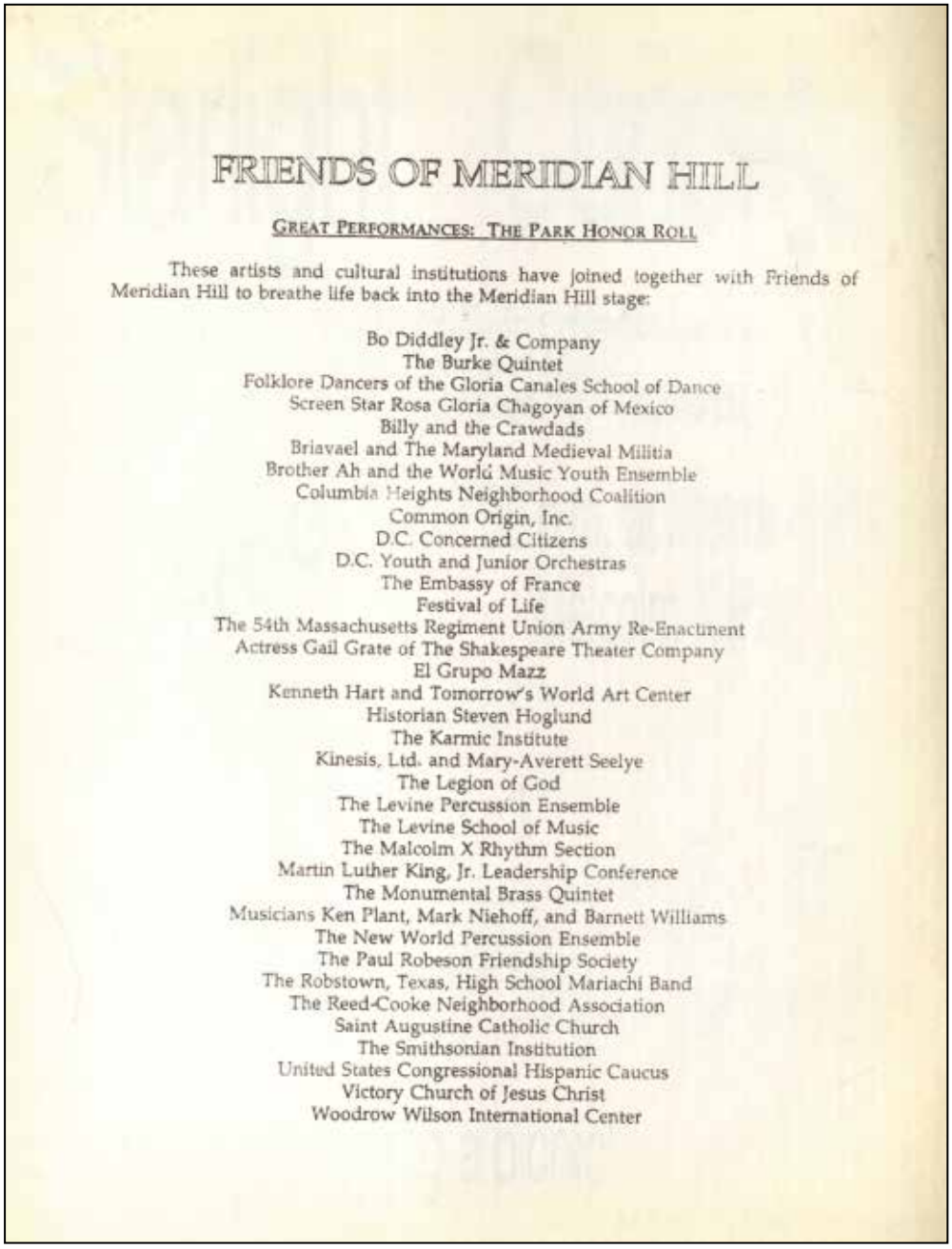
Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 5 FLYER FOR THE STARLIGHT CONCERTS, A CONCERT SERIES ORGANIZED BY THE FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL



Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 6 FLYER LISTING THE PERFORMERS THAT PARTICIPATED IN FRIEND OF MERIDIAN HILL'S STARLIGHT CONCERT SERIES



FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL

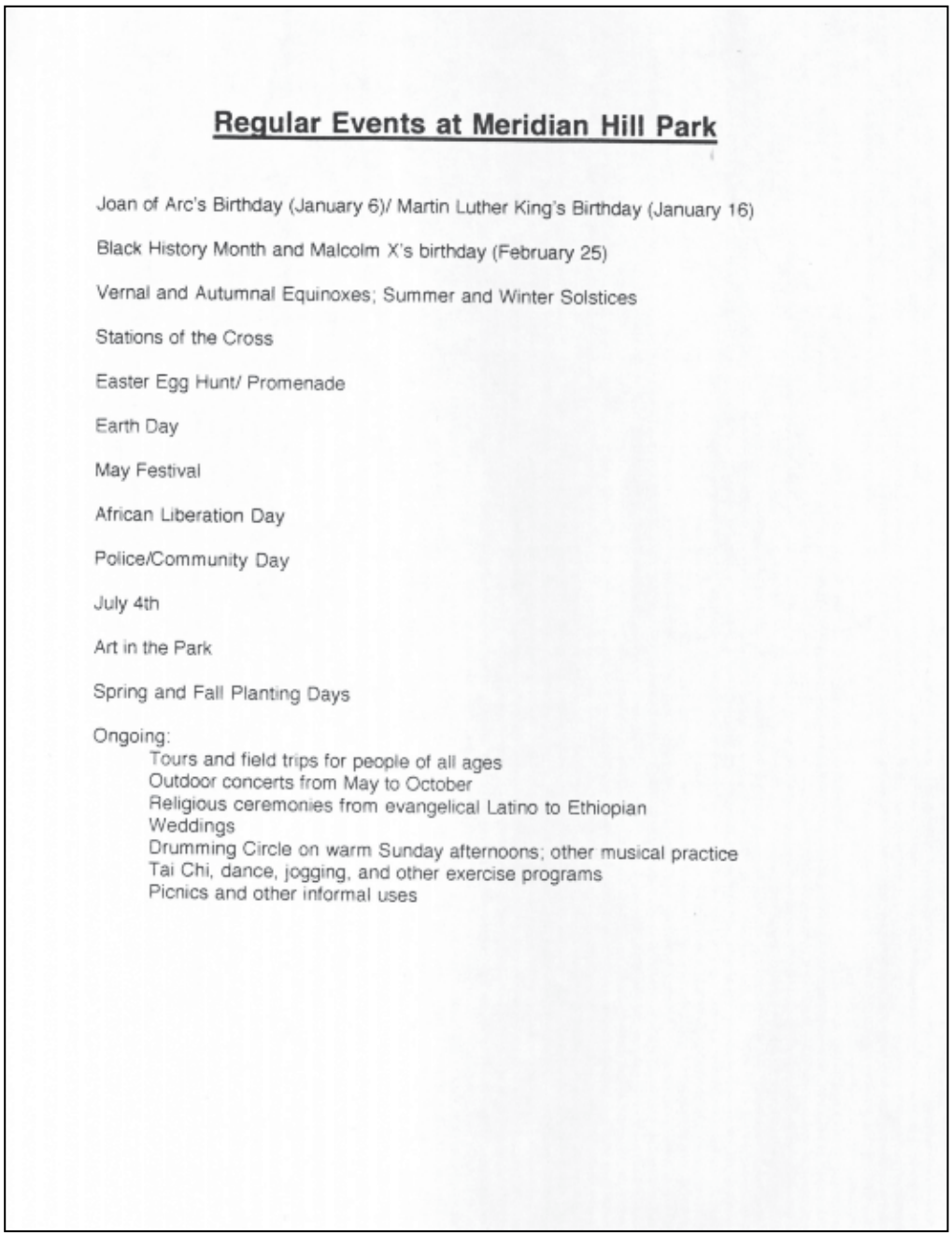
GREAT PERFORMANCES: THE PARK HONOR ROLL

These artists and cultural institutions have joined together with Friends of Meridian Hill to breathe life back into the Meridian Hill stage:

Bo Diddley Jr. & Company
The Burke Quintet
Folklore Dancers of the Gloria Canales School of Dance
Screen Star Rosa Gloria Chagoyan of Mexico
Billy and the Crawdads
Briavael and The Maryland Medieval Militia
Brother Ah and the World Music Youth Ensemble
Columbia Heights Neighborhood Coalition
Common Origin, Inc.
D.C. Concerned Citizens
D.C. Youth and Junior Orchestras
The Embassy of France
Festival of Life
The 54th Massachusetts Regiment Union Army Re-Enactment
Actress Gail Grate of The Shakespeare Theater Company
El Grupo Mazz
Kenneth Hart and Tomorrow's World Art Center
Historian Steven Hoglund
The Karmic Institute
Kinesis, Ltd. and Mary-Averett Seelye
The Legion of God
The Levine Percussion Ensemble
The Levine School of Music
The Malcolm X Rhythm Section
Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Conference
The Monumental Brass Quintet
Musicians Ken Plant, Mark Niehoff, and Barnett Williams
The New World Percussion Ensemble
The Paul Robeson Friendship Society
The Robstown, Texas, High School Mariachi Band
The Reed-Cooke Neighborhood Association
Saint Augustine Catholic Church
The Smithsonian Institution
United States Congressional Hispanic Caucus
Victory Church of Jesus Christ
Woodrow Wilson International Center

Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 7 LIST OF REGULARLY SCHEDULED EVENTS AT MERIDIAN HILL PARK



Regular Events at Meridian Hill Park

Joan of Arc's Birthday (January 6)/ Martin Luther King's Birthday (January 16)

Black History Month and Malcolm X's birthday (February 25)

Vernal and Autumnal Equinoxes; Summer and Winter Solstices

Stations of the Cross

Easter Egg Hunt/ Promenade

Earth Day

May Festival

African Liberation Day

Police/Community Day

July 4th

Art in the Park

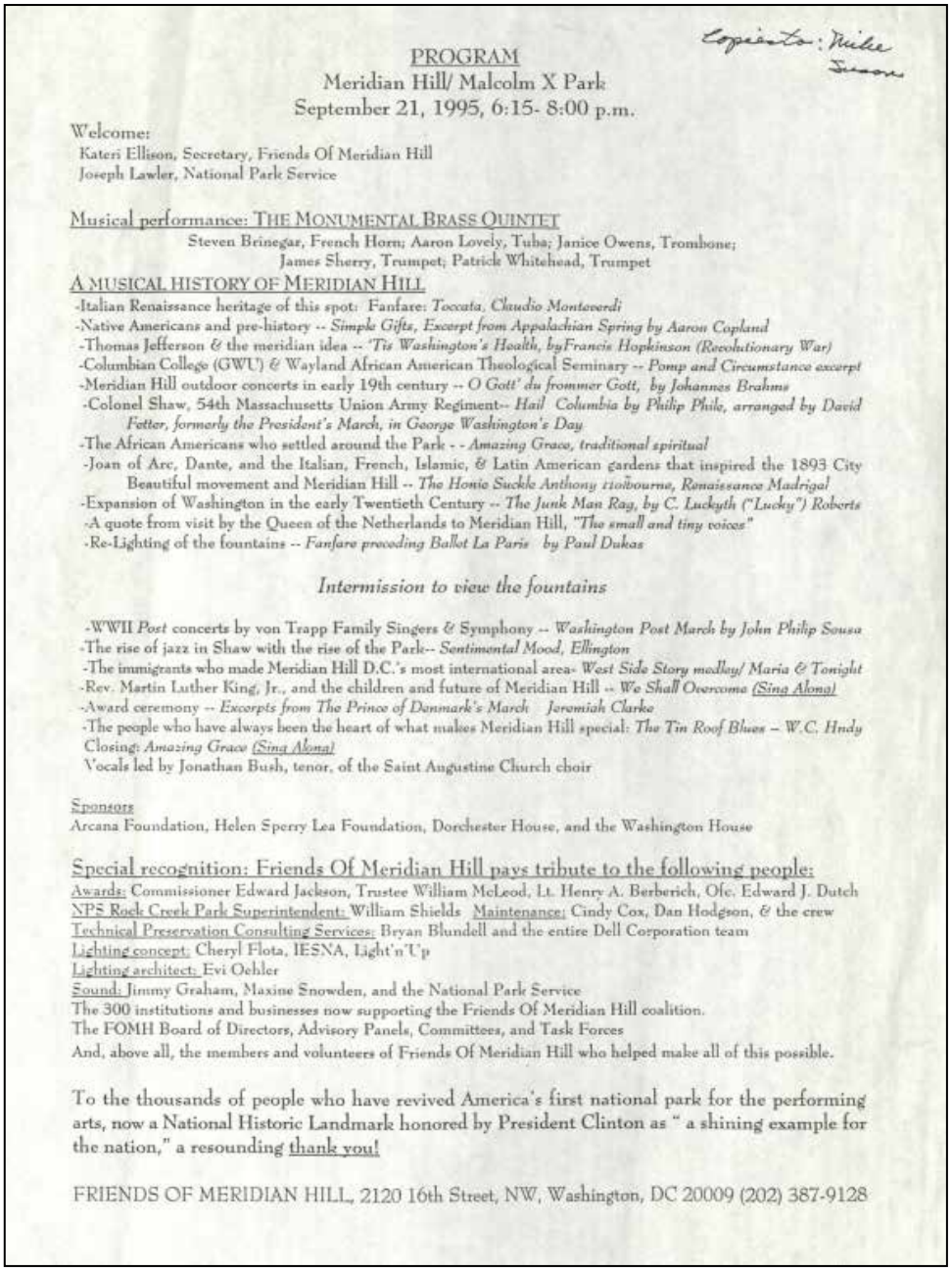
Spring and Fall Planting Days

Ongoing:

- Tours and field trips for people of all ages
- Outdoor concerts from May to October
- Religious ceremonies from evangelical Latino to Ethiopian Weddings
- Drumming Circle on warm Sunday afternoons; other musical practice
- Tai Chi, dance, jogging, and other exercise programs
- Picnics and other informal uses

Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 8 PROGRAM FOR A CONCERT AT MERIDIAN HILL PARK. SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 21, 1995 AND ORGANIZED BY FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL



Copies to: Mike Simon

PROGRAM
Meridian Hill/ Malcolm X Park
September 21, 1995, 6:15- 8:00 p.m.

Welcome:
Kateri Ellison, Secretary, Friends Of Meridian Hill
Joseph Lawler, National Park Service

Musical performance: THE MONUMENTAL BRASS QUINTET
Steven Brinegar, French Horn; Aaron Lovely, Tuba; Janice Owens, Trombone;
James Sherry, Trumpet; Patrick Whitehead, Trumpet

A MUSICAL HISTORY OF MERIDIAN HILL
-Italian Renaissance heritage of this spot: Fanfare: *Toccata, Claudio Monteverdi*
-Native Americans and pre-history -- *Simple Gifts, Excerpt from Appalachian Spring by Aaron Copland*
-Thomas Jefferson & the meridian idea -- *'Tis Washington's Health, byFrancis Hopkinson (Revolutionary War)*
-Columbian College (GWU) & Wayland African American Theological Seminary -- *Pomp and Circumstance excerpt*
-Meridian Hill outdoor concerts in early 19th century -- *O Gott' du frommer Gott, by Johannes Brahms*
-Colonel Shaw, 54th Massachusetts Union Army Regiment-- *Hail Columbia by Philip Phile, arranged by David Fetter, formerly the President's March, in George Washington's Day*
-The African Americans who settled around the Park - - *Amazing Grace, traditional spiritual*
-Joan of Arc, Dante, and the Italian, French, Islamic, & Latin American gardens that inspired the 1893 City Beautiful movement and Meridian Hill -- *The Honie Suckle Anthony ttoibourne, Renaissance Madrigal*
-Expansion of Washington in the early Twentieth Century -- *The Junk Man Rag, by C. Luckyth ("Lucky") Roberts*
-A quote from visit by the Queen of the Netherlands to Meridian Hill, *"The small and tiny voices"*
-Re-Lighting of the fountains -- *Fanfare preceding Ballet La Paris by Paul Dukas*

Intermission to view the fountains

-WWII *Post* concerts by von Trapp Family Singers & Symphony -- *Washington Post March by John Philip Sousa*
-The rise of jazz in Shaw with the rise of the Park-- *Sentimental Mood, Ellington*
-The immigrants who made Meridian Hill D.C.'s most international area- *West Side Story medley/ Maria & Tonight*
-Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the children and future of Meridian Hill -- *We Shall Overcome (Sing Along)*
-Award ceremony -- *Excerpts from The Prince of Denmark's March Jeremiah Clarke*
-The people who have always been the heart of what makes Meridian Hill special: *The Tin Roof Blues – W.C. Hndy*
Closing: *Amazing Grace (Sing Along)*
Vocals led by Jonathan Bush, tenor, of the Saint Augustine Church choir

Sponsors
Arcana Foundation, Helen Sperry Lea Foundation, Dorchester House, and the Washington House

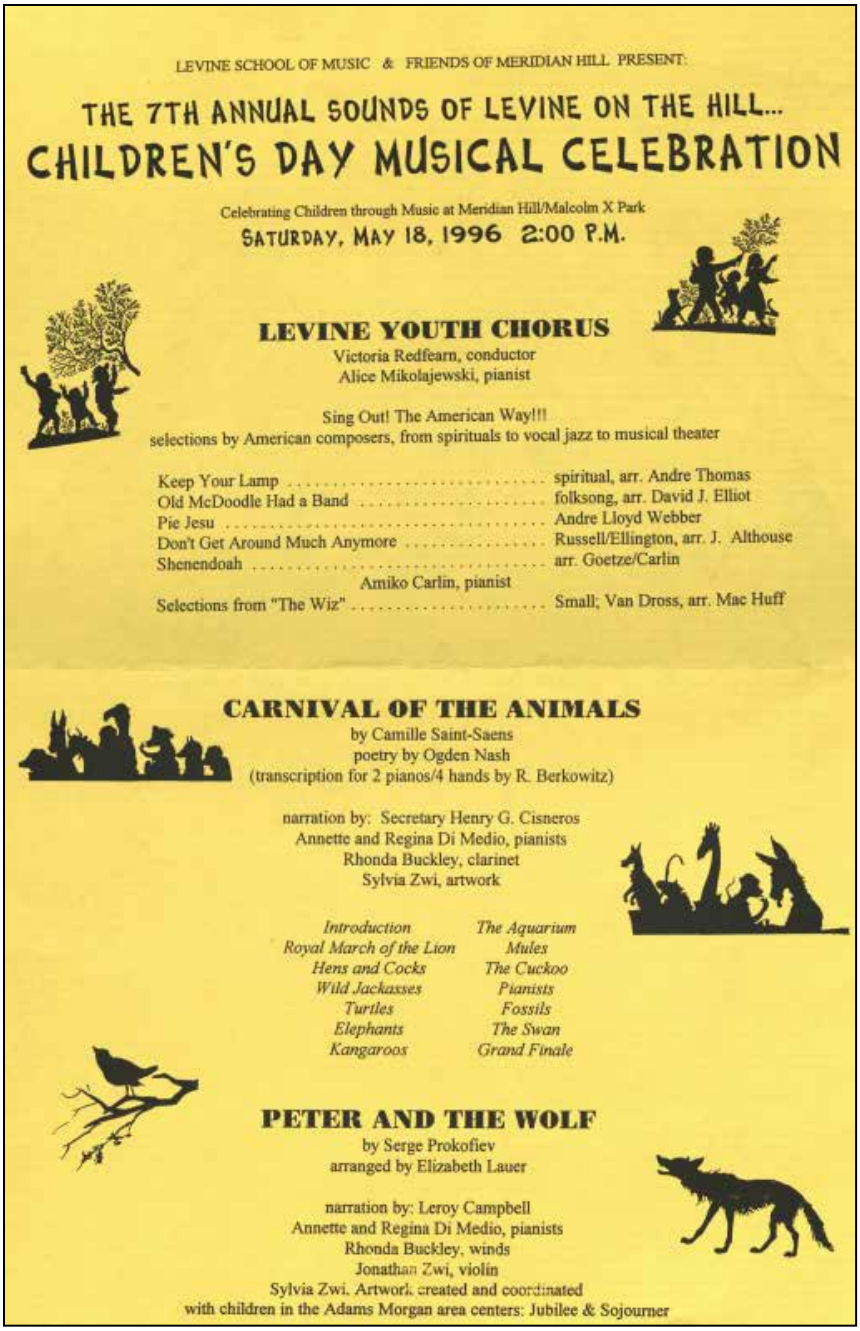
Special recognition: Friends Of Meridian Hill pays tribute to the following people:
Awards: Commissioner Edward Jackson, Trustee William McLeod, Lt. Henry A. Berberich, Ofc. Edward J. Dutch
NPS Rock Creek Park Superintendent: William Shields Maintenance: Cindy Cox, Dan Hodgson, & the crew
Technical Preservation Consulting Services: Bryan Blundell and the entire Dell Corporation team
Lighting concept: Cheryl Flota, IESNA, Light'n'Up
Lighting architect: Evi Oehler
Sound: Jimmy Graham, Maxine Snowden, and the National Park Service
The 300 institutions and businesses now supporting the Friends Of Meridian Hill coalition.
The FOMH Board of Directors, Advisory Panels, Committees, and Task Forces
And, above all, the members and volunteers of Friends Of Meridian Hill who helped make all of this possible.

To the thousands of people who have revived America's first national park for the performing arts, now a National Historic Landmark honored by President Clinton as " a shining example for the nation," a resounding thank you!

FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL, 2120 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202) 387-9128

Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

Appendix C. 9 Flyer for the Levine School of Music and Friends of Meridian Hill's "Children's Day Musical Celebration" in 1996



LEVINE SCHOOL OF MUSIC & FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL PRESENT:

THE 7TH ANNUAL SOUNDS OF LEVINE ON THE HILL...

CHILDREN'S DAY MUSICAL CELEBRATION

Celebrating Children through Music at Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park

SATURDAY, MAY 18, 1996 2:00 P.M.

LEVINE YOUTH CHORUS

Victoria Redfearn, conductor
Alice Mikolajewski, pianist

Sing Out! The American Way!!!
selections by American composers, from spirituals to vocal jazz to musical theater

Keep Your Lamp	spiritual, arr. Andre Thomas
Old McDoodle Had a Band	folksong, arr. David J. Elliot
Pie Jesu	Andre Lloyd Webber
Don't Get Around Much Anymore	Russell/Ellington, arr. J. Althouse
Shenendoah	arr. Goetze/Carlin
Amiko Carlin, pianist	
Selections from "The Wiz"	Small; Van Dross, arr. Mac Huff

CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS

by Camille Saint-Saens
poetry by Ogden Nash
(transcription for 2 pianos/4 hands by R. Berkowitz)

narration by: Secretary Henry G. Cisneros
Annette and Regina Di Medio, pianists
Rhonda Buckley, clarinet
Sylvia Zwi, artwork

Introduction
Royal March of the Lion
Hens and Cocks
Wild Jackasses
Turtles
Elephants
Kangaroos
The Aquarium
Mules
The Cuckoo
Pianists
Fossils
The Swan
Grand Finale

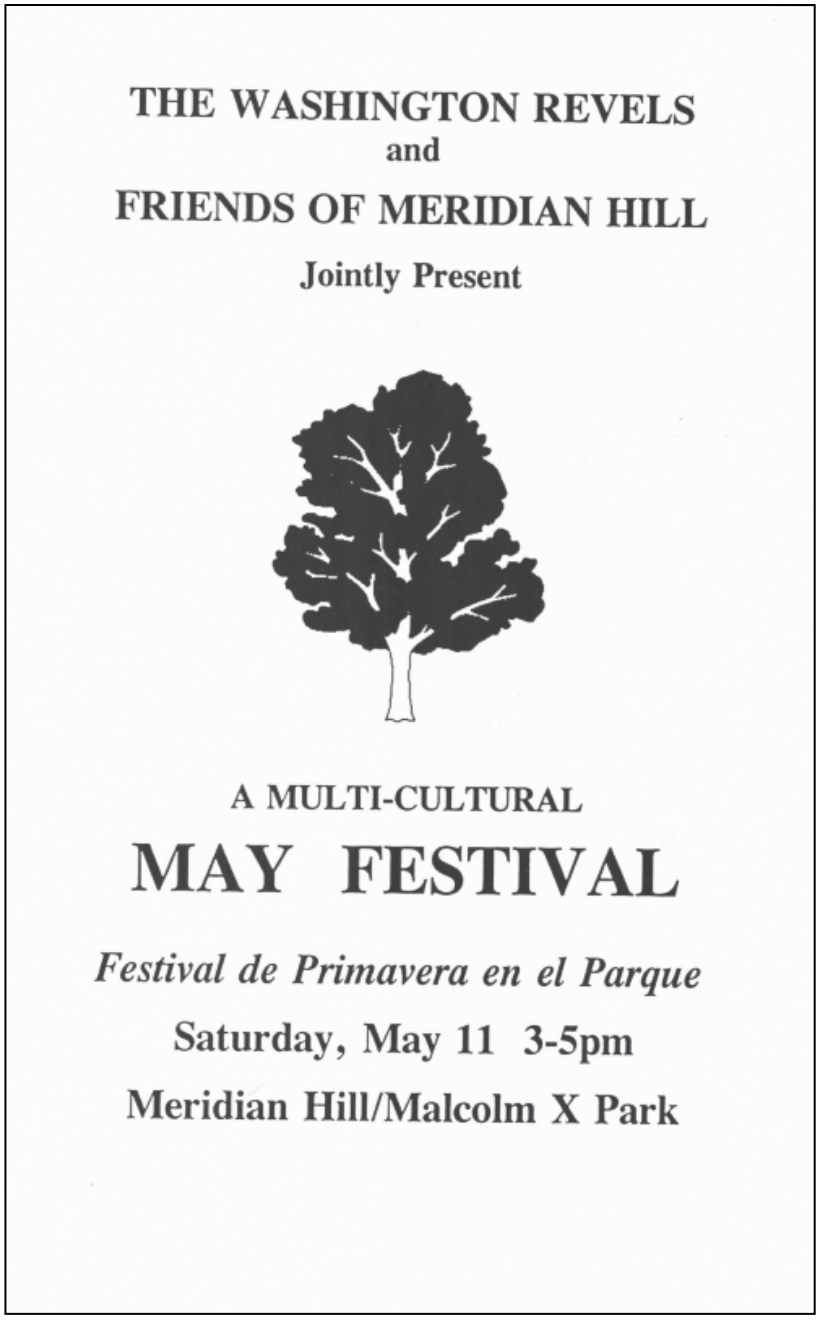
PETER AND THE WOLF

by Serge Prokofiev
arranged by Elizabeth Lauer

narration by: Leroy Campbell
Annette and Regina Di Medio, pianists
Rhonda Buckley, winds
Jonathan Zwi, violin
Sylvia Zwi, Artwork created and coordinated
with children in the Adams Morgan area centers: Jubilee & Sojourner

Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 10 FLYER FOR "A MULTI-CULTURAL MAY FESTIVAL," AN EVENT ORGANIZED BY THE WASHINGTON REVELS AND FRIENDS OF MERIDIAN HILL IN 1996



Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

APPENDIX C. 10 CONT'D

BRINGING IN THE MAY

A Multicultural Celebration in the Park

This Year's Festival is Dedicated to Josephine Butler

with

Ted Schneider, Master of Ceremonies
Charlie Sayles, Blues Harmonica
James Harkless, Charles Williams, Singers
Laura Rodriguez, Translation

1. PROCESSION . . . . . The Festival Band
The Cornish villagers of Helston dance to the *Furry Day Carol* every year on May 8th, now called 'Flora Day.'

2. COUNTRY DANCE: *Mad Robin* . . The May Revels Chorus
A longways English Playford country dance dating from the 1680s.

3. NIGERIAN WELCOMING SONG . . . . . Charles Williams

4. GREETING: *May Verses, 1996* . . . . . Mary Swope
A greeting to all the neighbors and friends gathered to celebrate together in this beautiful and historic park.

5. SUMER IS ICUMEN IN . . . . . H.D. Cooke Garland Dancers
Sumer Is Icumen In, most famous of all medieval vocal compositions, is a four-part round that may date from the early 14th century.

ALL SING!: (*slightly modernized words*)
Sumer is a-coming in, loudly sing cuckoo!
Groweth seed and bloweth mead
And springs the wood anew. Sing cuckoo!
Ewe bleateth after lamb, loweth after calf the cu.(cow)
Bullock starteth, bucke verteth,
Merrie sing cuckoo. Cuckoo, cuckoo!
Well sings thou, cuckoo, ne swik (stop) thou never nu.



6. SINGING GAMES . . . . . The Kid Connection
The Symondsbury Traveler's Tune comes from the English countryside, *Draw Me a Bucket of Water* and *Here Comes Zodiac* are African-American, and *Jolly Is the Miller Boy* was collected in Michigan.

7. BLUES HARMONICA . . . . . Charlie Sayles
A master of the blues harp offers a sample of his artistry.

8. A DANCE DRAMA OF NATURE . . Generation Celebration
Sky Above, Earth Below: an original dance drama created from poems and movement by Sarah's Circle seniors and H.D. Cooke sixth graders under the guidance of dancer Nan Tree, with music composed and played by Roy Barber especially for this performance piece.

9. SONG: COUNTRY LIFE . . . . . May Revels Chorus
This folk song extolling the pleasures of the ploughboy's life also mentions the seasonal routines of maintaining the hedges and ditches that to this day keep fields drained and manageable in many parts of England and other parts of the world.

10. *CAPOEIRA ANGOLA*
An Afro-Brazilian martial art. The tradition was brought from Central Africa to Brazil in the days of slavery. Cobra Mansa trained the troupe.

11. CANCIONES . . . . . Los Cantantes Pequeños
Three well-known songs from Puerto Rico and Mexico: *Arroz con Leche, El Coqui* and *Cielito Lindo*. Please join us on the refrain.

ALL SING:
Ay, Ay, Ay, Ay!
Canta y no llores
porque cantando se alegran,
Cielito Lindo los corazones.

12. DE COLORES . . . . . The Company
This Mexican song is one of the 42 songs all Americans should know, according to a recent panel of music educators.

ALL SING: (Chorus)
Y por eso los grandes amores
de muchos colores
me gustan a mi.

13. DOUBLE DUTCH . . . . . H.D. Cooke Double Dutch Team
A demonstration of skill and flexibility in a favorite springtime sport. Annette Thornton coaches this prize-winning school team.

14. BATTLE OF THE ELEMENTS . . . . Mad May Mummers
A mummer's play written in 1994 to celebrate a tree planting. The Elements argue over which is most important in nurturing a tree.
Tree, Cody Squire *Earth*, Ted Schneider *Air*, Chris Johns
Fire, Marta Schley *Water*, Andrea Jones

15. THE RATTLIN' BOG . . . . . Terry Winslow, *singer*
A cumulative song from Ireland with a message about fertility and the cycle of life. *Rattlin'* here means 'remarkably good, lively.'

ALL SING: Hi ho, the rattlin' bog,
The bog down in the valley-O,
Hi ho, the rattlin' bog,
The bog down in the valley-O!

16. RINCEMORE . . . . . The Cooke Irish Dancers
This lively and popular dance (pronounced *Rinky-more*) is typical of many traditional Irish dances.

17. DRUMS . . . . . The Drumming Circle
These drummers gather regularly to play in Malcolm X Park.

18. SPIRITUALS . . . . . Charles Williams, Jim Harkless
Songs of faith and resistance, spirituals have played a powerful role in both African-American history and America's cultural heritage.

19. THE PADSTOW MAY 'OSS . . . Foggy Bottom Morris Men
Our Obby Oss is modeled on a tradition from the Cornish fishing port of Padstow. There, every May Day, beginning at the stroke of midnight, the Oss dances through the village, enacting a ritual death and rebirth that symbolizes the renewal of spring. It is said to bring luck and fertility to the community — and to any woman it touches.
Terry Winslow, *The May 'Oss* Nick Seeley, *Teaser*

ALL DANCE & SING REFRAIN:
Unite and unite, now let us unite,
For summer is a-come in today,
And whither we are going we all will unite
In the merry morning of May.

AT THE 'DEATH' — very slowly:
Oh where is Saint George? Oh where is he now?
He's out in his long boat, all on the salt sea-O
Up flies the kite! Down falls the lark-O.
Aunt Ursula Birdwood, she had an old yowe (ewe)
And it died in her own park-O.

20. MAYPOLE DANCE . . . . . The Maypole Dancers
Though the maypole is an ancient symbol of fertility, its colorful streamers were a Victorian addition. Earlier, dances were performed around the trunk of a newly cut tree 'planted' in the ground and hung with floral hoops, still seen on Midsummer's Eve in Northern Europe.

21. WILD MOUNTAIN THYME . . . . . Leroy Campbell, *singer*
ALL SING: Will ye go, lassie, go? . . .
And we'll all go together
To pull wild mountain thyme
All around the blooming heather.
Will ye go, lassie, go?

22. COUNTRY DANCING . . . . . The Greenwood Band
Sellenger's Round, a simple English country dance, popular since the seventeenth century, is also called *the Beginning of the World*.

ALL JOIN: The band will continue to play !

~ ~

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to **St. Columba's Episcopal Church** and **St Augustine's Catholic School** (especially Linda Wallace, Parish Manager) for their cooperation in providing rehearsal space; to Gayle and Mark Jaster, Joan Shaw and Laura Garcia de Mendoza for artistic and linguistic consultation, and to Mynor Palaez for translating our flyers into Spanish. We are most grateful to **The National Park Service** for the use of the Park and for supplying the sound system and to all those who have worked and contributed for the past six years to make the Park a source of pride and cohesion in the neighborhood.

SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS!

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Rock Creek Park, Meridian Hill Park Files, Museum Resource Center

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