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Green, Constance Winsor McLaughlin, 1897-

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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Advisory Committee on the History of Washington Project

A meeting of the Advisory Committee on the History of Washington Project was held on December 2, 1939 at 2:00p.m. in the President's Office, 1901 F Street, N.W. It was attended by Mrs. J. Kirch, Gabriel, Green, Holmes, Leland, Foner and Are.

I. Chairmanship and Membership

Dr. Holmes reported on the composition of the Committee and suggested that, in view of his return to Washington, Dr. Leland might be willing to resume the chairmanship, which however, Dr. Leland declined. The Committee was informed that Dr. Galloway and Mrs. Mayer had accepted membership. It was moved and seconded that Dr. G. Franklin Ayers, Associate Professor of Sociology at Howard University be invited to join the Committee. Dr. Green offered to consult with Dr. Buck who has not been able to attend the Committee meetings because of illness.

II. Expiration of the Grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

Dr. Green stated that the history could be carried as far forward as the 1930's under the present grant, but that it was desirable to reach 1950.

Dr. Foner proposed a consultation with Dean Bray in regard to the possibility of securing Ford Foundation funds, and the Committee was agreed that steps should be taken as quickly as possible to secure further financial support.

III. Publication of the History of Washington.

Dr. Green reported that the manuscript, or portions of it, were being considered by Princeton University Press and the University of Chicago Press. There was general discussion of the merits and possible degrees of interest of different publishers.

IV. Discussion of Chapter XXI of the Manuscript.

Dr. Green informed the Committee of her progress and plans in regard to the manuscript. In the discussion and criticism, the Committee touched upon the following points:

The need for a more graphic description of the physical city and a more definite and detailed description of some of the personalities involved.

Attention to the influx of intellectuals making Washington an important research center with scholarly research organizations maintaining their headquarters in the city.

Some statement of the total cumulative effect of administrative problems.

More emphasis on the impact of the highlights of World War I on the city, for example Wilson's Four Message and the foreign dignitaries coming from Europe.

Some reference to the newspapers in terms of their policies when important shifts were apparent.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would be called as needed. Meanwhile a summary of progress to date would be compiled for use in soliciting foundation financial support and for the information of the Committee. The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.
Dear Mrs. Green:

I am happy to be able to write that at its meeting just completed, our Board of Trustees enthusiastically approved publication of your history of the city of Washington, subject only to a review of the completed manuscript by our Editorial Board. The Editorial Board, which is a small faculty committee, has already reviewed the partial manuscript which you sent, and is very much impressed with it. Their final review of your completed manuscript would be with reference only to its scholarly content and without reference to commercial expediency.

I think you will be pleased at the enclosed report from an outside reader whom we asked to advise us on the manuscript. Also I read the manuscript myself, and a member of our Editorial Board read it. We are all convinced that the book will be an important contribution to scholarship, and we also feel that it can be a real success as a publishing venture. We would plan to produce it in an attractive format, probably something similar to George Kennan's RUSSIA LEAVES THE WAR, since it is a very large book. We would also want to include forty-eight pages of illustrated material, that is, sixteen pages of illustrations for each of the three major parts of the book. If half the pages were full-page illustrations, and the other half half-page, this would allow seventy-two illustrations. I would suppose that in the archives in which you have been doing your research there would be a great many photographs, drawings, and maps that would be suitable. We found your text very interesting in itself, and we do not agree with our outside reader that you should attempt to bring forward the place of official society in Washington. In your book official Washington assumes its proper position with respect to the city as a whole, and we would not want to distort that. The social activities of Congress and the high officials of the administration and judiciary make another story.

I know that you have been considering various alternatives, but I hope that the idea of publishing with Princeton University Press will appeal to you. I think we could succeed in getting the recognition the book deserves, both from scholars and from the general public.

I shall look forward to hearing from you, and I hope to have the pleasure of working with you in the future as the book progresses.

Sincerely yours,

Herbert S. Bailey, Jr.
Constance McLaughlin Green

About 25% of a history of the City of Washington, D.C.

1. Is this manuscript a significant contribution to the field?
   Yes.

   1 (a) If so, to what extent is its contribution important and useful to other scholars? (Inaccessible source material, new interpretations, etc.)

   If the three or more parts of the manuscript that I have not seen match in quality this 285 page section, the book will be a distinguished addition to our very short list of good urban histories. The author has caught the peculiar flair of non-official Washington and has succeeded in isolating characteristics that give it special identity among American cities. Her use of official sources and newspaper material appears to be exhaustive, her sampling from memoirs, biographies, etc., adequate though less thorough. The chapters on the Negro community are outstanding.

   1 (c) To what extent will it be useful to interested readers, outside the particular field of scholarship? (Scholars in other fields, general readers, etc.?)

   A well-done history of the national capital should have a more general audience than the usual city history. Among other things the book ought to be a natural for that large and perhaps mythical library market that so seldom materializes. Special audiences—the Negro communities in cities, or Washington itself—might be substantial.

2. Is the scholarship sound?
   Yes; she fairly browbeats the reader with her possession of the official sources on the government and the economy of the District. On the other hand the occasional page or so with which she summarizes the state of the Union—usually introductory pages for a new era—have the flavor of rote reference to the liberal orthodoxy of the 30's and the 40's. I suppose this orthodoxy is still sound.

3. Is the content an effective unit? Does it make a well-rounded book?
   This unit itself only wants an introductory and a concluding chapter to make a well-rounded book. I cannot judge, of course, the organization of the whole work: if it is in proportion to this section, the manuscript will run to a thousand or twelve hundred typescript pages.

4. Does the manuscript have a readable style? A distinguished style? Are stylistic revisions called for?
   The style is always natural and readable, frequently very graceful. I was left uneasy by only one minor point. The author makes it
perfectly clear that her biases, in so far as they exist, lie with the individual and community aspirations of the Negro. I hope she will review very carefully her quoted use of such words as "darkies," "Bad nigger," etc.; no careful reader could possibly misconstrue her position, but all her readers will not be careful.

5. If you were a publisher of scholarly books with a usually crowded schedule, would you consider this manuscript a worthy addition to your list? Is it something you would be proud to publish?

Yes.

6. Are there competing books in the field?

The last full dress history of W ashington to which I can find any reference was published in 1914. There are numerous picture books, semi-official histories, and period studies, but nothing of this scale and quality.

7. My final reaction is that:

(x) I strongly recommend publication. I offer some suggestions for revision, but adoption of these should be left to the discretion of the author. Obviously this advice must be reviewed after the submission of the remainder of the manuscript.

8. Could the manuscript be improved by cutting?

Possibly, though I doubt it. The author achieves her ends by patient accumulation of a great deal of sometimes prosaic fact. She might find it possible to illustrate the same conclusions by resorting to more emphasis on dramatic incidents in her story, by more reliance on colorful vignettes at the expense of her sequential account. This is not her style, however, nor do her principal sources point to this kind of treatment.

This point illustrates the reservations I have about the work. The narrative stream is almost too placid, composed as it is of many interesting facts but few dramatic ones, many, many names, but few faces. I think that the circles of public and official Washington are left too far off-stage, though I realize that if politics as such were permitted to intrude too much, the book would be spoiled. Still, I would welcome a bit more attention to the changing styles of presidents' ladies, or the shifting fashions of congressional society.

Effective presentation of the book will require many maps and sketches, and lavish illustration. The author is not at her best in calling up visual images of the evolving city beautiful; she needs a photographer through almost every episode of her account. Mrs. Green has given us a shrewd analysis of the District's undemocratic government, a balanced and intimate report of the economic basis for the peculiarities of Washington's urbanization, and a haunting account of the disappearance of Negro influence on decisions in the capital community. Her effort to capture the "city of conversation," to reveal the excitement of an evening during an important moment of Washington society, is less successful. The structure of her book requires that she emphasize gradual institutional change rather than the ephemeral brilliance of this or that salon. If the whole book is as good as this part, I think it could be a successful publishing venture.
CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDING OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

In late May 1800 when the sloops carrying government records and the personal belongings of federal officials docked at Lear's wharf on the Potomac near the mouth of Rock Creek, the new national capital bore little resemblance to a city. A half-mile below the landing a sluggish little stream, Goose Creek, elaborately renamed the Tiber, worked its way to the river through tidal flats steaming in the hot sun. Above the marshy estuary rose the painted sandstone Executive Mansion flanked on one side by the brick building designed for the Treasury, on the other by the partly-built headquarters for the War Department. A mile farther east one wing of the white freestone Capitol occupied a commanding position on Jenkins Hill, blocking off from view the houses on the wooded plateau beyond. Nearby, dwellings ready to turn into boarding houses for Congressmen dotted the ridge along New Jersey avenue, while on North Capitol street stood the two houses General Washington had put up to encourage other investors.

Between the Capitol and the President's "Palace" stretched Pennsylvania avenue, planned as the federal city's main thoroughfare, its course now marked by a tangle of elder bushes, swamp grasses and tree stumps.¹

Downstream from the tidal swamps bluffs edged the river nearly to Greenleaf's point where the "Eastern Branch" flowed into the Potomac. About the point, today the site of Fort McNair and the National War College, were some substantial brick houses, some of them occupied, more of them awaiting tenants. The speculators who had attempted to exploit this river front area had also erected two rows of houses west of the President's House on Pennsylvania avenue, the "Six Buildings" begun by James Greenleaf at 22nd street, and at 19th street the better-known "Seven Buildings," financed by Robert Morris, which would serve for a time as offices for the Department of State.

Other houses conforming to the federal commissioners' exacting specifications lay scattered over the four-mile expanse from the site of the Navy Yard on the Eastern Branch to Washington City's northwestern boundary at Rock Creek. Here and there clustered small frame houses which the commissioners in charge of building had reluctantly permitted because "mechanics" obviously could not afford to build or occupy three-story brick edifices and the city would have to accommodate some of the "lower orders." All told, Washington contained but 109 habitable brick houses and 263 wooden. But in mid-summer the beauty of the natural setting impressed newcomers. The "romantic scenery" of river banks shaded by "tall umbrageous forest trees" compensated somewhat for the "unformed" streets, the roofless houses, the distance from one group of buildings to the next, and the clutter of stone, lumber and debris about the unfinished government buildings. Not until the November winds stripped the trees bare would the rawness and untidiness of the new capital afflict men fresh from the
The elegance and comforts of Philadelphia. ²

Georgetown on the heights of the Potomac upstream from Washington City was more prepossessing. Laid out in 1751 and incorporated in 1789, the little river port had flourished for some years as a shipping center for Maryland and Virginia tobacco. After 1793 she had suffered reverses as the small crops grown on depleted soil, the uncertain markets of war-ridden Europe and, hearsay reported, the diversion of local capital to speculation in Washington real estate combined to cut her tobacco exports by two-thirds. At the opening of the nineteenth century she still served as an outlet for the produce of the Maryland farms in her immediate vicinity, and her population together with that of the county outside her limits exceeded by some 1900 the 3000 inhabitants of Washington. Fine-looking brick houses stood in pleasant gardens running from "Bridge Street" to the river or along four or five other wide streets; the humble dwellings of working people occupied the land about the wharves and the warehouses. Two comfortable inns offered visitors accommodation. St. John's and a handsome Presbyterian church contributed to the settled atmosphere of the community, while Georgetown Seminary, founded eleven years before by Bishop John Carroll to train men for the Roman Catholic priesthood, lent the village special distinction. Congressmen seeking agreeable living quarters would

² Allen C. Clark, Greenleaf and Law in the Federal City, pp. 124-43, 245-46 (hereafter cited as Clark, Greenleaf and Law); William B. Webb, The Laws of the Corporation of the City of Washington, (1868), pp. 55-62; Mrs. Thornton's Diary, in CHS Rec, X, 81-216 (a complete transcript of the entries for 1800); American State Papers, Miscellaneous, I, 254-56 (hereafter cited as ASP, Misc); Margaret Bayard Smith, The First Forty Years of Washington Society, Gaillard Hunt, ed., p. 10 (hereafter cited as M.B. Smith, First Forty Years); ltr, Richard Griswold to Mrs. Fanny Griswold, 6 Dec 1800, Griswold Papers, Yale University Library.
be tempted to choose Georgetown, despite the inconvenience of the three miles of travel over rutted roads to reach the Capitol.\(^3\)

Alexandria, five miles down the Potomac at the southern tip of the "ten-mile square", was still more firmly established and sophisticated. Beautiful houses built before the Revolution for the Scottish tobacco factors and the wheat merchants who had developed this chief seaport on the Potomac proclaimed her relative antiquity and commercial importance. By building a network of roads into the lower Shenandoah Valley in the 1760’s and 1770’s, Alexandrians had captured the lion’s share of the export trade in Virginia wheat and flour. According to that observant Frenchman, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, in 1791 the city had "superb wharves and vast warehouses."\(^4\) Unfortunately for her 5500 inhabitants, she was accessible to the new capital only by sailing vessel or by coach and the ferry over the river below Georgetown. Yet Alexandrians, like citizens of Georgetown and Washington City, saw in the transfer of the federal government to the Potomac the dawning of a bright new future. Though later events would lead them to ask themselves why they had so confidently expected prosperity to follow immediately, in 1800 residents of the area

\(^3\) Ltr, Benjamin Stoddart to John Templeman, (n.d. but in 1604), Papers of Benjamin Stoddart, (Ms Div, L, C.); Avery O. Craven, Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, in University of Illinois Studies in Social Sciences, XIII (Mar 1925), 76-77.

\(^4\) Craven, Soil Exhaustion, pp. 66, 77; Fairfax Harrison, Land-Marks of old Prince William, II, 387, 399, l.07-17.
believed that a mighty commercial expansion would rapidly occur at "the permanent seat of empire."  

The Background of the "Residence Act"

Indeed Americans generally had assumed that wherever Congress chose to locate the federal city, there a great commercial center would arise. That conviction explains more fully than any consideration of prestige or legislators’ convenience why sectional controversy had run so strong during the Congressional debates on the "residence" bill. Expectations of long-term economic benefits as well as the immediate revenues the presence of Congress would bring to a community—$100,000 annually, a well-informed New Yorker estimated—had led a half-dozen towns and states months before the debates opened to offer Congress land for a permanent meeting place and jurisdictional rights over it. During the nearly eight years of intermittent discussion between October 1783 and July 1790, representatives had agreed on the overriding importance of a central location for the seat of government. But whereas some men defined central as geographically

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5 H Rpt 59, 11C, 25, 2 Feb 10, Papers of the First Fourteen Congresses (Rare Book Division, L.C.); ltr, Oliver Wolcott to Mrs. Wolcott, 4 Jul 00, quoted in George Gibbs, Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury, II, pp. 376-78 (hereafter cited as Gibbs, Memoirs); Isaac Weld, Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797, I, 90-91 (hereafter cited as Weld, Travels); Alexandria Advertiser, 8 Dec 1800; Second Census of the United States, 1800.

half-way between southern Georgia and northern New Hampshire, to others the term meant center of population, a point considerably north of Virginia even were slaves counted. Apparently no speaker mentioned the drawbacks of a capital in slave-holding territory. Southerners were persuaded, Thomas Jefferson perhaps as completely as anyone, that a capital below the Mason-Dixon line would attract "foreigners, manufacturers and settlers" to Virginia and Maryland and thus shift southward the center of both population and power.7 The Potomac river valley moreover, gave the South one natural advantage: a link between the eastern and the trans-Alleghany West by river and the shortest traversable route over the mountains. Aware that the Ohio country, if left without commercial ties with the East, might align itself with the Spanish or French settlements of the interior, George Washington and several associates in 1784 had organized the Potomac Company to improve navigation of the river westward.8

In the end neither geography nor demography so much as political bargaining had fixed the location of the capital. As the controversy dragged on into 1790, Jefferson, Secretary of State in Washington's first administration, and Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, had

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arranged a compromise. Over Jefferson's supper table in New York, the two cabinet members and Congressman Richard Bland Lee and Alexander White of Virginia had agreed that in return for Hamilton's aligning northern support for a southern capital the Virginians would vote for federal assumption of the state debts incurred during the Revolution. Congress, in accepting the plan, had specified Philadelphia as the seat of government for ten years while the federal city was building. Thus supporters of a strong national fiscal policy gained a vital concession and the proponents of a capital on the Potomac at once won special recognition for their section and, as they believed, a significant boost for the South's flagging commerce.

Throughout the long and frequently acrimonious disagreements over where to locate the capital, few men had challenged the principle of Congressional control of a federal district. General consensus outside and in Congress had already settled that basic problem. From first to last, every gift of land tendered to Congress, whether from the town of Kingston, New York, Nottingham, New Jersey, or the state governments of New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, or Pennsylvania, had included offers of complete jurisdiction free from state interference. In the light of


10 For more detailed discussion of the debates on the Residence bill, see John B. McMaster, A History of the People of the United States, I, 555-62, and Bryan, Capital, I, 1-29.

11 Papers of the Continental Congress, Item 20, Reports of Committees on "State Papers," I, 369, 1 Jun 1783, and Item h6, Proposals to Congress relative to locating the seat of government, passim, and especially pp. 9-11, h3, all in National Archives, Record Group 11 (hereafter cited as Papers Cont Cong).
the jealousies with which the sovereign states composing the Confederation guarded their prerogatives, the willingness of each contender for the capital to relinquish authority over a piece of its own territory may seem strange at first glance. Cession of lands in the West was a different matter, for they were remote, part of an unsettled wilderness; the capital would be the very center of American political and commercial activity. But compelling reasons for state self-denial were several. The very jealousies between the states made each loath to see a rival in a position to dominate the general government. At the same time any method of strengthening the Union without injuring any of its thirteen members had obvious merit. A fixed meeting place for Congress should provide the stability that parapetetic sessions had denied it. "Muteability of place", a delegate to the Constitutional convention observed in 1787, "has dishonored the Federal Government." Yet to place a permanent capital within the jurisdiction of one state was to imperil the influence of every other. The surest way of avoiding that risk was to vest in Congress rights of "exclusive legislation" over the capital and a small area about it. The debates on the residence bill had proceeded upon that premise.

While the competitive bids for the capital were rolling in, an episode had occurred in Philadelphia that underscored the weakness of

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12 Quoted in Bryan, Capital, I, 12.

Congress and the necessity of bolstering its prestige if the Union were to be more than a meaningless name. In June 1783, Pennsylvania veterans not yet discharged from the army had prepared to march to the State House where Congress was in session to demand the pay long overdue them for service during the Revolution. Earlier petitions had elicited no answer from Congress, doubtless for the very good reason that with an empty federal treasury a satisfactory reply was not possible. Congress upon learning of the soldiers' impending arrival had asked the Pennsylvania state council for protection. The council had taken no action; Philadelphians reportedly sympathized with the soldiers who were, after all, seeking redress of real grievances by use of procedures recognized in America—free assembly, free speech and direct appeal to elected representatives. On June 21st some 250 "mutineers" gathered about Independence Hall, only to find the doors locked against them while Congress huddled inside. Their nearest approach to violence consisted of "offensive language" and occasionally a musket pointed at the tightly shut windows. In mid-afternoon when Congress adjourned, the soldiers returned to their barracks. Congressmen thereupon scuttled out of the city to reconvene in Princeton the following week.\footnote{The Writings of James Madison, 19, 21 Jun 1783, 1, 180, 462-64.} The "affront" to the dignity of Congress added ammunition for the campaigners for a federally controlled capital, but the movement to establish it had gained momentum weeks before. Only later did Congress, perhaps secretly chagrinned at its own timidity, cite the humiliations it suffered from Pennsylvania as justification for an
"Exempt jurisdiction," and in time, after the excesses of the French Revolution had frightened moderates everywhere, the story of the mutiny in Philadelphia came to find place in school text books as the reason for founding a new capital city out of reach of mobs and powerful local interests.

**Implications and Express Terms of the Act**

In accepting the principle eventually written into the Constitution that Congress must be supreme in the federal district, no one had equated sacrifice of state power with cancellation of the political rights of citizens of the future federal territory. On the contrary, Americans of the 1780's had rather taken for granted that its permanent residents, like citizens of any state, would "enjoy the privilege of trial by jury and of being governed by laws made by representatives of their own election." Madison, to be sure, had recognized the puzzling character of the problem in a country where all political machinery operated through state organizations and only citizenship in a state enabled a man to vote in national elections. In 1783 the wise little Virginian had noted merely that "the power of Government within the sd district should be concerted between Congress and the inhabitants thereof." But four years later he had gone further. In one of the Federalist papers, that collection of able essays

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15 Papers Cont Cong, Item 23, I, 1h9-52, 16 Sep 1783 (NA, RG 11); Annals, 6c, 28, 1 Feb 01, p. 996 and 7c, 28, 9 Feb 03, pp. 503-04.

urging adoption of the Constitution, he had declared the political status of citizens of a federal district "as they will have had their voice in the election of the government which is to exercise authority over them; as a municipal legislature for local purposes, deriving from their own suffrages, will of course be allowed them." If the phrase "they will have had their voice" implied they could not long continue to have it, few contemporaries had observed the nuance.17

In fact before 1800 few contemporaries apparently had thought at all about the local problem in the making. In the 1780s men concerned about building a stronger union had so firmly believed a federally controlled capital a necessary part of the plan that they had incorporated the provision into the Constitution. At the state conventions called to ratify the Constitution, only in Virginia and North Carolina had delegates so much as spoken of the hazards of creating a federal district beyond the reach of state laws, and these criticisms, though pointing to possible tyrannies—abolition of trial by jury within the district and grants of commercial monopolies to its merchants—, had been in essence part of the over-all attack upon any plan for a strong central government.18 After ratification of the Constitution and passage of the residence bill eighteen months later, the question of governing the ten-mile square on the Potomac

17 Ibid., Item 23, II, 161, 22 Sep 1783; The Writings of James Madison, II, 12-13; The Federalist, #43.

18 Debates of the Virginia Convention ... June, 1788, III, 27-31; North Carolina Convention, Proceedings and Debates ... July 1788, pp. 229-26, 246-17, 273-74 (both in Rare Book Div, L.C.)
had resolved itself for a decade. The act of 16 July 1790 had not only empowered the President to choose the exact location and engage commissioners to take charge of planning and building the new capital but had also decreed that until Congress took up residence there and should "otherwise by law provide," Maryland law should run in the territory ceded by Maryland, Virginia law in the area given to the United States by the Old Dominion.19 With that decision, Americans had thankfully dismissed the matter. As late as November 1800 local citizens therefore continued to vote in state and national elections.

Preparations, 1790-1800

President Washington, although free by the terms of the Residence Act to select any locality between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and the Connoxeague river forty miles up the Potomac, had probably never seriously considered a site above tide water. In an era when travel was slow and hazardous at best, a capital accessible to coastal and ocean-going vessels was virtually imperative. Twentieth century residents of the District of Columbia nevertheless have wondered now and again why a trained surveyor who knew the countryside well chose a spot where tidal swamplands yearly bred fevers and oppressive damp heat would blanket the city every summer. The answer, apart from the undeniable importance of a location below the falls of the Potomac, is doubtless two-fold. Eighteenth century Americans looked upon the weather as an act of God and climate a condition of nature which need not affect any man-made decision. In the second place, as long as trees covered the shores of rivers and streams,

19 Annals, 1C, 28, Appendix, 16 Jul 1790, pp. 2234-35.
the area below the Little Falls of the Potomac enjoyed natural "air conditioning", and, before deforestation produced a downwash of soil and vegetation that silted up brooks and created marshes, the site of the capital was probably nearly as healthful as any farther upstream.

Residents of the early 19th century, to be sure, suffered so regularly from "flux" during the winter and "ague" in spring and summer that they expected to run fevers while going about their daily business. But ill health pervaded most communities, and the letters and diaries of the period rarely attributed its prevalence here to Washington's climate or unwholesomeness of location.

During the ten years of preparation for the transfer of the government to the banks of the Potomac, President Washington and then President Adams, the commissioners, the French engineer Charles Pierre L'Enfant whom the President had chosen to lay out the city, Thomas Jefferson, as renowned for his architectural talents as for his knowledge of statecraft, local landowners, and an array of carpenters, bricklayers, stone cutters and day laborers had struggled with financial and physical difficulties and with each other. The President had persuaded the chief property-owners to convey to the United States in trust all their land to be included in the city limits. According to the agreement, the government was to pay nothing for the area shown on L'Enfant's plan as set aside for public buildings, "reservations", and streets; of the land remaining, half the lots were to revert to the original proprietors, and

20 M. B. Smith, First Forty Years, p. 33; ltr, Dolly Madison to R. D. Cutts, 19 Sep 43, quoted in Clark, Life of Dolly Madison.
for the other half the United States would $25 Maryland currency, about $67 an acre. Since the state of Maryland had already advanced $72,000 and Virginia $120,000, sale of the government lots supposedly would raise enough additional money to cover the costs of erecting the public buildings. Troubles had cropped up almost at once. The commissioners had to dismiss the high-handed L’Enfant. They had found competent workmen hard to recruit, probably chiefly because slave labor kept wage rates in the South lower than in northern cities; in 1798 ninety slaves made up most of the work force engaged in building the Capitol. Since the surveyor’s plats and L’Enfant’s map were not in agreement, long-drawn-out quarrels had arisen between landowners and public officials, while feuds occurred between architects and builders of the Capitol. 21 A syndicate formed to buy up lots in Washington City, build houses, and sell at a profit had ended in bankruptcy in 1797, leaving behind scores of unfinished dwellings and, still worse, a bad name for the capital as a place for investment. 22 And yet in June 1800, the new national capital, however unfinished, was at last a reality.

The "Removal"

The arrival of executive officers and the public archives occasioned

21 Padover, Jefferson, 63-126, 150, 163-64, 178-87, 200-201, 322-34; Letters of the Commissioners, V, 177-78 (NA, RG 42; hereafter cited as Comrs’ Ltrs); Annals, 70, 25, 23 Mar 02, pp. 1302-16; ltr B. Henry Latrobe to Chm H. Comm 28 Feb 04, quoted in Documentary History of the Construction and Development of the U.S. Capitol Building and Grounds, H Rep 646, 58th, 28, pp. 107-08 (hereafter cited as Hist of the Capitol); For an exhaustive, though badly organized, account of these struggles, see Bryan, Capital, I, 105-356.

little excitement; the great moment would not come until Congress convened in November. Residents nevertheless welcomed the first official newcomers. On 3 June, Georgetown sent a delegation of citizens on horseback to greet President Adams at the District Line and escort him to the city's Union Tavern where a company of marines fired a salute in his honor. The next day the President drove on into Washington to inspect the Executive Mansion and the Treasury and on 5 June to attend a reception arranged by citizens at the Capitol. Following a call upon the recently widowed Mrs. Washington at Mt. Vernon and a large banquet in Alexandria, the President departed for Massachusetts after spending only ten days in the District of Columbia. By then departmental heads or responsible subordinates had opened their offices for business in new, if too-frequently cramped, quarters. Though the advent of 131 federal employees failed to bring the long-awaited prosperity, their presence dispelled citizens' uneasiness lest Congress postpone its first session in Washington.

Meanwhile the commissioners hurried on with their preparations. They had obtained another $50,000, loaned by Maryland, but they were still short of money. The sale of lots in the city had virtually stopped in 1797; men were wary about buying in a place where bankruptcy had overtaken others. Consequently in August 1800 the commissioners cut the price nearly

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24 Mrs. Thornton's Diary, 7 Jan 00, CHS Rec, X, 92; "Reprints", 29 Apr 02, ibid., IX, 226-41.
in half, keeping only to the stipulation that purchasers must build on at least part of their property. That scheme worked. While Dr. William Thornton, chief architect of the Capitol, prophesied a city of 160,000 in a very few years, his wife noted in her diary "houses building at this time--68 of brick and numberless wooden ones." During the summer communication improved. Stage coach lines increased the number of runs to the "Federal City" and by November a traveller from Philadelphia might make the journey in thirty-three hours, though it generally took more. The theatre that opened in August closed in September after performances Mrs. Thornton considered "intolerably dull", but already there was talk of another season. And, as if to show that various social amenities existed here as well as in Philadelphia, the Marine Corps band inaugurated its weekly outdoor concerts and two dancing "assemblies" organized during the early autumn. 25

Still more important for the city, that fall two newspapers began publication in Washington, the National Intelligencer and the Washington Gazette, while the Washington Federalist and The Cabinet of the United States appeared in Georgetown to compete with the Centinel of Liberty. 26

25 Comrs Ltrs, V, 119, VI, 38-39, Comrs to Sec/State, 27 Aug 00; Proceedings of Comrs, 20 Aug, 11 Nov 00; Mrs. Thornton's Diary, CHS Rec, I, 177-78, Centinel of Liberty, 6 May, 6 Jun, 11 Jul 00, cited in Bryan, Capital, I, 363-64; Washington Federalist, 25 Nov 00; Georgetown Musuem, 1 Nov 00; Intelligencer, 21 Nov 00, 28 Apr 02; Gibbs, Memoirs, II, 376-78.

The Gazette, like many another publication in a city that would soon earn
the name "graveyard of newspapers," was destined to be short-lived, but
the Intelligencer would last till 1869. During its first years the
Intelligencer owed its vigor to its owner, printer and editor, Samuel
Harrison Smith, friend of Jefferson and formerly secretary of the American
Philosophical Society. As vehicles of local advertising, surveyors of
national news and organs of political opinion, both papers contributed to
giving Washington a more nearly urban air than the years of planning and
building had contrived. And because Samuel Harrison Smith and his charming
wife, Margaret Bayard, were delighted with the young city, the columns of
the Intelligencer and the exchange of ideas in Mrs. Smith's hospitable
drawing room helped temper harsh judgments upon the new capital. Within
a year of saying of Washington "there is no industry, society or business,"
Oliver Wolcott, in July 1800 still Secretary of the Treasury, might have
conceded that the city had something to offer besides empty spaces.27

Character of the District's Population

Progress notwithstanding, Washington City in November 1800 was still
a small, rather isolated community. Of the 501 "heads of households"
enumerated in the census return, nineteen were the "original proprietors"
who had signed the agreement with President Washington in June 1791, and a
score or more were smaller landowners who had accepted similar terms
somewhat later. Most of the rest were newcomers. Land speculation had
attracted some of them. Thomas Law was probably the most notable of that
group. A wealthy man when he emigrated from England in 1795, he was one.

of the few large-scale investors in Washington real estate to make his home here after the failure of the Greenleaf and Morris syndicate had caused a sharp drop in local property values. Law might rank as Washington's pioneer manufacturer, although the sugar refinery he financed near Greenleaf's Point in 1797 closed down before 1801. Professional men formed a third category of the city's residents. William Cranch, at first came as business agent for Robert Morris and James Nicholson, stayed on to practice law and then to serve as judge of the circuit court. Several other lawyers, three or four physicians and a half-dozen pastors lengthened the list of specially trained men. Opportunity to work on government building projects had brought still others, ranging in distinction from Dr. William Thornton, remembered for his design of the Capitol, the Octagon House and other architectural triumphs, to his rivals, English-born George Hadfield and the Irishman James Hoban, and to the less well-known Samuel Smallwood, later printer and a mayor of Washington.

While categories overlap, and a man like Daniel Carroll of Duddington was at once an original landed proprietor and owner of the busiest brick kilns in the city, the men intent upon exploiting the commercial possibilities of the new capital made up a rather distinct fourth group of citizens. Besides the suppliers of building materials—Robert Brent, for example, whose quarry at Aquia Creek furnished stone for houses and federal buildings—there were merchants who hoped to establish import-export businesses. Colonel Tobias Lear, former secretary of General Washington, represented this kind of investor. Though the collapse of 1797 had injured the prospects of mercantile firms, some of the disappointed commercial adventurers
remained in the city in the belief that the convening of Congress would mend their fortunes. Of all the men who anticipated a business future in the capital, the printers and the tavern-and boarding-house keepers were almost alone in correctly envisioning financial success. Officers attached to the Navy Yard and the Marine Corps unit, while subject to transfer, also ranked as local citizens; in 1800 everyone looked upon a man like Captain Thomas Tingey, Commandant of the Navy Yard, as a fixture in Washington. The other three to four hundred householders were obscure craftmen and day laborers, some of them free Negroes. White or black, most of these lived from hand to mouth. Oliver Wolcott’s comment of July 1800 was uncomfortably apt five months later: “The people are poor, and as far as I can judge, they live like fishes, by eating each other.”

In addition to the people who chose to live in the federal area, the District’s 13,267 souls in 1800 included some 3,200 chattel bondsmen, a higher proportion than any later decade would show. Yet no one person owned many slaves, in Washington only seven people as many as ten and only the former planter Daniel Carroll of Duddington and Ann Burns as many as twenty. The local attitude toward slavery, a visitor later remarked, was

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much like that in the West Indies. Surprisingly enough, the Maryland segment of the District had some 900 more slaves than the Virginis and the cities apparently more than the rural areas. Use of hired slaves in building operations in Washington might account for this unusual distribution, though the census taker presumably would list slaves as located wherever their masters lived. Whatever the explanation, the fact is inescapable that the "peculiar institution" of the South was an accepted part of the social order of the new capital from its very beginning. 30

In November 1800 this was the community which, as the "permanent seat of empire", Americans hoped would cement national unity forever.

30 See n. 28; Third Census of the United States, 1810; David B. Warden, Chorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia, pp. 63-64.
CHAPTER II

THE "SEAT OF EMPIRE", 1800-1812

The Coming of Congress

Every free resident of the District of Columbia looked forward to
17 November 1800, the date set for the first meeting of Congress in the
new capital. Six days before, voters of Washington journeyed to Bladens­
burg, Maryland, to cast their ballots in the national election. Polls in
Georgetown and Alexandria served the other two cities. Evidently no one
allowed himself to think this the last time citizens of the District of
Columbia would vote for Presidential electors and representatives in
Congress. When Congress convened, it might continue the existing arrange­
ment or might redefine the political status of local residents, but their
political stature, like their economic, should grow, not shrink, once
the "Grand Council of the nation" assembled in Washington. Cheerfully
leading men in Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria prepared to welcome
the 106 representatives and 32 senators of the Sixth Congress.¹

Nothing went as planned. For lack of a quorum Congress had to
postpone its opening till 2/November. The much talked-of procession of
citizens to the Capitol did not take place at all, partly because of
quarrels over who should be master of ceremonies, and partly because of a

¹ National Intelligencer, 12 Nov 00 (hereafter cited as Intelligencer);
Washington Federalist, 16 Oct 00. Evidence about faith in the District’s
political future is negative rather than positive. Before December 1800
nothing suggests anxiety lest Congress cancel local voting rights.
three-inch snowfall the day before. Mrs. Adams reached Washington a
d fortnight after the President but found most of the Executive Mansion
still unplastered, few furnishings in place, no bell pulls and a scarcity
of fire wood; she used the ceremonial East Room to hang the family washing
in. Congressmen complained of their clogged lodgings and of the city's
inconveniences and dreary appearance. Representative Griswold of Connect-
ticut called it "both melancholy and ludicrous...a city in ruins."2

Repeated derogatory comment upon the new capital was not reassuring to
its inhabitants. Only President Adams' message on the state of the Union
seemed to hold out encouragement and endow Washington with dignity: "In
this city may...self-government which adorned the great character whose
name it bears be forever held in veneration.

"It is with you, gentlemen, to consider whether the local powers
over the District of Columbia vested by the Constitution in the Congress
of the United States, shall be immediately exercised."3

The Question of Local Government

Congress chose to act promptly. To wait would leave the decision
on the District government in the hands of the recently victorious

2 Washington Federalist, 16 Oct 00; Intelligencer, 21 Nov 00;
Osborne, "Removal of the Government," GHS Rec, III, 152-53; Letters of
Abigail Adams, pp. 432-35; J.C. Smith, Correspondence, pp. 6, 117; ltr,
Richard Griswold to Mrs. Fanny Griswold 6 Dec 00; ltr, Albert Gallatin
to his wife, 15 Jan 01, quoted in Allen C. Clark, Life and Letters of
Dolly Madison, p.

3 Annals, 6c, 25, 22 Nov 00, p. 723.
Republicans, opponents of a strong central government; Federalists in the Lame Duck session of 1800-1801 had no time to lose if they were to make the federal capital a bulwark of national power. Yet the bill presented to the House in December had the support of some Republicans also, men who considered the constitutional provision giving Congress exclusive legislative authority in the District a mandate they dared not ignore. To disregard it might reopen the thorny question of the location of the capital and prove endlessly costly to everyone. Certainly that reasoning would explain the readiness of some residents to relinquish their political rights in exchange for assurance that the capital would remain on the Potomac. But to other local citizens and to a number of Congressmen the plan offered by a special committee of the House came as a shock. The bill provided that the incumbents of state executive and judicial offices within the District should continue in office until replaced by the President with his own appointees; that the powers of all incorporated bodies in the District, including the corporations of Alexandria and Georgetown, remain unimpaired; and that the laws in force in Virginia on 1 December 1800 become the legal code for the trans-Potomac part of the District, Maryland laws of that date the code for the rest of the ten-mile square.4

Protests sounded from private citizens before the debate opened in Congress. The most vigorous attack appeared in a series of articles published in the National Intelligencer over the signature of "Epaminondas,"

4 Ibid., 60, 25, pp. 731.
the pen name of Augustus B. Woodward. Woodward, a Virginia-born lawyer, a resident of ambitious, politically liberal Alexandria from 1797 till he moved to Washington in 1800, took exception to every section of the bill and to one serious omission. He argued that the constitutional provision did not mean that District citizens ceased to be a part of the people of the United States entitled to the enjoyment of participation in their own government. Admitting a constitutional amendment necessary to permit local citizens to vote for the President and Vice President, elect a senator and, when the population had grown sufficiently, a representative, he urged the propriety of enacting the amendment as soon as possible and meanwhile of giving the "Territory of Columbia" its own local, elected legislature. "No policy can be worse than to mingle great and small concerns. The latter become absorbed in the former; are neglected and forgotten." A judgment in which later generations of District residents would concur. "It will impair," he added, "the dignity of the national legislative, executive, and judicial authorities to be occupied with all the local concerns of the Territory of Columbia." Woodward objected also to establishing two different systems of legislation and jurisprudence within the federal area and, prophetic of the complaints to be repeated for the next hundred years, pointed to the handicaps of fastening upon a

5 Museum, 2h Dec 00, 12 Jan 01; Intelligencer, 2l, 25, 29, 31 Dec 00; Alexandria Advertiser, 6, 7, 9, 14 Jan 01; Charles Moore, "Augustus Brevort Woodward, Citizen of Two Cities," CHS Rec, IV, 11h-18.

6 Intelligencer, 29 Dec 00.
new community unrevised 18th-century state laws. Finally, "Spaminondes" rebuked the committee reporting the bill for failing to specify what part of the expenses of the District should be borne by the federal government and what share by local taxpayers. "Is it that they [the committee members] imagine the affairs of this metropolis will fall into order by the mere diurnal and annual revolutions of the earth? Or do they intend that the resources of the Federal Government shall be lavished for the wants of this favorite child, the door of its Treasury kept open and its every wish gratified on request?... We must consider...that we are legislating for posterity as well as for ourselves; and that the interest of millions unborn is confided to our hands."  

On the floor of the House of Representatives opposition to the bill derived from several mutually conflicting objections: the unsuitability of perpetuating state laws in an area where, by the terms of the Constitution, Congress must be supreme; conversely, the desirability of continuing the status quo, a workable arrangement in the past, needed now to protect citizens' political rights and entirely permissible since the Constitution allowed, but did not require, Congress to exercise its full authority; and, third, the unrighteousness of reducing men "in the very heart of the United States" to the condition of subjects whose rulers would be "independent and entirely above the control of the people." The House returned the bill to committee.  

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7 Ibid., 31 Dec 00.

8 Annals, 68, 25, 31 Dec 00, pp. 868-73, 2 Jan 01, p. 874.
Further consideration of the problem unhappily failed to bring agreement either in Congress or among local residents. A redrafted bill provided, to be sure, for an elected territorial legislature but vested in it no authority to levy taxes and limited suffrage to owners of District real estate. The proposal pleased neither proponents of full political rights for the District nor the men anxious at all costs to enhance the prestige and authority of the federal government. Public meetings held in Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria to crystalize public sentiment merely revealed the cleavage of opinion between citizens who abhorred the very thought of such restricted political status and the men who considered federal assumption of government for the District their strongest economic anchor to windward. And as multiplying uncertainties about the political fate of the District undermined confidence in its commercial future, rifts appeared between the advocates of some early decision, no matter what, and the people who preferred postponement to an unsatisfactory act that might prove hard to undo. When the congressional debate resumed in February 1801, Representative William Craik of Maryland declared the situation of residents "deplorable"; they did not know under what jurisdiction they came and "serious doubts exist with judicious men how far the grants and acceptances of lands, or their papers, afford them security for value received." Exhortation, however, could not reconcile Congressmen's differences; the upshot was a stalemate.9

9 Ibid., 2, 4 Feb 01, pp. 991-1003; Intelligencer, 30 Jan, 6, 9 Feb 01; Alexandria Advertiser, 2, 19, 26 Feb, 2, 3, 4, 11 Mar 01.
As March and the inauguration of a Republican President drew near, the Federalists abandoned their efforts to present him with a fully organized, congressionally controlled District government. Only one inadequate measure was possible: in the very last days of the session the House hastily accepted two Senate bills establishing a judiciary for the area. The acts divided the territory into Washington County where Maryland law should run and Alexandria County across the Potomac where Virginia law should apply. A circuit court, consisting of a chief justice and two associates, was to hold four sessions yearly in each county, and procedures in each were to conform to the state's. Justices of the Peace and a marshal selected by the President completed the judicial system. So far from unifying the federal District, the laws enacted formalized and widened the split into two jurisdictions.\textsuperscript{10}

Economic Progress, 1801-1802

While Federalists nursed their disappointment and Republican partisans looked forward to having their own way in the 7th Congress, people in the District faced the prospect of paying heavily for the delay. Yet in the months following the March day when Thomas Jefferson walked from his New Jersey avenue boarding-house to the Capitol to be sworn in as the third President of the United States, Washington City began to taste a little of the prosperity investors had long anticipated. Anxiety lest

Congress vote to move to another locality subsided as the federal Treasury poured money into completing public works—furnishing the Executive Mansion, adding the "Oven", an elliptical chamber at the south of the Capitol for the temporary accommodation of the House of Representatives, construction of barracks for the Marine Corps and readying the Navy Yard for outfitting ships. Surely no sane nation would throw so much money away. True, sale of public lots lagged; obliged to raise money to meet payments due on the government's debt to Maryland, the commissioners held two auctions during 1801 without netting for some of the land as much as the purchase price of 1791. But in spite of that ill omen and in spite of renewal of the controversy about what was public, and what private, property, business in Washington quickened. New dry goods, grocery, and jewelry shops appeared, and house building went forward. Additional boarding-houses opened to compete with those on New Jersey avenue and with Pantius D. Stelle's hotel on Capitol Square, Tunnicliffe's Tavern on Pennsylvania avenue and William O'Nele's near the "Seven Buildings."

To men who did not "think themselves above a mechanic," Andrew MacDonald's Mechanic's Hall offered "several genteel rooms, with fireplaces" and a ready supply of beer and porter. Before the end of the year the city had 599 habitable houses, and rentals were bringing an annual 20 percent return on the investment. In September 1801 the Intelligencer asserted "no town in the Union has advanced so rapidly."

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11 See Ch I, n 21.

12 Intelligencer, 15, 26 Dec 00, 7 Sep, 18, 21, 28 Dec 01, 21 Jul 6 Oct 02; ASP Misc, I, 219, 243, 251, 256-57, 260; Congress Proceedings, 27 May, 20 Jun 01, VI, 158, 175-77.
In early 1802 when the Potomac Company, after seventeen years of work, completed the locks and canal around the Great Falls above Georgetown, extension of trade westward seemed to promise all three District cities an unparalleled commercial growth—an endless succession of boats and canal barges disgorging up-country produce at the cities' wharves and, as soon as further improvement of Potomac navigation permitted the hauling of barges upstream, shipments of manufactured goods inland. Anxious to make the most of the new opportunities, Washingtonians petitioned Congress to charter a company to dig a canal through the heart of the city from the Tiber to the St. James creek, a tributary to the Eastern Branch. The scheme, which in 1792 the commissioners had attempted but abandoned for want of money, would cut cartage costs in Washington; up-country grain and flour landed at wharves near the mouth of Tiber creek could move cheaply across to the Eastern Branch while cargoes from ocean-going vessels docked below the Navy Yard could be transported inland without risking the dangers of sailing around Greenleaf's Point and beating upstream against the force of the current. Washington thus would be independent of Alexandria and Georgetown. Congress granted the charter, authorizing lotteries to finance the undertaking, and stipulating only that the company must have the canal in working order within five years. 13

Questions of Local Government Again

However encouraged by the upswing in business, citizens of the capital knew their future must remain precarious as long as the political relationship of community and federal government was unsettled. Alexandria and Georgetown were also uneasy, although most of their local political rights were still theirs. Congress, in turn, saw the drawbacks of further temporizing. But in the early months of 1802 revival of the proposal for a single territorial government with an appointed governor and an elected legislature again showed the lack of unanimity among private citizens and the unwholesome rivalries between the three cities. Alexandrians not only protested over "taxation without representation," and over having Alexandria County play second fiddle to Washington County but objected to any consolidation: "The inhabitants of the two divisions have been long under the influence of different systems of laws, paying allegiance to different authorities...and competitors in commerce." So great was the diversity of views between Georgetown, Alexandria and Washington "that no subordinate legislature can be expected to give general satisfaction." At that moment Washingtonians petitioned for a municipal charter which would put them on an equal footing with residents of the other two cities. A third municipal corporation in the ten-mile square would not resolve the fundamental problem of District representation in

14 Intelligencer, 22 Jan, 5, 16 Feb, 3, 24 Mar, 30 Apr 02; Annals, 7C, 15, 26 Jan 02, p. 463.
Congress and local voting for President and Vice President, but a municipal charter would lighten some of the congressional tasks. Congress acceded to Washington's plea on 3 May 1802.

The act of incorporation granted a two-year charter. The President was yearly to appoint a mayor who must be a local resident. The mayor was to have a veto over the acts of the elected city council, though a majority in the upper chamber might override the veto. Free white male taxpayers who had resided in the city for a year might elect annually a twelve-man common council, four members from each of the three wards into which the city was divided; the council was to choose five men to serve as an upper house. The suffrage restrictions met no opposition even from Congressman who had spoken passionately against "enslaving" the District. The council was to provide for support of the poor, see to repair of the streets, build bridges, safeguard health and abate nuisances, regulate licenses, establish fire wards and night police patrols, and might levy a small tax on real estate. On the other hand, justices of the peace, appointed by the President, were to assess the taxes, a superintendent, also chosen by the President, was to replace the former commissioners, and control of the militia was vested in the President. The federal government thus held the reins; elected officials had duties but little authority. Still a limited charter was better than nothing, and citizens felt gratified. On 2 June 1802 President Jefferson appointed Robert Brent mayor and Thomas Munroe superintendent. Elections held soon after made the municipality a functioning entity.15

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15 Annals, 7C, 13, 3 May 02, Appendix, 1374-80; Intelligencer, 4 Jun 02.
The new city charter, however, provided only part of what Washingtonians hoped for and benefitted the rest of the District not at all. Some people wanted manhood suffrage, election of both council chambers and the right to open public schools.\textsuperscript{16} Within seven months of electing a city council, property-owners in the capital, joined by residents of Washington County, formulated another petition asking Congress to establish a territory of Columbia which would restore to them a voice in national affairs. Again Alexandria, in belief that she would lose more than she gained, took exception to the proposal. At that point Representative John Bacon of Massachusetts suggested retroceding the two segments of the District back to Maryland and Virginia. That plan in one form or another occupied the attention of Congress at intervals over the next four years, while the people most directly concerned watched the disrupting effects upon the District’s economy. But important principles and private interests were both at stake, and no one on the Hill was willing to dismiss either lightly. The arguments favoring retrocession were twofold: it would restore to local citizens their rights as free men and save Congress the time and annoyance of handling purely local problems. The opposition pointed to the binding character of the constitutional provision, the advantages for the area of beneficent federal rule and citizens’ avowed preferences for it. Behind the eloquent words of both attackers and defenders lay implicit the thought that retrocession was but a first step on a course that would end in moving the capital northward.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Intelligencer}, 12 May 02, 24 Dec 04, 16 Oct 07.
In February 1803 the House defeated the Bacon resolution. A year later a modified retrocession bill leaving only Washington City under congressional control passed the House, 40 to 28; lack of a quorum invalidated the vote. District citizens had to rest content with renewal of the three city charters with wider corporate powers. The fight to return all the District outside Washington to state jurisdiction resumed in 1805, but protracted debate again failed to carry the measure. Local proponents tried another petition in 1806, while John Smilie of Pennsylvania, indefatigable advocate of their untrammeled political rights, introduced still another retrocession bill. His associates shelved it. When the question of the status of the capital next came before Congress, emphasis had shifted. To the horror of Washingtonians, in 1808 the debate revolved solely upon the desirability of transferring the government to Philadelphia. Washington, Congressmen declared, would never become a metropolis; living costs were excessive, inconveniences numberless and the "debasement" of citizens willing to sacrifice their political freedom for pecuniary gain left them with no claim to consideration. Washington breathed easier when the discussion ranged so far afield that the House dropped the subject altogether.17

17 Ibid., 10 Jan, 23 May 03, 27 Feb 04, 8 Jan 08; Alexandria Advertiser, 20 Jan 03; Annals, 70, 28, 27 Jan, 9 Feb 03, pp. 126-27, 493-506, 16, 18, 17 Mar 03, pp. 1199-1200, 80, 28, 6, 9 Jan 05, pp. 877-81, 90, 18, 12 Feb, 4 Mar 06, pp. 197-58, 532, 100, 13, 2-6, 8-9, 8 Feb 08, pp. 1585-80, 1583-96.
Whether, in the interest of reclaiming full political rights, any
Washingtonian had ever stood ready to risk loss of capital is doubtful.
Men had invested in property in the city because here was to be the seat
of government. Stripped of that privilege, Washington would wither, unable
to compete with the older, better established Potomac ports. Removal of
the capital might cost Alexandria and Georgetown something also, but
neither city would face obliteration. Alexandria, on the contrary, would
soon seek to cut her ties to the federal government, and Georgetown would
unsuccesfully try to return to Maryland. Washington could not afford to
toy with such schemes. Alarmed by the talk of removing the capital, her
citizens for some years after 1806 foreswore their campaign to get a
voice in national affairs. At the dinner celebrating Captain Meriwether
Lewis's safe return from his 4000 mile journey to the headwaters of the
Missouri, one of the twenty-seven toasts offered was to the District of
Columbia: "Unrepresented in the national councils, may she never experience
the want of national patronage." For the time being, such subtle reminders
had to suffice. Regretfully or willingly Washingtonians accepted federal
domination and the advantages and handicaps attendant. Taxpayers welcomed
the degree of self-government the city charter bestowed and rejoiced at
gaining more: by a new charter of 1804 the privilege of opening public
schools and of electing members of both council chambers, and by an amend­
ment of 1812 the right to have the councils choose the mayor. Suffrage, to
be sure, was still limited to property-owners, but that restriction obtained
also in most states of the Union. 18

Economic Growth, 1802-1812

If Oliver Wolcott correctly described Washingtonians of 1800 as living "by eating each other," in time a certain number obviously found other means of survival. Yet to reconstruct the pattern of every-day life in the District of the early 19th century is, as de Tocqueville prophesied in the 1830's, "more difficult...than it is to find remains of the administration of France in the Middle Ages." Material progress was never constant. Ups followed downs with some regularity, affected in part by the insecurity born of congressional flirtations with notions of moving the capital, in part by the cut-throat competition between the District's three cities, and in part by business fluctuations in the rest of the country. 19 But in spite of reverses, residents clung to belief that once investment capital flowed into the area the Potomac region would turn into the principal commercial and industrial center of the United States. The federal government would attract the necessary funds, and native resources would thereafter produce the miracle.

In a period before men understood the perils of navigating the upper Potomac or the full difficulty of developing manufactures, that faith appeared better founded than it would look later. The riches of the

18 Intelligencer, 24 Dec 02, 23 May 03, 16 Jan 07; Annals, 70, 28, 28 Jan 03, p. 111, 80, 15, 24 Feb 04, p. 1258, 80, 28, 3 Mar 05, pp. 1686-90; Petition, HR 12A-Ph.7, 13 Dec 11.

19 Clark, Greenleaf and Law, p. 181.
Ohio valley seemingly could feed more easily over the mountains to the Potomac than over longer routes to Philadelphia or by way of Lake Erie, small streams and the Hudson to New York. Furs and farm produce brought down the Potomac to tidewater would move from wharves in Alexandria, Georgetown, or, upon completion of the Washington Canal, on the Eastern Branch, to Europe, the West Indies and other parts of the United States. The Shenandoah valley in Virginia was already supplying Alexandria with flour for export. In the spring of 1802 some fifty sloops were clearing the port monthly, and though Baltimore's export trade was double Alexandria's, the opening of the canal around the Great Falls might well permit the Potomac city to overtake her powerful rival. Moreover, only twelve miles above Georgetown the Great Falls offered water power unmatched in any settled part of the entire United States. Factories lining the river at the fall line would produce goods to ship upstream and over the mountains to the West. Though skilled labor was scarce in the District, workmen would surely flock to the place where industrial opportunity awaited them. Lack of capital, men thought, was the one obstacle to realization of their dream. In the eyes of many Americans, banks provided the surest way of securing liquid capital. It was as if the signatures of bank officials on

20 Alexandria Advertiser, 26 Apr - 15 Jun, 1 Nov 02, 13 Jun 03.
21 Ltr, Benjamin Stoddert to Jefferson, 12 Oct 03, quoted in Padover, Jefferson, p. 321; Intelligencer, 1 Jun, 17 Jul 07; Alexandria Advertiser, 17 Jul 07.
notes that circulated as money automatically created wealth. And insofar as credit rested on faith, and in a country of boundless natural resources credit wisely used could create wealth, the concept had validity. Certainly citizens on the Potomac saw in the multiplication of banks the key to prosperity, and when stockholders in one institution opposed the founding of another the reason patently was their hope of themselves filling the growing demand for capital. Whatever else went wrong, banking would save the day. 22

A group of Alexandria merchants had founded the first bank in the District as early as 1792. The Virginia Assembly, persuaded that the trade of the back country would go to Baltimore and Philadelphia unless Alexandrians could extend farmers credit, had granted a charter permitting the Bank of Alexandria to issue currency up to four times the total of its capital, provided only that officers issue no note of smaller denomination than $5. 23 A year later Maryland had chartered the Bank of Columbia in Georgetown and in 1801 the Bank of the United States had opened a branch in Washington. Three more banks, none of them chartered, appeared between 1804 and 1809. By then the District cities professed to have over $1,500,000 in banking capital. Still, the demand for credit to use in building roads and canals outran the supply, in spite of the few and ineffectual restrictions on the amounts banks might issue in notes. 24

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22 Harry E. Miller, Banking Theories in the United States before 1860, pp. 11-12.

23 Petition of Merchants of Alexandria, 1792, quoted in The William and Mary Quarterly, III, no 3 (Jul 1923) pp. 206-07; Davis R. Dewey, State Banking before the Civil War, p. 57.

24 Dewey, State Banking, p. 54; Petition, HR 12A-Fu.2, 15 Mar 12, NA, RG 15. (As all petitions to the House are listed in Record Group 15, and all to the Senate in Record Group 33, hereafter petitions will be cited only by number and date).
Congress, in turn, felt that easier credit would hasten fulfillment of the District's destiny. When in 1810 the local banking houses petitioned for new charters, the House Committee on the District of Columbia declared:

An increase of banking capital will be conducive to the growth of commerce and manufactures within the district.... The founding and erection of so extensive a city as the permanent seat of empire for the United States, must obviously require the aid of vast resources, and that consideration offers additional inducements to give the most advantageous extension to the monied capital it may possess.

It can no longer be doubted that the District of Columbia is destined to an enviable and perhaps unrivaled enjoyment of commerce.²⁵

That glowing endorsement sufficed. While the committee recommended imposing safeguards for the public, the majority in Congress granted charters with only minor restrictions on the banks' freedom of action: they were not to accumulate debts of more than double their capital plus their deposits, and for any commitment in excess of those totals individual directors were to be legally responsible. Representative Root of New York urged placing upon the capital stock of the Bank of Alexandria a tax of one percent to be used for support of free schools in the city, but the House rejected the proposal by an overwhelming vote. The banks received virtual carte blanche to stretch their credit resources to the limit and beyond, and they used their privilege of issuing notes with little regard to redeeming them in specie. Moreover, when the Senate refused to renew the charter of the Bank of the United States, the Treasury deposited most

²⁵ H Rpt 59, 113, 28, 2 Feb 10, in Papers of the First Fourteen Congresses, (Rare Book Div, L.C.).
of its funds with the Bank of Columbia in Georgetown and for a time about $123,000 with other District banks. Thus encouraged, the local institutions envisaged themselves as the permanent financial agents of the federal government. 26

Five District banks together claimed to have $2,500,000 in capital, while the Bank of Columbia put its capitalization at $1,000,000. For an area of ten miles square with a population of 24,000 in 1810, $3,500,000, if actually paid-in capital, should have proved ample to finance legitimate local enterprises. But subscribers to bank stock had rarely paid in the full amount due for their holdings; in 1812 the Bank of Columbia, after eighteen years of operation, had still to collect a "large portion" of its capital, and shareholders in the Bank of Washington had paid for but half of their stock. Probably few people realized that local banking capital was thus partly imaginary and further diminished by the occasional practice of one bank's owning stock in another. 27

The important thing, as the community saw it, was the credit available for new undertakings.

The first concern of local investors, whether bankers or borrowers, was to improve communication inside the District and with markets and sources of supply outside. Each city fought for herself and had no compunctions about ruining her neighbors. When the Embargo and the later


27 ASP, Finance, II, 516-17; Petition, HR 12A-Ph.2, 15 Mar 12.
Non-Intercourse Acts went into effect. All District shippers suffered, though the meagerness of Washington's overseas trade meant she lost less than Georgetown, and Georgetown, with smaller exports than Alexandria, paid less dearly than the down-river port. Here under the noses of federal officials smuggling was out of the question. Duties on imports into the District dropped from $120,000 in 1807 to $20,000 in 1808, and reached a mere $41,000 in 1809. But common troubles failed to make common cause. Only the Potomac Company got the support of all three cities, as all would benefit.

Washington's dearest project, however, the Washington Canal, made scant headway. Its promoters were unable to raise the necessary money before the first charter expired and, when Thomas Law and a few associates obtained a second in 1809, subscriptions to stock in the company came in slowly. At last in May 1810 digging began. After President Madison had turned the first spadeful of sod, the Irish immigrants employed by the company set to work. But a year later funds ran out and, in return for Congressional permission to raise more by a lottery, the company agreed to saddle itself with draining the swamps contiguous to the canal. That added task slowed progress disastrously; the canal was still unfinished in 1815. 28

Georgetown, meanwhile, was desperately trying to overcome the threat to her commerce caused by the siltin up of the eastern channel of the river. Just below the city the river divided at Mason's, or Analostan,

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28 Thomas Law, Observations on the Intended Canal in Washington City, GHS Rec, VIII, 161; Clark, Greenleaf and Law, pp. 256-57; Annals, 10C, 13, 10 Nov 07, pp. 1811-15, 12C, 15, 6 May 12, pp. 1291-92; Intelligence, 15 May 07, 16 May 10; Warden, Chorographical and Statistical Description, p. 27; Sanderlin, National Project, p. 335.
Island. The western channel was quiet water, but along the Georgetown shore spreading mud banks and shallows were making navigation increasingly difficult. When dredging failed to solve the problem, the town applied to Congress for permission to build a dam at Mason's Island and a causeway to the Virginia shore in order to divert the river's main flow east of the island so that the full force of the current would scour out the mud blocking the approach to her wharves. Furthermore, since boats bound for Alexandria used the western channel, the causeway might benefit Georgetown by hurting her chief commercial competitor. Frantic protests from the downstream port were futile. Congress granted Georgetown's request. The causeway, built during 1810, handicapped Alexandria without greatly helping her rival; obstructions in the main channel withstood the current and Georgetown's every effort to clear them.

Alexandria in turn won a battle when a six-year struggle ended in her getting congressional approval of bridging the Potomac from the foot of Maryland avenue in Washington to Alexander's Island off the Virginia shore. Georgetown shippers argued that a bridge would impede river navigation, and Washingtonians who owned property near the mouth of the Tiber and aspired to develop a port there joined the opposition. But Congress at length recognized the advantages for the District as a whole in having the bridge, and construction began in 1808. When completed in May 1809.

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the bridge cut the distance by road to Alexandria in half. In 1812 the
government also authorized a canal around the causeway at Mason's Island
but as war intervened to delay the undertaking for a number of years,
Alexandria's commerce suffered and she lost her best chance of overtaking
Baltimore.30

The local banks and individual subscribers put money into turnpike
companies also, for roads were only less important than waterways in
opening up trade with the hinterland. Alexandria, aware that the roads
she had built before and after the Revolution were largely responsible for
her preeminence as an exporter of flour, took the lead. In 1803 she began
building a turnpike to the ford of the Little River over which she expected
to transport yearly some 120,000 barrels of flour, in 1808 a road to
"Bridge Point" on Alexander's Island, and the next year one to the
causeway at Mason's Island. Across the Potomac other companies undertook
turnpikes northward toward Baltimore and Montgomery. Although only two
of the five highways started between 1808 and 1810 were finished within
ten years, they reduced the isolation of the District somewhat.31

In spite of Hamilton's Report on Manufactures, before 1807 few
Americans had experimented with producing goods by power-driven machinery.

30 Annals, 7C, 15, 23 Dec 01, 15, 16 Jan 02, pp. 319, 122, 422,
8C, 25, Feb 05, pp. 177-76, 10C, 15, 5 Feb 08, pp. 2819-26, 12C, 15,
17 Jun 12, pp. 2319-22; Intelligencer, 8 Feb 08, 17 Feb, 23 May 09.
31 Alexandria Advertiser, 25 Nov 03; Annals, 10C, 15, 21 Apr 08,
2530-39; Petition, HR 11A-F3.3, 19 Dec 09.
Craftsmen in the District cities turned out articles by hand for local purchasers—hats, boots and shoes, some furniture and nails, a little tinware, a few firearms from an Alexandria gunsmith, and beer brewed in the building that had begun life as the sugar refinery near Greenleaf's Point. But ambition to play an important industrial role was stirring in the District when Jefferson's Embargo Act gave impetus to enterprise designed to make the United States "independent of the workshops of Europe." In pursuing an object "at once local and national...few towns in the Union," the Intelligencer declared in 1808, "have greater natural advantages." The Potomac falls promised abundant power and, if the area lacked manufacturing experience, a skilled labor supply and ready capital, determination, men told themselves, could overcome those handicaps. On 15 June 1808 Mayor Brent called a public meeting in Washington to formulate plans for a company to manufacture "cotton, wool, hemp and flax." For once, Alexandria and Georgetown forgot their quarrels and joined with Washington in the new venture. Samuel Harrison Smith, Judge Cranch and Dr. Cornelius Coningham laid the groundwork for the Columbia Manufacturing Company, and, when they had obtained subscriptions to 400 of the company's 2,000 shares, a shop opened on Pennsylvania avenue between 14th and 15th streets. The location precluded use of water power, and good

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32 Clark, Greenleaf and Law, p. ; Intelligencer, 11 Mar 01, 5 Dec 01, 22 Jul 07; John Melish, Travels Through the United States of America in the Years 1806 and 1807, and 1809, 1810 and 1811, 1, 210 (hereafter cited as Melish, Travels); Warden, Chorographical and Statistical Description, p. 78.

33 Intelligencer, 20 Jun 08.
will was not enough to spin cotton successfully. Like similar undertakings in other parts of the country and like the society founded in Georgetown in 1809 for the promotion of home manufactures, the Columbia Manufacturing Company petered out before 1813. 34

Still, while private industrial enterprise proved abortive, the United States Navy Yard became an increasingly important factor in Washington's life. Before 1806 operations were confined to equipping and repairing ships, but an appropriation of $250,000 for the construction of fifty gunboats then turned the Yard to ship-building which required 175 civilian workmen. Navy Yard business kept two local rope-walks busy and meant periodically 100-barrel orders to suppliers of whiskey. 57

Setbacks notwithstanding, the decade before the outbreak of the War of 1812 saw considerable material progress in the District. At least people with money to invest frequently did well for themselves. In the summer of 1807, Alexandria and Georgetown merchants exported $800,000 worth of flour, and the Washington Federalist noted that the District "experienced an almost incredible addition to its commercial ability. Besides an unusual supply of tobacco, corn, bacon, butter, and whiskey...above 80,000 barrels of flour have been brought down the Potomac this season, which is more than double the quantity ever received in one

34 Ibid., 15, 22 Jun, 1, 13 Jul 08, 23 Aug, 20, 24 Nov 09, 13 Apr 13.

season before." The Washington Commercial Company, founded in 1808 with ostensibly $100,000 of capital, landed at Barry's wharf near Greenleaf's Point enough tea, sugar, wine and crockery to pay stockholders a 5 percent dividend at the end of the company's first ten months in business. And shareholders in several of the local banks got as much as 16 percent on their investments.36

The newspapers never reported on slave-traders' profits, but those too were probably high. Before prohibition of the African slave trade in 1808, the business in the District, like that elsewhere in the South, was more casual than systematic. At intervals notices appeared of a slave or two for sale, but auctions of as many as sixty occurred infrequently, perhaps once in six months. Initially the District's dual legal system and humanitarianism combined to check growth of trade. Virginia law in force in Alexandria County prevented a trader from shipping Maryland-owned slaves across the Potomac, just as Maryland law prohibited the importation of Virginia slaves into Washington County. Moreover, if an Alexandria grand jury of 1802 was representative of a community which would later become one of the principal centers of the domestic slave trade, local citizens stood aghast at scenes "of wretchedness and human degradation disgraceful to our characters as citizens of a free government." The grand jury besought Congress to halt "the practice of persons coming from

36 Intelligencer, 1 Jun, 17 Jul 07, 20 Apr, 5 Aug, 30 Sep 08, 8 Feb 09, 19 Sep 12; Alexandria Advertiser, 17 Jul 07; Alexandria Gazette, 2 Oct 09, 3 Jun 11.
distant parts of the United States into this district for the purpose of purchasing slaves." But when cotton planters of the deep South could no longer get field hands from Africa and markets for the surplus crop of Virginia and Maryland slave owners widened, sentiment changed enough to lead a group of District citizens to beg Congress to remove the restrictions upon moving chattels from one county to another. In 1812 Congress revised the law accordingly. Thereafter the volume of trade would swell.37

Labor shortages existed throughout America at the opening of the 19th century. In the still thinly populated Potomac valley the problem of recruiting workmen continually harassed the Potomac Company, while the commissioners in charge of federal building had to comb the countryside for skilled hands. On government building operations the pay scale before 1812 ranged from $1.75 a day for stone masons and $1.25 for bricklayers to 75 cents for carpenters, but private individuals expected to pay less, and although Europeans commented upon the exorbitant costs of labor, wage rates on most jobs were apparently lower than in northern cities. Since $60 a year was the standard price for a hired slave, a $100-a-year wage for an Irish immigrant seemed not out of line. An able-bodied slave could be purchased for $100. A few craftsmen still used indentured apprentices, but a newspaper advertisement offering a

ten-cent reward for the return of a runaway suggests that masters set little store by them. Free Negroes got less than white men for the same work—$6 a month instead of $12 as gardeners, Mrs. Thornton noted, and at the steel furnaces at the Navy Yard, 80 cents a day instead of the whites' $1.81. Virtually all household servants were Negroes, some of them free, more of them slave, although by 1810 the proportion of slaves in the District's population had dropped from 22.5 percent of 1800 to about 19 percent. Probably the competition of cheap Negro labor served as a deterrent to European immigration. Long hours, usually from sunup to sundown, low earnings and, as Congressmen and visitors noted, high living costs in the District offered scant inducement. Other than the Irishmen engaged to dig the Washington Canal, foreign-born workmen were few.38

Diversions

Yet amid poverty so widespread that the corporation of Washington in its first years spent more for relief of the poor than for any other one

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38 Sanderlin, National Project, pp. 32-33; ltrs, George Washington to David Stuart, 8 Mar 1792, and Comrs to Jefferson, 5 Jan 1793, in Padover, Jefferson, pp. 112, 165-66; Georgetown Museum, h Dec CO; Warden, Chorographical and Statistical Description, pp. 45-46, 63-64; Mrs. Thornton's Diary, 7, 8 Apr, 12 May, 17 Nov CO. CHS Rec. X, 127, 111, 212; History of the Capitol, p. 232; Melish, Travels, I, 198; Richard Beale Davis, Jeffersonian America, Notes on the United States of America, collected in the Years 1805-6-7 and 11-12 by Sir Augustus John Foster, Bart., p. 13 (hereafter cited as Davis, Jeffersonian America); Beckles Willson, Friendly Relations, A Narrative of Britain's Ministers and Ambassadors to America (1790-1935), p. 49.
purpose, life held pleasures for humble people as well as for their social superiors. If the working day was not all beer and skittles, time out for "good whiskey" was usual. The Commandant of the Navy Yard objected to the mass exodus of workmen for the "grog shops" every morning, but he arranged for this forerunner of the "coffee break" much as a later generation of officials would do, by having the "refreshments" brought to the job. At the end of every Saturday afternoon between May and November anyone who enjoyed martial music could listen to the Marine Band concerts and after church service on Sunday the poor man, like the rich, if not stopped by religious scruples, might dangle a fish line into the river, hook sturgeon at the Little Falls or dig in a patch of garden. Fourth of July celebrations were particularly gay in Washington; the militia paraded in colorful uniforms, and afterward officers gathered for wine, confectionary and lemonade at the President's House, and everyone else thronged the tents and booths set up in the grounds. More frequent, and unique to the capital, were the opportunities to see strange and interesting sights: the Tunisian envoy arrayed in turban and flowing robes driving through Washington's streets, the grizzly bears that Meriwether Lewis, head of the famous expedition to the far West, had brought back from the Rockies and that now occupied cages in the President's lawn, and in the winter of 1806 Indian chiefs and braves with partly shaven heads and gaudily painted faces and bodies who came to negotiate with the white man's government. The poorest day laborer's wife could get amusement out of wondering what the wife of the Secretary of War would choose for the Indian squaws to wear to the President's reception. Mrs. Dearborn selected neither silken
robes nor blankets but flowered chintz skirts and wide petticoats. 39

Entertainment for the well-to-do and people with leisure was far more varied than for the working classes. As wild duck, partridge, quail and snipe were abundant, men shot game in the swamps and woods within a stone's throw of Pennsylvania avenue. Besides occasional official balls, the dancing assemblies open to subscribers met at 5:30 in the afternoon once or twice a month every winter. Travelling companies performed at what the British minister called "the miserable little rope-dancing theatre" in Washington or at the theatre in Alexandria, and horse races organized by the Washington Jockey Club drew crowds that included senators and representatives. Cards, backgammon and visits to the halls of Congress were other popular pastimes. Well-informed residents of Washington and Georgetown, moreover, were in a position frequently to discuss matters of public interest with legislators, for the social atmosphere was informal and Congressmen, living as most of them did in boarding houses, were likely to drop in for tea or for supper at the houses of friends. Hospitality, if simple, was warm, and conversation, though more likely to center on politics than the arts or sciences, was stimulating. Men far outnumbered women, but some officials brought their families to Washington for the height of the "season", and their daughters and friends turned the capital

into "one of the most marrying places of the whole continent." 10

Although Washington had not yet achieved the sophistication of Philadelphia, European artists and American lecturers visited the new capital at intervals, and a half dozen publishers and booksellers established themselves here permanently. J. D. Mollot, the miniaturist, Charles St. Memin, whose enchanting crayons have given immortality to people who would otherwise have long ago been forgotten, and David Boudon of Geneva, a specialist in "profiles in water color," found appreciative patrons in the District. Both St. Memin and Boudon, or Bourdon, painted some of the Indian chiefs in Washington during the winter of 1805-06. Bookshops carried a wide variety of reading matter—Malthus on Population, Parson Weems' The Private Life of George Washington, priced at 87 1/2 cents, and all the latest novels. The newspapers advertised for proposals for publishing works as disparate as Benjamin Franklin's writing—and "Pyroloiomogia", an "attempt toward a new theory of the electrical phenomena and galvanic influence arising from terraqueous and nutrid exhalations, which explains the causes of pestilential diseases." The Library of Congress was spending yearly $1000 on the purchase of books, and the Intelligencer pointed out the advantages for publishers and authors of depositing in the Library copies of their works. The Columbian Library Company of Georgetown

had .500 books available to its subscribers, the Alexandria Library even
more. Washington had a commercial circulating library but no library
company until 1811, when two hundred subscribers undertook to remedy the
omission, for, as "Joe" Geles who bought the Intelligencer in 1809 from
Samuel Smith, explained, the Philadelphia Library had done more to form
the character of Philadelphians than had anything else in that city. For
musical ears, moreover, Washington provided the gratification of an
occasional piano or music concert.44

The lack of pomp in official society often shocked foreigners. When
John Merry, His Britannic Majesty's minister to the United States from
1803 to 1806, went in full dress to present his credentials to the American
chief of state, the Englishman was horrified to be received by President
Jefferson attired in "an old brown coat, red waistcoat, old corduroy
small clothes much soiled, woolen hose and slippers without heels."
The President, upon learning that the English and Spanish ministers were
incensed at his escorting Mrs. Madison to the seat of honor at a state
dinner, announced that the order at all official functions thenceforward
would be "pêle-mêle", in order to make clear to European dignitaries that
foreign rules of precedence had no place in a Republic. Of the eight to
ten members of the diplomatic corps it was the ministers of Czarist Russia

44 Alexandria Advertiser, 15 Mar 00; Intelligencer, 1801-1812,
passin for advertisements of books, and 3 Jun, 8 Jul, 21 Aug 01, 7 Jun
02, 6 Feb 01, 6 Feb 05, 10, 21 Feb, 17, 28 Mar, 11 Apr, 29 Aug 06, 17
Jun 08, 26 Sep 11, 7 Nov 12; Annals, 90, 18, 21 Feb 06, p. 1227; Davis,
Jeffersonian America, p. 35.
who, one after the other, found the ways of the Republic most congenial and who made themselves most welcome in American "court circles." Men of learning and varied experience gathered at Jefferson's dinner table; no guest ever found the occasion dull. Anyone and everyone felt free to approach the President. On New Year's day all sorts and kinds flocked to the Executive Mansion to pay their respects, and though they behaved with greater restraint than Andy Jackson's admirers would twenty-odd years later, the American passion for equality was clearly in evidence in the Jeffersonian capital. When the Madisons entered what by 1809 was coming generally to be called the "White House", official entertaining took on slightly greater formality, but the vivacious first lady maintained about her a friendly atmosphere devoid of stiffness. Whatever its drawbacks, the capital drew to itself some of the most charming and gifted people in America. In spite of the strained relations between the United States and Great Britain in 1811 and 1812, the British minister, Augustus John Foster, one-time aide to the hypercritical Mr. Merry, considered the bad manners he encountered in Washington partly a political pose, and, for all his irritation at the crudities he observed, he obviously took considerable pleasure in the life of the city about him. And at the gala ball he gave in honor of the Queen's birthday, principles of Republican simplicity did

\[1\] Ltrs, William Plumer to Samuel Plumer, 7 Dec 02, and to Daniel Plumer, 9 Dec 02, Plumer Papers, Willson, Friendly Relations, pp. 10-18; Baltimore Whig, 22 Nov 10; Intelligencer, 4 Jan 08, 6 Mar 09. (Ms Div, L.C.)
Problems of City Administration

Throughout Washington’s early years the principal deterrents to agreeable social intercourse were not political feuds or lack of savoir faire so much as geographical distance and the condition of the streets. In fine weather a ferry ran regularly to Alexandria, but much of the year residents of Washington and Georgetown saw little of their neighbors to the south. Within Washington also communication was difficult. If a resident of the northwest section of the city wished to call upon friends living near the Navy Yard, he must choose between walking three or four miles over unpaved footways or risking a drive over rough rutted roads deep in mud when not thick with dust. Time-consuming and inconvenient by daylight, the journey at night was hazardous: pot-holes and tree stumps threatened to overturn carriages; most of the thoroughfares lay in utter darkness and the feeble light of the occasional oil lamp near a government building intensified rather than lessened the blackness beyond. Like Americans, foreign visitors invariably complained bitterly about these miseries and, unlike their hosts, tended to see in the very layout of the capital a sign of American delusions of grandeur. Thus the satirical verses of the Irish poet, Thomas Moore, who visited Washington

43 Davis, Jeffersonian America, pp. 86-87.
44 Davis, Jeffersonian America, pp. 86-87; Hines, Recollections, p. 20.
in 1804 ridiculed the pretentiousness of the straggling untidy little city:

Where tribunes rule, where dusky Davi bow,
And what was Goose Creek once is Tiber now:
This embryo capital, where Fancy sees
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees;
Where second-sighted seers e'en now adorn
With shrines unbuilt and heroes yet unborn
Though now but woods - and Jefferson - they see
Where streets should run and sages out to be. 15

But Congress, if annoyed at such disparagements, was still unwilling to spend money on any improvements except to the public buildings. After concurring with President Jefferson's request to plant Lombardy poplars along Pennsylvania Avenue from the Treasury to the Capitol and in 1807 appropriating $3000 for repairs to that thoroughfare, the legislators left to local taxpayers the entire burden of grading, gravelling or macadamizing the streets. As the layout of the capital, in keeping with L'Enfant's plan, called for avenues not less than 160 feet wide and streets not less than 80, the cost of paving was far too high for a city of meagre financial resources. 16

Yet as long as proposals were recurring on the Hill to return the capital to Philadelphia, wisdom dictated making Washington as comfortable as possible for Congress. Citizens intent on that goal swallowed their

15 Quoted in Willson, Friendly Relations, p. 97.
irritation at having to foot the bills for work on the streets and avenues
which, by the terms of the proprietors' agreement with the President in
1791, were clearly federal property. Individual subscriptions paid for a
sidewalk along part of F street and taxes paved one or two other stretches,
but these merely emphasized the lacks elsewhere in the city. Seventy
years later a representative told the House: "The national capital at
that day was a series of abrupt hills and quagmires, and the whole history
of the capital has been the correcting of the evils which nature generated
upon this spot of ground." What the corporation spent on highways and
bridges, though never enough to defeat nature, represented in most years
a sizable part of the city's annual income,--in 1805-06, for example,
nearly $4300 out of $9000 collected in taxes and license fees.47

The amount of money the District cities could raise for municipal
purposes was limited by the relatively small population, still more by
the prohibition on taxing federal property, and finally by the fiscal
powers vested in county officials. The Levy Court, consisting of magis­
trates appointed by the state governors, had been an 18th century insti­
tution in Maryland and Virginia to take charge of collecting taxes,
building roads and keeping order in rural areas. Congress perpetuated the
county levy courts even after it granted city charters that expressly

47 Intelligencer, 1 Jun 03, 2 Jun 06; Record, 15C, 28, 7 May 78,
p. 3241; Proceedings of the Comrs, 23, 27 May 00; ltrs, Comrs to Jefferson,
24 Aug, 4 Sep 01, and ltr, Alexander White to Jefferson, 10 Jun 02, all in
Padover, Jefferson, pp. 222-23, 230, 273-75; Georgetown Museum, 30 Mar 01.
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permitted mayors and councils to levy municipal taxes. Hence justices of
the peace appointed by the President continued to assess city dwellers
as well as property-owners in the counties. It was a cumbersome arrange­
ment. Changes of policy in 1804 denied the justices taxing powers in
Washington, though extending them in Georgetown and Alexandria, and then
in 1812 again permitted the Levy Court to tax Washington property for
support of the county poor. By 20th century standards municipal tax rates
were low, in Alexandria $1.63 on every $100 of assessed valuation, in
Washington and Georgetown only 25 cents until 1908; thereafter Washington
doubled that figure. License fees brought the cities added income, about
a third the yearly total. The charges for retail stores and "ordinaries"
netted the largest amount, "pleasurable" carriages and hackney coaches
another several hundred dollars, and imposts on slaves and on "all animals
of the dog kind" most of the rest. But all sources together failed to
produce enough. Within two years of her incorporation Washington had to
borrow money.\textsuperscript{48} The theme of municipal poverty that would dominate most
periods of the city's history for the next 150 years was taking form by 1804.

\textsuperscript{48} Annals, 7C, 1S, 21 Dec 01, 27 Mar 02, pp. 3842-13, 1093, 8C,
1S, 25 Feb 02, pp. 1259-62, 8C, 2S, 28 Dec 04, pp. 864-65, 10C, 2s, 21
Mar 08, p. 1858, 10C, 2S, 15 Dec 08, pp. 856-57, 12C, 1S, 1 Jul 12, pp.
2343-44; Intelligencer, 6 Oct, 1 Nov 02, 25, 30 May, 1 Jun, 15 Jul, 12
Oct 03, 30 May 08, 2 Jun 06; Ordinances and Acts of the City of Alexandria,
22 Jun 04, pp. 122-23 (hereafter cited as Alexandria Ordinances); Acts of
the Corporation of the City of Washington, 22 Jun 04, pp. 122-23, 30 Apr
05, p. 31, 17 Apr 05, pp. 28-30, 1 Nov 07, pp. 5-8, 25 May 08, pp. 17-18,
25 Sep 08, pp. 9-10, 8 Nov 08, pp. 16-20, 1 Aug 09, pp. 3-4, 18 Aug 10,
The obligations of mayors and councils in all three cities differed little in kind from those of other American municipalities. The protection of persons and property from lawlessness, fire and dangers to health, regulation of weights and measures and inspection of flour, salt beef and tobacco for export, maintenance of highways, bridges and public pumps, care of the indigent and infirm and, after 1804 when new city charters expressly permitted, the establishment of public schools. During the early years of the century the two older corporations succeeded far better than Washington in meeting these responsibilities. Longer experience, well-graded streets, many of them cobbled in the 18th century, and, above all, the compactness of Alexandria and Georgetown simplified their tasks. Georgetown had acquired a fire engine before 1804, in 1805 employed a scavenger to clean the paved streets regularly, appointed two salaried policemen and a street commissioner in 1808 and 1810 and, by ordinances apparently executed meticulously, throughout kept track of community comforts and morals. Private citizens, moreover, organized the Female Benevolent Society in 1810 to care for impoverished families and in 1812 formed a Lancasterian School Society. The Lancasterian school, managed by trustees who could bind children as apprentices to the society and use the older pupils to teach the younger, was Georgetown's approach to a public school system.19 Alexandria, considerably bigger, wealthier, and perhaps more ambitious, provided still wider municipal services. She built a

Poor House in 1800, established a work house for vagrants, paved streets, introduced street lamps, created a board of health with authority to conduct inspections at stagecoach stops to prevent the entry of people with contagious diseases, empowered the Superintendent of Police to enforce sanitary regulations, and, to ensure an adequate milk supply in a city where most householders kept a cow, purchased two community bulls. Although the ships coming into her port exposed her to occasional epidemics and slave traders caused her anxiety, visitors in the District usually remarked upon the city's well-ordered mien.  

Washington's inability to do as well as her neighbors was due neither to incompetent officials nor to lack of public spirit. On the contrary, Mayor Brent and members of the councils were conscientious men eager to serve the community, and citizens were ready to cooperate. But then as now Washington faced peculiar difficulties stemming from her status as capital. In addition to the vast scale of the city's layout and the expenses thus entailed, in addition to her newness and the loss of income from tax-exempt federal property, she felt under constant pressure to prove to Congress her civic enterprise and at the same she had an unusually heavy burden of poor relief to shoulder.  

Why a new city should contain a disproportionately large number

50 Alexandria Ordinances, 1800-1812, passim, and particularly, 5 Feb, 30 Aug 00, pp. 77, 78, 31 Mar, 7 Sep 02, pp. 82, 84-87, 7 Feb, 26 Mar, 12 May 01, pp. 88-90, 100-11, 19 Apr, 3 May 05, pp. 133, 136-38, 17 Aug 10, pp. 191-92, 7 Aug 11, pp. 208-09; Alexandria Advertiser, 7 Mar 03; Alexandria Gazette, 5 Aug, 10, 13, 14 Sep, 30 Oct, 1 Nov 03.
of needy people appears to admit of only one explanation: they collected in the capital in hopes of getting jobs or largesse from the federal government and, when they failed, became a public charge. Most town and city poor laws of the period denied "transient paupers" support; the national capital promised refuge. But in the absence of federal provision, care of people stranded in the capital fell to local taxpayers. In the first year of municipal administration, 42 percent of the city budget went to welfare, 28 percent the following year, and $1700 plus $51 for "lunatics" from the city's $10,000 of revenue in 1806. Trustees of the Poor appointed by the mayor determined who should receive help. The city councils gave them authority to issue clothing bought from public funds, to pay over to needy "resident families" a sum not to exceed $2 a week each, and to contract for room and board for individuals either in private households or, if need be, at the Washington County almshouse. The mayor engaged a physician to provide medical care, but by 1806 a public infirmary had become necessary. The Washington Asylum built near the Marine barracks at the city's eastern edge was completed in 1809 at the then staggering cost of $3000. Meanwhile "the plight of the poor" inspired charitable citizens to further effort. Committees chosen at a public meeting in the fall of 1805 canvassed the city for voluntary contributions, and in 1810 during a particularly severe winter the Washington Benevolent Society of Young Men established a regular fund "to alleviate the distresses" of the poor. 51

51 Intelligencer, 1 Nov 02, 1 Jun, 7, 12 Sep 03, 30 May 04, 21, 23 Jan 05, 2 Jun 06, 29 Nov 10, 25 Jun 11; Washington Acts, 31 Oct 06, pp. 5-8, 30 May 08, p. 19, 23 May 09, p. 38, 9 Jan 11, pp. 52-53, 11 Aug 12, p. 15.
The extreme poverty in parts of the city probably affected public health, but Washington was too sparsely settled to have slums; the chief menace to health arose in the low-lying areas where faulty drainage or none permitted stagnant water to accumulate, to the joy of mosquitoes and the misery of humans. That problem indeed became so acute that in time to come the city would petition Congress to turn over to the corporation the proceeds from sale of Washington lots in order to finance filling swampy stretches in the heart of the city. While reliable vital statistics were non-existent, mortality was almost certainly high. Citizens denied Baltimore's accusations that the capital was ridden with yellow fever and "dissentery", but there is a humorous pathos in a municipal ordinance of 1811 proclaiming the introduction of small pox unlawful. Before 1811, the Superintendent of Police was in charge of enforcing the few sanitary regulations. He might revoke the license of a slaughter house within the city limits if the owner failed to abide by the rules. The arrangement was obviously unsatisfactory even when the mayor doubled the police force by appointing two officers instead of one. The police were also responsible for inspecting fire-buckets, and private citizens, organized/ward by ward, did the fire-fighting. In 1811 city commissioners replaced the police, but change of title neither lessened officers' burdens nor increased their efficiency. Though major crime was rare and ordinarily most of the occupants of the city jail were insolvent debtors and runaway slaves, Washington attracted numberless swindlers out to make the most of
the opportunities the capital offered.52

If discouraged over the city's untidiness and disorder, Washingtonians nevertheless showed public spirit in undertaking to open public schools. Early in the 19th century tax-supported schools were few outside New England; Americans generally viewed education as a private responsibility. In the capital hopes that Congress would open a national university influenced leading citizens to petition for the right to establish free schools; common schools would form the base of an educational pyramid with a college and a federally financed university at the top. President Washington had set aside nineteen acres of land in the city for a national university and had willed his shares in the Potomac Company for its support, but Congress delayed action until the stock was worthless and in 1811 concluded that the Constitution forbade an appropriation for such a purpose.53

The national legislature, on the other hand, had no objection to the municipality's paying for free schools, and the city charter of 1804 expressly authorized it. But if advocates of a tax-supported school system counted on financial help from the federal government, they were disappointed.

Grants of public land to the territories for school support were one thing,


53 ASP, Mis, I, Doc 91, 21 Dec 96, pp. 153-54; Annals, 7C, 26 Jan 03, p. 1321; Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools, 1805-1818, 13 Dec 05, pp. 14-45 (hereafter cited as School Trustees Minutes).
comparable donations in the District of Columbia quite another. Thus thwarted, some members of the Washington councils at first regarded free education as a luxury the city could not afford; the community needed the funds for improvement of the streets and for the purchase of fire engines, and, one councilman argued, to settle a "large salary" on any professor was merely to encourage him to sloth. Opposition evaporated, however, and in December 1804 the city enacted a measure turning over to elected trustees for public schools $1500 annually from the license fees for hacks, peddlers, taverns, dogs and slaves. In the summer of 1805 the Intelligencer announced the names of the trustees of the "Permanent Institution for the Education of Youth,"--Thomas Jefferson, president of the board, Mayor Brent, Captain Thomas Tingey, Judge Cranch, Samuel Harrison Smith, and eight other distinguished local citizens.54

The narrow scope of the school system as men of the day conceived it eventually proved its undoing. The school act stipulated that only persons who contributed as much as $10 to a building fund could cast a vote for the trustees, and the board was to have exclusive authority over the management of the schools. Because the trustees observed "that most of the plans projected in the city have failed principally from undertaking them before the necessary means were acquired," the plan adopted provided free schooling only for poor children who would otherwise get no education; those whose parents could afford tuition were to pay.

Furthermore, the prospectus of 1805 added another monetary distinction: free pupils would get instruction in the three R's and in grammar; pay pupils would have geography and Latin lessons as well. The scheme was an attempt to combine public and private education and would end in fastening upon the institutions the label "pauper schools" to which self-respecting parents would not send their children. Yet in 1805 the arrangement was perhaps the only one feasible. There were to be two schoolhouses, one near the Capitol, the other a half-mile from the President's House, each with a principal who would get $500 annual salary. Classes were to meet six to eight hours five days a week. Every poor child must apply to the trustees for admission, but they endeavored to protect him by imposing secrecy upon the teachers about his non-paying status.

The "western school" opened in February 1806 in a building on Pennsylvania avenue between 17th and 18th streets, the "eastern school" in May in one of Daniel Carroll's row houses on 1st street where the Library of Congress stands today. When President Jefferson allowed the trustees to build on land belonging to the United States, they erected two schoolhouses near the original rented quarters. But the buildings cost nearly $1600, somewhat more than the total subscribed and collected, and, although the trustees tried to economize by dropping the fixed salaries for the principals and letting them instead pocket the tuition fees from pay pupils and $20 for each "pauper", the expenses of salaries and supplies

55 School trustees Minutes, 15 Sep 05, p. •
had reached $1700 by the summer of 1807. Citizens thereupon complained "loudly" about these wild extravagances which ate up 15 percent of the municipal budget. The next year the council cut the city's contribution from $1500 to $800. The trustees, unable to get the cut restored, declared "the institution for the education of youth could not be supported in anything like a state of respectability", and in 1812 proposed substituting a Lancastrian school where one teacher could preside over a hundred or more pupils. Private schools meanwhile were multiplying. Interest in free public education was on the wane.56

The Position of Negroes

Race barred colored children from the public schools, for though no rule expressly so stated, and though city officials raised no objection when three free colored men, themselves illiterate, engaged a white teacher in 1807 to open a colored school, the assumption was general among whites in this Southern community that free people of color were not and could not be citizens. Gradually Southern concepts submerged the Northern view of Negroes as human beings with dark skins, and, after the defeat of a resolution of 1805 in Congress which would have freed slaves in the District when they reached maturity, the prevailing attitude in the capital relegated all Negroes to a position of irredeemable inferiority.

Washington waited till December 1808 to enact a Black Code, and perhaps formulated one then only because the number of free Negroes had doubled since 1804. Alexandria waited till 1809 but then promulgated a more rigorous code than Washington's. That whites in the District stood in real fear of their colored neighbors is unlikely: in 1808 Washington's 500 free blacks and 880 slaves together composed a scant quarter of the population. But an influx of colored householders was an unwelcome prospect and, were free Negroes here allowed privileges denied them in the rest of the South, the number of blacks might increase rapidly. Yet for a city where debtors, white or black, might land in jail for owing $20, Washington's first Black Code was less severe than might have been expected. The law imposed a $5 fine upon any colored person found on the streets or at a dance or meeting after 10:00 p.m., and decreed whipping for a slave only if his master refused to pay his fine. Four years later in amending the city charter Congress authorized local officials to whip slaves with as many as forty lashes for attending "nightly and disorderly meetings" and to jail free Negroes and mulattoes for as long as six months.

At that point the city councils took the precaution of requiring free Negroes to register and carry with them certificates of their freedom. Without such proof any free colored person was liable to be jailed as a runaway slave, and unless some white man supplied evidence that the Negro was indeed free and then paid the costs of his keep while in prison, the
jailer might sell his helpless victim in order to recoup any loss. Perhaps the mounting volume of the slave trade in the District accounted for the harshness of the new regulations, and free Negroes may have felt relief that there was no prohibition against their educating their children. The school of 1807 had a brief life, but later another would open. By and large free colored families in the District probably considered themselves better off than their fellows in other southern cities.

By 1812 Washingtonians in the face of various discouragements dared at last feel secure. The city had nearly tripled in population since 1800 and, if still insignificant commercially, had outstripped Alexandria in size. Little by little men had come to believe Congress would never move the capital from the banks of the Potomac. Patience would overcome the city's manifest drawbacks, and the District of Columbia would then become the true center of the United States. As the War Hawks in Congress gained converts during that spring and early summer, residents of the capital watching with interest felt no alarm about what the future would bring.

57 Intelligencer, 17 Sep 02, 9 May 04, 30 Sep 08; Washington Acts, 6 Dec 08, pp. 24-26, 16 May 12, pp. 29-35; U.S. Statutes at Large, II, May 12, ch cxxv, pp. 721-27; Alexandria Ordinances, 9 Aug 09, pp. 182-91; George W. Williams, History of the Negro Race in America, II, 182; Washington Federalist, 3 Sep 05; Annals, 30, 28, 15 Jan 05, pp. 995-96.

58 Third Census United States, 1810.
The Initial Effects of War

The declaration of war in June 1812 came as a surprise to Washington. Congress had been debating the step since the preceding December, but, as month after month passed without the War Hawks' rallying the necessary nineteen votes in the Senate, Washingtonians had inclined to believe with Augustus Foster that the United States would continue to seek peaceful redress from both France and Great Britain rather than openly defy either power. On 17 June when, as the British minister described events, the war party rounded up a "drunken senator" usually absent from important sessions and with his vote swung a majority into passing a "resolution" for war against Britain, the atmosphere in the capital was cheerful. And when the President reluctantly signed the paper the next afternoon, the elation of the expansionists of the West and the South became contagious. The thirty-year-old South Carolinian, John Calhoun, reportedly threw his arms around the neck of Henry Clay, the young speaker of the House, and, joined by others of the Congressional "mess" at their New Jersey avenue boarding house, performed a Shawnee war dance about the table. The wrath and dismay of Federalists who thought the United States should fight Napoleon, if anyone, in no way dampened the enthusiasm of men delighted at the prospect of snatching Canada from Britain and forcing the royal navy to respect American rights at sea. ¹

¹ Davis, Jeffersonian America, pp. 96-103; Glenn Tucker, Poltroons and Patriots, A Popular Account of the War of 1812, I, 19-21.
Federalist merchants of the District of Columbia, notably of Alexandria, decried the prying open of the "Pandora's Box" which loosed the "deadliest of evils: war with Great Britain," and they correctly anticipated more severe commercial losses than embargo and non-intercourse had inflicted. Anger burned fiercely at the end of July when a respected Georgetown man was killed by a Baltimore mob in its attempt to stop distribution of a violently anti-administration newspaper printed in the District. But a large segment of the local public, led by "Joe" Gales of the National Intelligencer, supported Republican policy. Perhaps belief that war would bring new business to the capital, source of government contracts and center of planning, contributed to the feeling that the country had embarked upon a "National Jubilee." In 1807 and 1808 when war had threatened after British search of the frigate Constitution in American coastal waters, the District militia had offered fifteen companies, about two thousand men, for immediate action. Now, Federalist opposition notwithstanding, military ardor again swept the District cities. On the 4th of July 1812 five hundred militiamen paraded in uniform and, although law made all able-bodied white male residents between the ages of 18 and 45, not excepting government clerks, subject to service in the District militia, several volunteer companies formed during the summer, including one of Washingtonians too old for militia duty. 

2 Alexandria Gazette, 20 Jun, 18 Aug, 15 Oct, 24 Nov, 1 Dec 12; Intelligencer, 16 Jul 06, 15, 17, 20, 21 Jul 07, 5 Dec 08, 8, 28 Jul, 1, 6, 8, 13 Aug, 8, 10 Sep 12; Henry Adams, History of the United States During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison, VI, 1703-09 (hereafter cited as Adams, History); U.S. Statutes, II, 215, 3 Mar 03; Anales, 76, 28, 3 Mar 03, pp. 1575-78.
In spite of American reverses on the Canadian border, the surrender of Detroit and the continuing hostility of Indian tribes aroused by Tecumseh, optimism about the war lasted in Washington till after Madison's second inauguration. Canada and the West were too far away to affect daily pursuits in the capital on the Potomac. British naval raids on the Chesapeake had not yet begun, and, the administration insisted, if the enemy were eventually to set foot on American soil, he would seek to engage the army in the field, not to attack the capital. At the end of October the Washington Jockey Club held its annual races, and during the winter other entertainments went on as usual. The diary of Michael Shiner, a Washington Negro, described in some detail the new volunteer fire company and its dashing yellow-fringed uniforms but made no mention of war. At the inaugural parade on 4 March 1813, onlookers remarked upon the "animating" appearance of the volunteers lining Pennsylvania avenue in the brilliant sunshine as the District cavalry escorted the President to the Capitol, and that night couples danced gaily at the ball held at Davis' Hotel. A few weeks afterward, light heartedness gave way to alarm: a British fleet was blockading Chesapeake Bay.

Early in May 1813 Rear Admiral Cockburn's tars and marines pillaged and burned Havre de Grace at the mouth of the Susquehanna and, to Mrs. Madison's chagrin, the swaggering Cockburn sent word "he would make his bow" at her drawingroom very soon. President Madison hastily sent troops

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3 *Intelligencer*, 3 Nov 12, 6 Mar/13; Diary of Michael Shiner, 1813-1865 (Ms Div, L.C.)
to repair Fort Washington, twelve miles down the Potomac and the capital's chief defense from naval attack, and, while "all the city and Georgetown (except the cabinet) ... expected a visit from the enemy," units of the District militia encamped near the White House on the hill where the Naval Observatory would later rise. By July British ships were moving up the Potomac and by the 15th were within sixty miles of Washington. The frigate and the gunboats at the Navy Yard sailed at once, army regulars accompanied by most of the District volunteer companies and several members of Congress marched for Fort Washington, and District householders packed up their effects preparatory to flight. Meanwhile, more terrifying than the approach of Redcoats were the rumors of impending slave uprisings. Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith writing from the Smith farm on which Catholic University stands today spoke of "our enemy at home" who would join with the British as the invaders drew near. Washington, stripped of troops, lay exposed not only to rebellious blacks but to lawless whites ready to loot the city. At this point Mayor James Blake appointed a night watch to patrol the streets after dark and several "military" units composed of elderly volunteers for home defense. Construction of earthworks to mount heavy guns began at Greenleaf's Point and the Navy Yard with a furnace at each to supply red-hot cannon balls.

The immediate crisis passed. The British ships sailed back down the Potomac, and the militia came home. Slaves in the area made no strike for freedom, though bondsmen along the Chesapeake had offered their help to

Allen C. Clark

Admiral Cockburn only to discover too late that he was not above selling them to planters in Barbados. Relieved of fear of the British Lion, Washingtonians could enjoy seeing the four-hundred-pound "Royal Tiger of Asia" on exhibit at the front of the Capitol. In the District of Columbia life resumed its normal course.

Business, in fact, assumed abnormal proportions. The Secretary of the Treasury reported internal revenue duties paid in the District of Columbia higher than those in New Hampshire, Vermont, Delaware, Tennessee and Louisiana. As military purchasing went forward and men seeking government contracts came and went, two new banks opened, the Bank of the Metropolis in Washington and the Farmers and Mechanics in Georgetown. District bankers indeed felt themselves in a position to offer the hard-pressed federal Treasury a loan. New turnpike companies and one to enlarge Georgetown's water supply organized in spite of the high costs of materials and workmen's demands for higher wages. A daily evening newspaper appeared and a guide book to the capital, the first of an endless succession. Men felt confident enough about the city's future to hold a lottery with a $30,000 prize to raise money for building a monument to George Washington. Activity at the Navy Yard mounted steadily as ships damaged in encounters with the enemy put in for repairs. Crews and marines from every vessel that docked spent money in the city. Furthermore, for the first time the Washington Navy Yard received a commission to build a frigate, a sloop of war and a 5-gun schooner; all three ships virtually ready for launching in August 1814.

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5 M. B. Smith, First Forty Years, op. 90-91; Intelligencer, 13, 17, 19, 21, 22, 29 Jul, 17 Aug 13; Tucker, Poltroons and Patriots, I, 290 and 395n.
Although a British squadron still patrolled Chesapeake Bay, American naval successes at sea and on Lake Erie stirred everyone's pride and provided the occasion for gala public dinners in honor of Commodore William Bainbridge and Captain Oliver Hazard Perry. When a peace mission sent to Europe reported unacceptable British terms and local apprehensions about enemy attack revived during the spring of 1814, Secretary of War John Armstrong persisted in declaring that no one having Baltimore within reach would invade the "sheep walk" on the Potomac. 6

The Capture of Washington

But time was running out. In June 1814, landing parties from Admiral Cockburn's ships got within / miles of Washington. The District militia took the field but, after failing to locate the British, were ordered home and mustered out. News that part of Wellington's victorious army under General Robert Ross was on route to America led Secretary of War Armstrong belatedly to make half-hearted plans for the protection of the capital, but worried Washingtonians called upon the President to urge more vigorous measures, while a committee of Alexandrians drew attention to the defenseless state of their city. The War Department undertook to align militia from neighboring states to strengthen the District forces, but, with the British harrying the Maryland and Virginia settlements on the Bay, the gesture was inevitably futile. Arms, ammunition, tents and food for the

citizens' army were still in short supply in mid-August when 1,500 British regulars landed at Benedict on the Patuxent river thirty-five miles southeast of the capital. On Saturday, 20 August, the District's ill-equipped, green militia, under the command of the easy-going Brigadier General William Winder of Baltimore, encamped near the Eastern Branch bridge. Mayor Blake appealed the next day for men remaining in Washington to assemble at the Capitol and march thence to dig earthworks at Bladensburg at the District line; necessity persuaded him to beg free colored men to join the citizens' corps of workers. Whites later had the grace to make grateful acknowledgment: "The free people of color of this city, acted as bedse patriots; there is scarcely an exception of any failing to be on the spot ... manifesting by their exertions all the zeal of freemen. At the same time, highly to their credit, conducting themselves with the utmost order and propriety."7

Events moved swiftly during the next days. Government clerks hurriedly packed up official papers and scoured the city for wagons to cart them to safety; householders loaded their valuables into such conveyances as they could find, and the exodus began. By Tuesday night few women and children remained in Washington. The public offices and every shop had closed that day, and while the President and Cabinet officials, after a special conference at sunrise, rode back and forth between General Winder's camp and the capital, Mrs. Madison and a black servant or two at the White House had filled trunks with cabinet papers. In the blistering heat of the

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early afternoon of 24 August the British invaders reached the Eastern Branch at Bladensburg. "The Bladensburg Races," as angry humiliated citizens dubbed the rout of the American army, took scarcely half an hour.

Mrs. Madison with Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Washington beside her in the presidential carriage drove out of the city in mid-afternoon shortly before the President's return from the battlefield; at the White House the table was already set for dinner. Winder's troops scattered over the countryside, but some fled back through Washington and northwestward before encamping above Tenleytown near the District Line. The Redcoats entered Washington at dusk. As they set fire to the Capitol and the President's House, Captain Tingey, Commandant of the Navy Yard, ordered the buildings, the naval stores and the ships on the runways burned. A violent thunderstorm that night alone prevented a conflagration of the entire city. Demolition continued the next day—the Potomac bridge, the War and Treasury buildings, the arsenal at Greenleaf's Point, and, because Admiral Cockburn contended "dear Josey" Gales was a British traitor, the office of the Intelligencer. Only the pleas of Dr. Thornton, Superintendent of Patents, saved the Patent Office and the Post Office; for Thornton convinced the British major that the patent models were private property and to destroy them would be a crime against civilization, like the burning of the famous Alexandria library "for which the Turks have been ever since condemned by all enlightened nations." Later that day a tornado struck, whipping roofs off houses, toppling chimneys and adding to the wreckage created by the British soldiery. When the invading troops withdrew that night and returned to their ships on the Patuxent, the American capital lay
in ruins. 8

Nin was the danger past. Four days later, while Washingtonians were
dazedly beginning to tidy up the debris, caring for the wounded and burying
the dead, British ships sailed up the river to Alexandria; the commanding
officer at Fort Washington had blown up the fortifications when he sighted
the enemy squadron. The British demanded and immediately obtained the
capitulation of defenceless Alexandria and, after loading the vessels at
her wharves with the flour, tobacco, cotton, sugar and wines in her ware­
houses and with the goods of her citizens, dropped safely back down the
Potomac with their booty. As people who had remained in the District
cities now swelled the throngs of earlier refugees to the country, Margaret
Bayard Smith observed sadly: "I do not suppose Government will ever return
to Washington. All those whose property was invested in that place, will
be reduced to poverty. . . . The consternation about us is general. The
despondency still greater." She took comfort, however, in noting that the
"negroes all hid and instead of a mutinous spirit, have never evinced so
much attachment to the whites and such dread of the enemy." Though the
British troops generally spared private property, fear that they might over­
run the entire countryside persisted until they met with a repulse at Balti­
more in September and word came of an American victory on Lake Champlain. 9

8 Annals, 130, 35, 22 Sep 15, pp. 305-08; M. B. Smith, First Forty
Years, 98, 109-12; Adams, History, VIII, 148-50; "Diary of Mrs. Thornton,
Capture of Washington by the British," GHS, Rec, XIX, 173-82 (reproduced
from the original ms in the L.C. and covering 20-31 Aug 14); "Unwelcome
Visitors to Early Washington," GHS, Rec, 1, 55-67 (a reprint of Dr. James
Ewell's "Capture of Washington," (published originally in the 3rd edition of
Planters and Planters Medical Companion in an essay entitled Billious Fevers;
Tucker, Politicians and Patriots, II, 552-64; Intelligencer, 30, 31 Aug, 7, 13
Sep 14). 9 Alexandria Gazette, 15 Sep 14; M. B. Smith, First Forty Years, pp.
101-15; Intelligencer, 31 Aug, 1, 4, 9 Sep 14; "Diary of Mrs. Thornton,"
30 Aug 14, GHS Rec, XIX, 173.
The Question of Relocating the Capital

Mrs. Smith's foreboding that the government would never return to Washington appeared to have a sound basis even though the President and the executive departments had reestablished themselves in the city within a few days of the British withdrawal. After a brief sojourn on F street, the Madisons moved to the Octagon House on New York avenue, since its former tenant, the French minister, had departed to Philadelphia. The failure of any of the foreign ministers to reopen legations in Washington looked ominous to residents of the District, and the discomforts that Congress must face when it convened in special session on 19 September added cause for trepidation. Multiplying charges that the District militia had behaved with abominable cowardice, charges mortifying to people who believed the incompetence and timidity of the Secretary of War and General Winder solely responsible for the disgraceful defeat at Bladensburg, increased the doubts that Congress would consent to risk staying on in so ill-protected a locality. The Intelligencer which, by borrowing type, was able to resume publication on 30 August, strove to forestall any plan for establishing a temporary capital elsewhere, lest the arrangement become permanent. That, the editors believed, would constitute a "treacherous breach of faith" with citizens who had "laid out fortunes in the purchase of property in and about the city." An argument with wider appeal to the rest of the country was patriotic pride: removal of the capital from Washington "would be kissing the rod an enemy has wielded." Other than thus expressing their "abhorrence and astonishment" at the prospect of again facing the uncertainties they had thought safely behind them after 1810, citizens could
do little more for the moment than abet the work on preparing a hall where Congress could meet. 10

The sight that greeted senators and representatives when they returned to the capital on 19 September was grim. The blackened walls of the President's house, White House no longer, stood out starkly against the hill beyond, where a small force of army regulars was encamped. The Treasury and the War Department offices were only less badly gutted than the Executive Mansion. The dome of the Capitol upon which Italian painters had lavished their art and the roofs of both wings lay in ashes over which towered smoke-stained walls pierced by gory holes where windows had been. Some of the walls now bore angry inscriptions and pencil drawings: "The capital and the Union lost by cowardice"; "Sd---- Armstrong, Secretary of War/ sold the city for 5000 dollars"; cartoons of the President running off without his hat or wig and of Admiral Cockburn burning hen roosts. Nothing remained of the books or papers that had formed the Library of Congress.

The Navy Yard and the arsenal grounds at Greenleaf's Point were streatches of rubble. All save five or six private houses stood unharmed, but the only undamaged public building was the Post Office, spared because it had housed the models deposited with the Patent Office. There perforce Congress convened, the House, with 19 of its 176 members providentially absent, in a room so small that "every spot up to the fireplaces and windows is occupied." 11

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11 Fearon, Sketches of America, A Narration of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles through the Eastern and Western States of America, 3rd ed., 204-05; n Doc 276, 210, 18, 8 Mar 30; Intelligencer, 9, 16 Sep, 6 Oct 14; Annals, 130, 35, Oct 14, p. 353; and 23 Jan 15, p. 1100.
The inevitable proposal to relocate the capital came almost at once. Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, offered Congress comfortable accommodations and the city council of Georgetown tendered the use of the Georgetown College building with the added bait of furnishing board for $10 a week instead of the $16 charged by Washington hotels. The heights of Georgetown were of course almost as exposed to enemy attack as Washington; the Pennsylvania cities would be safer. Partisan politics played a considerable part in the fierce debates in the House, but, providentially for Washington, a good many representatives shared the Intelligencer's view that dignity and patriotism forbade decamping even temporarily, as if driven to flight by terror of Redcoats; one representative declared his preference for a seat under canvas in the established capital to one in a palace so much as a mile beyond her limits. Washingtonians, furthermore, presented not only arguments in the form of resolutions and letters to the newspapers: the city's bankers volunteered a half-million-dollar loan to the government to enable it to rebuild the public buildings on their old sites. For three weeks the decision hung in the balance. Then by a vote of 83 to 54 the House rejected the bill for removal and accepted the bank loan.\(^\text{12}\)

The Senate delayed its concurrence for three months, but in the meantime the city councils had organized committees to solicit funds from private citizens to finance construction of such defenses as the general government deemed needed, and, thanks to the contributions of Washington's

\(^{12}\text{Annals, 13C, 35, 26 Sep 14, pp. 311-12, 323, 3 Oct 14, pp. 333-34, 5 Oct 14, pp. 345-55, 6 Oct 14, pp. 357-76, 12 Oct 14, pp. 387-90, 15 Oct 14, pp. 395-96; Intelligencer, 28, 30 Sep, 7, 8, 10, 16 Oct 14.}
and Alexandria’s residents, restoration of Fort Washington had proceeded rapidly. The Senate could not ignore that proof of public spirit. On 3 February 1815, the bill passed ordering rebuilding the federal offices on their former sites. The next day word came of General Andrew Jackson’s victory at New Orleans. A fortnight later, in the exquisitely proportioned drawing room at the Octagon House, President Madison signed the peace treaty. The war was over, the Union saved, and Washington still the capital.13

The scars of the battle to keep the capital on the Potomac took time to fade, for while Washingtonians were relieved at the congressional decision, the delay in the Senate had subjected the city to fresh uneasiness, a repetition of the anxieties that had recurred periodically between 1802 and 1810. The political manoeuvrings which, property-owners felt, had again and again jeopardized their local investments and stunted the city’s growth might resume at any moment until reconstruction of the government buildings had gone too far to permit another change of plan. As late as October 1815 a congressman took a last fling at reversing the decision. Although his proposal got short shrift, resentment lingered on the District at being the shuttlecock in the congressional game of battledore. A letter to the Intelligencer in 1816 declared that Washington, so far from enjoying "that fostering patronage" which the government should have offered her, was "the scapegoat of capricious malignity and ignorance." Georgetown

asserted that Congress had no concern for the District: "If a national bank is created, the head is fixed elsewhere. If a military school is to be founded, some other situation is sought. If a national university is proposed, the earnest recommendation of every successive president in its favour . . . is disregarded . . . Every member takes care of the needs of his constituents, but we are the constituents of no one." Still, to nurse grudges was obviously futile, and some men professed to look upon the burning of the capital as a blessing in disguise: it had forced Congress to a definite commitment to Washington, would therefore provide the stability long lacking and give the city more substantially built government offices. In 1817 a foreigner remarked that the visit of General Ross had halted the progressive decay which had been undermining Washington since 1802; she "seems to have risen, like the phoenix from the flames, and is once more partially increasing in prosperity."

Once begun, the work of effacing the marks left by Washington's British captors went forward steadily. By August 1815 the stockholders of the bridge companies had completed new bridges over the Potomac and the Eastern Branch, and, thanks to the government's acceptance of Thomas Jefferson's offer to sell his library, a new 14,000-volume Library of Congress had come into being. A year later the executive departments moved into their rebuilt offices. The Navy Yard was beginning to build a ship of the line and new military storehouses were in order about the arsenal at

Creamleaf's Point. The White House was ready for occupancy in September 1817; when President and Mrs. Monroe took possession they found a more solidly constructed, better furnished house than had their predecessors.

By 1820 appropriations for rebuilding had run to over a million dollars and Congress rather futilely sought to enlarge the fund by sale of federal lots on the north side of Pennsylvania avenue near Tiber creek. The Capitol was not finished in every detail until 1825, a few months after the death of the talented Giovanni Andrei of Carrera who, having superintended the carving and sculpture of the interior of the original building, had taken charge of the new also. But the structural work was completed in time to enable Congress to convene in the new halls in December 1819.

During the four years preceding Congress met in what came to be known as the Old Brick Capitol erected in 1815 at northeast 4 and 1st streets. Inspired by Thomas Law and convinced that congressional comfort would affect congressional attitudes toward the District, some fifteen private citizens had put up the building and thereby, many Washingtonians believed, saved the capital for the city. Serious doubts about the permanence of her status as national capital would not recur for half a century. 15
District residents in the spring of 1815 found the upswing of business reassuring and, as the year wore on and most local enterprises continued to prosper, men put their grievances to one side and set themselves to make the most of the "era of good feelings." The newspapers again carried articles about the rich resources of the Potomac valley, and while each of the three cities advertised her own prospects, for the moment opportunity seemed ample for all. The Intelligencer invited "the young and enterprising" to settle here where they could share in Washington's rapid expansion.

The Messenger wrote of Georgetown: "The natural advantages of this place are scarcely surpassed by those of any city or town in America." And the Gazette declared Alexandria about "to rise to that importance to which its natural situation had so preeminently fitted it." Confidence in the good times to come gradually overcame both irritation and caution.

Alexandria at first took the lead, since shipping and foreign trade, at last freed from embargoes, non-intercourse acts and threat of enemy action, flourished until Great Britain again closed her West Indian ports to American vessels. In mid-March 1815 a six-gun salute greeted the first square-rigger to dock at Alexandria in two years' time. Between April and July, goods valued at $1,390,000 cleared her wharves and during one three-day period in September, sixty-five brigs, schooners and sloops entered the port. The value of her exports to foreign countries alone reached $2,356,000 at the end of the year, and though the total for 1816 dropped to scarcely $1,111,000 and failed thereafter to equal the record of the

16 Intelligencer, 25 May 15; Georgetown Messenger, 23 Dec 18; Alexandria Gazette, 1 Jun 15.
could profit by cheap power. These cheerful prophecies in 1817 smacked of counting unhatched chicks, inasmuch as only one flour mill and a small woolen factory had gone up before disagreements between the Potomac Company and prospective investors in mill sites at the falls stopped further industrial development. But by then other enterprises were flourishing visibly. The growing business of the Office of Indian Trade was proving valuable to local merchants, of the thirty-eight firms dealing with the government factory twenty-seven were located in Georgetown, one in Alexandria. To be sure, the light hardware and blankets they supplied netted them less than $15,000 a year, but government orders were steady, government money sound and payment always certain. Whatever her assets, Georgetown attracted a number of newcomers before 1820, among them several agreeable English families who would add considerably to the city's stature in the years ahead. 18

If facts about Georgetown families' business affairs are few and generally uninforming, most evidence points to slowly spreading affluence and to occasional startling success. Thus in the first years of peace two Georgetown dry goods firms started two young men on careers as extraordinary as Horatio Alger heroes. In 1814 nineteen-year-old George Peabody began as a clerk in Elisha Riggs' wholesale dry goods warehouse; a partner in 1819, Peabody by the 1840's had made himself a financial power in London and one

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18 Georgetown Ordinances, 13 Sep 16, pp. 93-94; Messenger, 28 Sep 16, 28 Feb, 12 Sep 17, 23 Dec 18; Sanderlin, National Project, pp. 42-43; Dietz, The Government Factory System and the Indian Trade, pp. 146, 150, 163, 177, 179; Evening Star, 11 Jul 73 (hereafter cited as Star), Intelligence, 28 Dec 21.
of America's first great philanthropists. His good friend, William Wilson Corcoran, in 1815 aged seventeen, persuaded his brothers to let him join them in their dry goods business; in 1819, with the help of brothers and father, Postmaster and a former mayor of Georgetown, William opened a wholesale auction and commission house, and, though that undertaking failed, before 1850, W.W. Corcoran, having taken Elisha Riggs' son George into a brokerage partnership, commanded a fortune so large that he retired in 1854 to spend the last thirty-four years of his life in giving his money away. 19

Washington City, contrary to the hopes and expectations of her neighbors, grew faster than they. Not only the government building program but expanding private enterprise provided jobs at good wages and gave the city an air of vigorous activity. At the end of 1815, the valuation of private property in the capital stood at nearly $3,500,000, whereas in Alexandria it was $3,278,000 and in Georgetown $2,300,000. In spite of some efforts to promote manufacturing, Washington still produced hand-made wares primarily for home consumption—boots and shoes, buttons and combs, furniture, candles, soap, carriages, and brick—except for the slave trade, which obviously was growing, her commerce with other communities remained insignificant. But the number of houses built in the first twenty months of peace exceeded the ninety-nine of the five years preceding, and 1817 saw another eighty-one new buildings go up. According to one estimate, real estate sales increased 500 percent between 1813 and 1818, and tongue-cluckings over the high prices

had little effect upon speculating buyers. Shops multiplied, correcting deficiencies that had driven customers during the war to purchase in Alexandria and Georgetown. Yet after the spring of 1815 steamboats plying regularly between the three cities eased travel within the District, although the fare was expensive: the agent of the "Washington" warned patrons that no one would be allowed to disembark without paying his dollar. More important to the capital, rapid communication with the South opened up when the "Washington" began runs every other day to Aquia Creek, Virginia, whence passengers could connect with the stage to Fredericksburg. In the course of the next year or two, stage coach lines scheduled more frequent trips to Baltimore and Philadelphia. The Washington canal, moreover, opened amid ceremonial fanfare in November 1815, promised to reduce the cost of living by permitting rapid and inexpensive distribution of commodities within the city. 20

Washington, however, like Alexandria and Georgetown, was chiefly intent on improving river navigation above tidewater in order to tap the resources of the upper Potomac and the Ohio valley beyond. Encouraged by hopes of diverting produce of nearby farms from Baltimore to District markets, investment in turnpike companies continued, but construction of toll roads and even "that great national work, the Cumberland Road," stirred

20 Secy of State, A Digest of Accounts of Manufacturing Establishments in the U.S., 1822, p. 19 (Rare Book Div, L.C.); Intelligencer, 10 Jun, 15 Dec 15, 16, 31 Aug 16, 1, 7 Jan, 3 Feb, 23 Aug 17, 5 Mar, 18 May 18; Alexandria Gazette, 1 Jun 15; Warden, Choreographical View, p. 78; Thomas Dornton, Notice of "The Steamboat Washington," 6 Jun 15, 9 Jan 16, in D.C. Miscellany, Box 1 (Ms Div, L.C.); Comrs' Notices, 21 Mar 15, 1 Apr 16, D.C. Miscellany, Box 1; Fearon, Sketches of America, 287-92.
far less public interest than did plans for exploiting the Potomac highway to the West. Whether or no Washingtonians accepted the thesis that foreign trade was a "gilded delusion," they believed trade with the upper valley and with the Ohio region vital to the city's growth. Since upcountry grain and whiskey, the Georgetown Messenger calculated, when carted by road to Baltimore cost $2 a barrel but cost only 74 cents if brought down the Potomac, a tremendous expansion of District trade awaited only completion of canals around the stretches of rough water upstream. The Intelligencer, after remarking upon Washington's fine harbor, observed that when the upper Potomac became navigable "few years would elapse before the riches of the West would be unladen at our wharves." Washingtonians knew that Georgetown merchants would profit more immediately than they, but the smaller city was beginning to evince a readiness to pool her interests with Washington's which augured well for their common future. Alexandria, in turn, could count on bettering her commercial prospects. When a shipment of flour from Ohio landed in Georgetown, the Alexandria Gazette heralded the event as significant for all the District cities: midwestern flour transported by the Cumberland road and the Potomac "may be conveyed to this District in less time, and at less expense and sold at a better profit, than to New Orleans." Experience had not yet established the fact that miles of shallow water would prevent safe commercial navigation of much of the upper river. All that seemed necessary at the moment was to persuade the Potomac Company to undertake extensive improvements to the main channel. But exhortation to act quickly lest all trade routes lead to Baltimore failed to supply the Potomac Company with funds. While New York State pushed the
Erie Canal westward, the Potomac project remained talk. 21

Local men, as in pre-war years, tended to attribute any weakness in the District's economic structure to lack of an adequate currency and, by the same token, tended to believe the opening of more banks the surest way of overcoming the shortage. Notes signed by the president and cashier of a bank were as good as gold as long as people accepted them as sound money; hence seemingly the more banks issuing paper the better. The years 1815 through 1818 were an era of "capital formation through inflation" throughout the United States. The process began earlier in the District of Columbia than in the rest of the country because of the tonic of government business in the capital during much of the war. Acting to remedy the want of credit facilities, "a defect now obvious to everyone, which depresses improvement and checks public spirit," and taking advantage of the ineffective banking controls imposed by Congress, District citizens launched five new banks between 1811 and 1814 to make a total of ten and, during 1815, added three more. Not all of them had charters, but the government's desperate needs created opportunities for the unchartered houses.

In the spring of 1814 when the Treasury's specie reserve had dropped to $1,000,000 and some $2,000,000 in paper was circulating in the District, Congress had attempted to investigate local banking practices. But the

moment was obviously ill-chosen. By November: "The Department of State," a congressman wrote, "was so bare of money as to be unable to pay even its stationery bill: the government was subsisting on the drainage of unchartered banks in the District, which felt themselves compelled to contribute their means lest the rod in terrorem which was held over them should be applied and an Act of incorporation refused." At the end of the war Washington and Georgetown banks were still loaning the government money in paper already 50 percent depreciated. Inasmuch as their stockholders were getting 8 to 12 percent dividends and businessmen anxious to start new enterprises or expand old welcomed easy credit, few local people saw anything amiss with the system. 22

Nevertheless, except for shareholders of the Bank of Columbia in Georgetown, the District rejoiced at the chartering of the Second Bank of the United States in 1816. The Bank of Columbia, having acted since the expiration of the First Bank of the United States in 1811 as a principal repository for Treasury and Post Office funds and as disbursing agent of interest on the public debt, opposed the new scheme and fought the proposal of Washingtonians to have a branch located in the District. Georgetown argued that the District's private banks would suffer: "The deposits will only change hands," and the profits from discounts would go to Philadelphia where the headquarters of the new Bank of the United States was to be.

Washington in 1817 won the privilege of having the branch and felt satisfaction at breaking Georgetown's local monopoly of government business. Congress meanwhile resumed its efforts to stop "the circulation of notes issued by any private banking association" in the ten-mile square, but the House District Committee believed the dominant consideration was how to assist "construction of certain turnpike roads terminating in the District and leading to the upper and fertile part of the country." The Committee recommended merely incorporating all unchartered local banks and requiring them to pay specie upon demand. "When we take into the estimate the extensive and rich country on the shores of the Potomac, and even of the Shenandoah ..., whose prosperity is ..., dependent on the command of capital here, we may venture to doubt the accuracy of that opinion which pronounces the banking capital too large." A majority in House and Senate at length agreed. The new law forbade unchartered banks to issue bills or discount notes and specified that all government dues be paid in specie after 1 February 1817. The National Intelligencer thereupon likened "the sound of dollars jingling on every counter" to "the joyful congratulations of prisoners released from long confinement." The gold eagles or double eagles with which the government paid departmental clerks added to the gratifying sense that District currency problems were now solved.

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23 ASP, Finance, II, 516-17; Messenger, 28 Sep, 30 Oct, 23 Nov 16, 11 May 17; Intelligencer, 1 Jan, 16 Nov 16.

Before the end of 1818 District banking houses claimed to have $6,000,000 in capital, a fifteenth of the total of all chartered banks in the country; Virginia had but $4,800,000, New Jersey just over $2,000,000 and even wealthy New York State less than $16,000,000. Paid-in capital was another story. Later investigation would show only five of the District's thirteen banks with fully paid up subscriptions to stock, while the figures for the other eight varied from a high of 80 percent to a low of 11. Blandly disregarding the law requiring specie payment on demand, three of the newly chartered banks emitted $729,486 in paper against a specie reserve of less than $175,000; several others held no specie at all. Furthermore, the municipal corporations of Washington and Alexandria continued the practice begun in 1814 of issuing "due bills" until Washington had some $30,000 worth in circulation and Alexandria $50,000.

The original purpose of these slips of paper signed by one or the other mayor and bearing a face value of anything from a penny to a dollar had been to supply small change for local transactions and thus avoid the necessity of taking scissors to larger notes to make change when coppers and small silver coins were scarce. Georgetown also used the device, but her city councils periodically redeemed issues by "burning the change," and thus kept amounts in circulation. As the corporations pledged themselves to accept the due bills in payment of taxes, residents considered the local paper money a convenient and sound arrangement. Congressmen similarly inclined to think finances in the federal area in

satisfactory condition; local banks were performing their prescribed functions in lending some $2,000,000 for commercial and manufacturing ventures. Manifestly no one foresaw that many of the new enterprises were doomed to early demise.

The Panic of 1819 and Its Consequences

The post-war business expansion drew its strength chiefly from a land boom financed by what one historian has characterized as "one of the most extraordinary emissions of dubious paper money in the history of the modern world." Inevitably speculation in time overreached itself and early in 1819 the District along with the rest of the country faced the collapse of the inflated values. The volume of commerce dwindled steadily, commodity prices dropped, and real estate sold at fractions of its original cost. Of the District cities Alexandria was the hardest hit. European recovery had reduced her flour trade before the panic set in, but the 217,000 barrels she exported in 1817 shrank to 176,900 in 1819. A wharf and storehouses that had sold two or three years before for $17,000 brought $1250 in 1820. The federal government itself was unable to find buyers when it put up lots in Washington for auction. Washington and Georgetown businessmen also found themselves in trouble, for the credit upon which many of them depended became unobtainable. Stock in the Washington


27 Intelligencer, 15 Sep 17, 13 Mar 18, 25 Jan, 3 Mar 20, 19 Jul 21; Messenger, 28 Jan, 10 Mar 20, 19 Mar 21; Dangerfield, Era of Good Feeling, p. 179; Alexandria Gazette, 7 Sep 19; Annals, 17 C, 15, 21 Dec 21, pp. 586-87.
canal, which had operated at a loss even in the boom year 1817, fell from $100 a share to $30. Specie evaporated as the Bank of the United States began calling in government balances in the possession of local banks and sending hard money to Philadelphia. The Bank of Washington's funds dropped from $26,500 to $1700, the formerly powerful Bank of Columbia saw its specie reserve cut in half, and the Mechanics Bank of Alexandria could produce only $1400 in coin. District bank notes that in times past had averaged a discount of not more than 2½ percent in the open market now commanded only forty cents on the dollar in Baltimore and at one point paper of the Mechanics Bank of Alexandria went at twenty cents. The Virginia Assembly enacted measures to prevent circulation of District notes in the Old Dominion, and the Washington branch of the Bank of the United States took a loss of some $71,000. Making bad matters worse, the corporation of Washington released $10,000 in new due bills in October 1819. 28

Threatened with bankruptcy, the unscrupulous tried various unsavory schemes to save themselves. Note-shaving became common, and more than one local bank used the device of issuing bills at home at par and then dispatching agents to other cities to buy them up at a discount. Counterfeiting even nearly worthless paper spread. One Georgetown bank chalked up on the credit side of its ledger $31,000 in counterfeit bills in order to strike a balance with the debit side. Most of the counterfeits were the small notes that

usually fell into the hands of the poorer classes who were already pinched by wage cuts and faced with the competition of workingmen imported from Philadelphia and New York for jobs on government buildings. Desperately a group of mechanics begged Congress for a lien law to protect them from the "wily, cunning and dishonest spirit which . . . so unfortunately abounds within this city."29

As the depression deepened, District citizens began to accuse the banks of being "the sole authors of the pecuniary distress." Some men placed the blame on too many banks, others on over-capitalization. A worried Congress conducted another investigation but concluded punitive action against houses that had overstepped their charter privileges would cause failures and expose to sale "at a great sacrifice much of the real property in the District." The upshot was a decision to extend the charters for one year in hopes that by then the crisis would have passed and the banks have redeemed themselves. The Secretary of the Treasury bolstered up some of them by depositing government funds with them from time to time, but not even that assistance saved them all. Four banking houses failed during 1820, bringing fresh disaster to depositors and stockholders alike. Congress, persuaded that the nine banks remaining must be sound, in 1821 granted them fifteen-year charters limited only by provisions for redemption of notes in specie on demand and a prohibition on issue of notes of less than $5 denomination. That reprieve spelled the preservation of

29 Intelligencer, 17 May 19, 31 Mar 20; MSP, Finance, III, 796; Dewey, State Banking, p. 61; ltr, Samuel Lane, Comr Public Works, to Henry Meigs, 11 Mar 20, quoted in History of the Capitol, pp. 232-33, 2H; Amals, 170, 18, 17 Jan 22, p. 73.
the concept of banks as houses of issue and discount. Though banking
troubles were not over and the volume of investments dropped along with
the price of bank stocks until 1822, thereafter the gradual revival of
business ended public belief that bankers were the villains in the tragedies
of the panic. For the next dozen years banks and banking practice in the
District received scant attention. When Senator John Eaton of Tennessee
early in 1823 charged the Mechanics Bank of Alexandria with making loans
to its stockholders with only their bank shares for security, the accusation,
later proved correct, aroused no interest.30 By then prosperity had
returned to the country.

Economic distress, while pronounced between 1819 and 1822, was
probably less acute here than in the big commercial centers of the North,
for government operations materially lessened the business stagnation in
the District. Other than depositing federal funds in the local banks on
several occasions, government officials took no steps to hasten recovery,
but neither did Congress curtail routine government expenditures. The
mere existence of federal offices in Washington had a stabilizing effect.
The roster of government clerks changed scarcely at all and, though
laborers engaged in rebuilding the Capitol had to take wage cuts, the salaries
of departmental clerks were untouched. Furthermore, the General Land Office,
created in 1812 to handle the sales of government lands, was opening up

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30 Intelligencer, 16, 20 Oct 19, 3, 7 Jan, 26 Aug, 20, 21 Jul 21;
Alexandria Gazette, 15 Oct 19; Messenger, 1 May 20; Petition, HR 16A-05.1,
20 Dec 19; Annals, 16C, 15, 2 Feb 20, 27 Apr 20, pp. 61-63, 1043-45,
305-6; Gouge, Paper Money, II, 61; ASP, Finance, III, 795-97; Washington
Gazette, 12 Feb 23.
to private citizens a new kind of business. Not only men buying through
local land offices in the West but men who were accepting land warrants in
lieu of cash for military service were beginning to find the help of some
one in Washington useful to straighten out tangles of red tape or to
expedite the issue of the final patent. In 1822 a Georgetown firm was
advertising its services as an agent for claimants encountering delays or
unable at long distance to clear their titles to bounty lands. In the
course of the next decades District firms specializing in dealings with the
Land Office would multiply. Similarly a new pension law of 1816 and official
disapproval of government clerks' representing private clients gave rise to
a body of semi-professional claim agents. Work at the Navy Yard was another
source of equilibrium to the community. In 1820, when industrial enterprise
in much of the United States had come to a standstill, the Navy Yard was
employing 360 civilians in addition to sixty-seven officers and enlisted
men. The construction program moved forward without curtailment. Following
the launching in 1819 of the Columbus, a ship of the line that cost $1,260,000,
a schooner slid down the runway in 1820 and the frigate Potomac two years
later. New smithies and anchor shops and repairs to other buildings helped
keep employment at the Yard at a high level. 31

31 Ltr Comr Pub Bldgs to Henry Meigs, 11 Mar 20, quoted in History
of the Capitol, pp. 232-33; Register of Officers of the United States, 1818,
1820, 1822; Leonard D. White, The Jeffersonians, A Study in Administrative
History, 1801-1829, pp. 519-20; Hibben, History of the Navy Yard, pp. 62-
63; ASP, Misc, II, 497; Ltr, G. R. Fitzgerald to Richard Wallack, 20 Sep
18, D.C. Miscellany, Box 1 (Ms Div, L.C.); H Doc 55, 160, 13, 19 Jan 20,
pp. 655-72, Ser 34.
The government business that kept Washington City from feeling the full force of the country-wide depression had relatively little effect upon the rest of the District. The flour mill and woolen manufactury, which Georgetown investors had expected to see inspire the building of a score of others at the Little Falls, were advertised for sale in 1821. During the darkest days of 1819 and 1820 Georgetown merchants had benefitted from dealings with the Office of Indian Trade, but in 1822 a reversal of federal policy wiped out that source of profit when Congress, apparently yielding to pressure from Senator Benton of Missouri, abandoned the system of government-controlled trade with the Indians and closed the factory in Georgetown. Like Georgetown suppliers, the Alexandria firm that sold kettles to the factory also lost a steady customer. Alexandria indeed derived scant advantage from the presence of the federal government across the river. Improved communication with the capital netted her only disappointed hopes.

Yet considering its geographical size, the District maintained a larger export business than the complaints of Alexandria and Georgetown would suggest. These two cities carried on virtually all the shipping for the District, and in 1820 $1,205,000 in exports put the ten-mile square in ninth place among the United States' twenty states and territories. If Washington's population had grown faster than her neighbors', still Alexandria had added a thousand to her 7,200 inhabitants of 1810, and Georgetown had increased to 7,360 from 5,248. Furthermore, insofar as slaves were evidence of wealth, white families in Alexandria and even more certainly in Georgetown were better off than in Washington: in the capital the proportion of slaves to whites was 19.45 bondsmen to 93.76 whites, or just over
20 percent, whereas it was 25 percent in Alexandria and 30 percent in Georgetown. Obviously the decade of war and post-war readjustment had not left everyone in the older District cities impoverished. 32

Proposals for a Change in Political Status

Nevertheless both Alexandria and Georgetown resented Washington's receiving the lion's share of federal patronage and attributed her more rapid growth to congressional favors. The Messenger suggested a union of Georgetown with Washington, in order to share the plums bestowed on the capital, but that plan offered Alexandria nothing and promised Georgetown too little to satisfy her. In December 1818 President Monroe made a more comprehensive proposal: territorial status for the District. Although wise people knew a single legislature would not automatically reconcile the conflicting interests of the three cities, even limited representation in Congress should be useful. Unhappily, counter proposals in Georgetown and Alexandria for retrocession to Maryland and Virginia respectively split the advocates of change. Georgetown men questioned whether the advantages of a territorial government were "such as will justify the abandonment of the most important privileges of free citizens." They envisaged smaller representation for themselves than for their neighbors and heavier expenses for all. In both the older cities the depression strengthened opposition to consolidation and encouraged the clamor for retrocession, for insofar as men persuaded themselves that congressional highhandedness had foisted

many of their woes upon them, they were ready to believe that salvation lay
in reclaiming state citizenship. When some Alexandrians called attention
to the drawbacks of reunion with Virginia where the tax rate was higher, a
letter to the Gazette asked if they considered it nothing "to exchange the
spirit of sordid interest and abject submissive slavery, for the energy and
industry of freedom?" The District's dual law system, furthermore,
foreshadowed complications for a territory. Congress had instructed the
judges of the circuit court in 1816 to prepare a single code for the District
but had then rejected the clumsy version Judge Cranch submitted. Hence
Maryland laws of 1800 still ran in one county, Virginia laws in the other,
and dread of the legal confusions likely to arise under a territorial
government probably worked against its endorsement.

In Washington opposition grew chiefly out of fear that she would lose
her privileged position within the District. To strip Congress of respon-
sibility for the city, the Washington Gazette prophesied, would cost her
congressional interest and end in moving the capital elsewhere. The cor-
poration councils, perhaps sensing that opinion in the city was fairly
evenly divided, hinted at the desirability of a referendum, but none took
place and the delegation that waited upon the House District Committee

33 Messenger, 22 May, 8, 29 Jul, 11, 16 Dec 18; 8 Jan 19, 17 Jan
20; Alexandria Gazette, 19 Feb 17, 5, 7, 8 Jan, 11 Oct 19; Intelligencer,
10 Nov, 10, 21 Oct, 18, 28 Nov, 12, 28 Dec 18; Petition, 17A-F 4L 9 Mar 22.

34 Walter S. Cox, "Efforts to Obtain a Code of Laws for the
District of Columbia," CHS Rec., III, 115-20; Annals, 170, 18, 8 Apr 22.
urged continuation of the status quo.\textsuperscript{35}

A number of congressmen, on the other hand, believed a territorial government would save Congress time and trouble and relieve the federal Treasury of onerous demands upon it. One representative contended that the courts of the District alone had cost the government over $350,000 in nineteen years; the Treasury set the figure at some $200,000. But the decision to make the District bear the costs of building a courthouse weakened the argument for a territory. In the spring of 1820 the Senate District Committee stopped the bill by declaring: "it would not be expedient for Congress to legislate on the subject ... during the present session."\textsuperscript{36}

Two years later agitation for a District government from which statehood might eventually develop revived when Representative Kent of Maryland responded to a local petition by calling for a convention of locally elected delegates to frame a plan of union. Criticism of the proposal was again sharp. An "old inhabitant" wrote that it had the support "mostly of persons who have little or no interest in property within the District; and the petition was not handed to many of the largest proprietors, and oldest and most respected inhabitants." The Washington City councils saw no advantage in having a delegate in Congress.


They considered "The District of Columbia as placed under the jurisdiction of the whole Republic and thus claiming special fostering care and protection of the national authorities." So far from being without representation, the District was "more fully and ably represented than any other portion of our Country . . . by the whole assembled Congress." The bill died.37

Municipal Administration

While discussion of a territorial government was in progress, Washington's city councils were paving the way for a renewal of the city charter. In 1818 a memorial to Congress asked not merely for continuation of existing corporate authority but greatly enlarged powers. Besides a considerable list of lesser privileges, such as the right to open alleyways and lay special taxes for street improvements, the petition urged that the federal Commissioner of Public Building be required by law to reimburse the city for half the costs of work done on any street adjoining or cutting through government property. The corporation wanted authority also to create a board of health which could establish and enforce sanitary regulations. Perhaps most significant of all, the councils sought the right to prohibit traders from transporting slaves through Washington or depositing them within the city preparatory to shipment South. Before Congress had acted on these proposals, the corporation added others: authority to impose a house-building code and, doubtless a reflection of the hard times of 1819,

37 Annals, 11C, 15, 9, 21 Mar 22, pp. 1244, 1338; Washington Gazette, 15 Mar, 10 Apr 22.
power to bind out orphans and children of Washington's paupers and to
exclude from the city vagrants likely to become public charges. The defeat
of the territorial bill in May 1820 left Congress with the choice of making
numberless decisions for Washington or delegating authority to the city.
There was no debate. A new charter took effect on May 15th and gave the
corporation everything it had asked for except control over the slave trade
and the right to bar vagrants from the city.38

If voters were disturbed at those omissions, they were gratified
at gaining the privilege of electing the mayor instead of having the councils
choose him. As it happened, the first election put Samuel Smallwood back
into the mayor's office where he had already served a year as the councils'
choice. Though the charter enfranchised only white males who paid at least
50 cents in taxes and had resided in the city for a year, revolt against
the property qualification broke out in 1822. Much as the poorhouse inmates
test their "25 cent votes" in 1811, propertyless men in two wards cast
ballots in the city election of 1822. Thomas Carlyle, the poor man's can­
didate for mayor, won easily, only then to find his election challenged.
A court decision at last seated him. He immediately enrolled on the assess­
ment books the names of citizens who, according to their opponents, owned
no property but their clothes. Nearly seven years before Andrew Jackson
entered the White House, the "common man" in Washington thus had a brief
taste of political power.39

38 Intelligencer, 1 Apr 18; 16th Council of Washington, 1 Oct
Dec 18, pp. 39-41; H Rpt 83, 19, 29 Nov 19, p. 45; Annals, 160, 18,
28 Feb, 15 May 20, pp. 255±6, 2600-10.
39 Intelligencer, 5, 6, 13, 16, 21, Jun 22; Washington Gazette, 12
Jun 22, 18 May 22; H Rpt 83, 19C, 18, 22 Feb 26, Ser 111.
However satisfying to local pride, the exercise of wider municipal authority failed to change the character or number of Washington's civic problems. Some of them were the ones common in every age to cities the world over, a few were peculiar to communities of the ante-bellum South, and others were uniquely Washington's. As was true during the first decade of her municipal existence, the distinguishing feature of her troubles was the weight of the burden that fell to her as national capital which Congress refused to share. The result was that population and community needs grew faster than community resources.

Of the three principal areas in which congressional parsimony hamstring the city, the most self-evident was upkeep of the streets. Macadamizing carriage ways, laying sidewalks and keeping bridges and three public markethouses in repair had cost Washington City nearly $13,000 in 1811-12; by 1821-22 the cost, increased by the expense of lighting the street lamps nightly, had reached $34,000. Congress, after approving $3000 in 1807 for repairs to Pennsylvania avenue, appropriated nothing at all to the city for work that directly benefitted the federal government; federal funds for District improvements between 1801 and 1823 totalled less than $15,000. True, the law granting Washington a new charter recognized the Government's obligation to share the costs of improvements to federal property but specified that the money must come exclusively from the sale of public lots in the city. That proviso would later cause endless trouble. When concern over the health hazards of a stretch of stagnant water at the foot of Capitol Hill and of marshy land along the Washington canal led city officials to enlist congressional cooperation, they obtained sanction to
drain and "ornament" the public reservations between the Botanical Garden, southwest of the Capitol, and northwest 6th street and to fill swampy areas west to 7th street, but the only financial aid offered consisted of permission to sell at auction the lots thus redeemed along the canal. John Law, orator at the ceremonies of laying the cornerstone of the new City Hall, voiced Washingtonian's irritation: he contrasted the munificence of Constantine in building Byzantium and of "the Autocrat of Russia" in creating St. Petersburg with the niggardliness of Congress toward the American capital.10

The second realm in which congressional disregard of federal obligation adversely affected the municipality was in the maintenance of order and respect for law. All sorts and kinds of people drifted in and out of the capital. Policing was difficult at best. At the height of post-war prosperity, Mayor Robert Orr remarked that "vice in every odious form roams through the city unrestrained," and children who should be in school gathered outside the Capitol and the courthouses "with a view to obtain money for holding horses." He recommended restricting the number of grog shops and petty taverns, assigning two constables to each of the city's four wards and building a new jail.

Higher fees for ordinaries, taverns and "porter cellars" went into effect, but, even before the panic brought hard times, a municipality that had to borrow to meet current expenses balked at doubling the police force, let alone building a new jail. Though the District's county jails housed prisoners convicted in federal courts for breaking laws established by congressional action, Congress made no move to build a federal penitentiary or to revise the criminal code. Unable to obtain Federal action, District citizens continued

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to complain about conditions in the county jails and about the severity of
criminal laws that forced the court to send offenders to prison unless
sentences were to be death, branding or a public whipping.\textsuperscript{11}

The third source of grief to Washington which Congress ignored was
the penniless transient. In 1815 when the city councils combined the
poorhouse and the workhouse for the "safekeeping of vagrants," the Washing-
ton Asylum became the central agency through which the city administered
relief to the needy and disciplined the shiftless. Sale of articles made
by the inmates lightened expenses a little, but since the Asylum was the
one place to which "migrant paupers" in need of medical or other care could
be sent, the hard times of 1819 and after put a considerable strain upon
the institution; impoverished veterans of the Revolution and War of 1812
thronging to the capital to press pension claims frequently ended up at
the Asylum. Local residents averred that Washington had her "full propor-
tion of paupers of native growth" and should not have to support the
indigent of other localities. But pleas for federal aid fell on deaf
ears. Congress waited till the 1840's to give it.\textsuperscript{12}

Washington taxpayers thus paid a high price for being residents of
the capital. The tax rate set at 50 cents on $100 of assessed valuation
applied to both real and personal property, with assessments, at least
theoretically, figured at full market value. During 1815 and 1816, moreover,

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Intelligencer}, 23 Jun 17, 10 Aug, 21 Oct 18, 11 Feb, 2 May 20;
\textit{Annals}, 116, 26, 29 Dec 09, p. 987, 150, 18, 3 Apr 18, pp. 2523-24.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Washington Acts}, 6 Apr 15, pp. 31-33, 29 Oct 19, pp. 24-25, 9 Jul,
27 Sep 22, pp. 6-7, 16; \textit{Intelligencer}, 3 Mar 21; Petition, HR 16A-05.5,
20 Dec 19.
citizens had to pay a direct federal tax of 22½ cents on every $100 in land, slaves and household furniture. Municipal fees for licenses and the special levies on carriages, slaves and dogs added other charges. Even before the panic of 1819, the number of men imprisoned for debt had risen.

Slave holders resented the impost on their chattels, and by 1821 real estate owners were contending that tax assessments exceeded market prices.

In five years the city debt jumped from the $17,000 of 1816 to $46,000; annual revenue amounted to only $42,000 and delinquent taxes came to $15,000.

Worried property-owners urged stringent economy, and in 1822 Mayor Carbery agreed.

Yet the corporation ordinarily kept tight hold on the purse strings.

Interest on the city debt, payments into the sinking fund and, after 1820, occasional redemption of due bills gobbled up a solid chunk of the city revenues, but the $43,000 spent for roads and sidewalks in 1821 and the $12,000 for a new city hall marked the nearest approach to extravagance. Salaries and administrative costs never reached $10,000, and during the worst of the depression the budget for poor relief remained below $7000, including $2000 for an addition to the Washington Asylum.

The method of distributing funds, however, penalized the poorer parts of the city. Each ward collected its own taxes, paid a small part into the

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city treasury and spent the rest within its own limits; even in raising
funds for poor relief each ward solicited contributions independently and
used the money exclusively for its own needy. The result was small separate
financial kingdoms with unequal opportunity for growth. After 1820 when a
rearrangement made six wards out of the original four, the second and third
wards were the wealthiest, and, because they could afford expensive improve-
ments, the area above southwest E street stretching from the Capitol to
the Treasury rapidly drew to itself the most enterprising householders.
The wards where poor people lived and where want was greatest lost pro-
gressively the capacity to attract the well-to-do.

Like other American cities below the Mason-Dixon line, Washington
felt encumbered by her Negro population. Federal law in the District
sanctioned the slave trade and congressional denial of municipal power
to regulate it tied city officials' hands. Yet John Randolph's passionate
appeal to Congress in 1816 to forbid the "nefarious" traffic in the capital
stirred little response in the city. The local black code of 1812 underwent
no modification after the war, in spite of Washington's professed gratitude
to her free blacks for their help when the British invasion impended.

Some leading citizens supported the newly founded American Colonization
Society dedicated to returning Negroes to Africa, but most whites in this
Southern city thought Negroes unfit for American citizenship. If no one
objected in 1818 when the colored "Resolute Beneficial Society" engaged a

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114 Washington Acts, 10 May 16, p. 52, 4 Apr, 22, 24 May, 1 Jun 20,
pp. 37-38, 111-12, 16; Intelligencer, 31 Jan 16, 18, 22 Jan 17, 2 Jun 19,
22 May 21, 17 May 22.
colored teacher and opened a free school for colored children, neither did whites acclaim Negroes' efforts to help themselves. Ignorant or educated, they were unwelcome, as if somehow a subtle menace to the city's well-being. Strict surveillance of her 1800 free colored people and 2000 slaves seemed to city officials a necessary, though costly, precaution. Runaway slaves and occasionally free Negroes unable to produce proof of their freedom crowded the jail, and the city councils frankly declared the workhouse designed primarily for colored people charged with petty offenses.

However expensive to enforce and however humiliating to self-respecting Negroes, the black code had popular approval, if only as a means of discouraging more colored people from coming to Washington.  

Public health supervision, on the contrary, was one of several activities public opinion was not yet willing to endorse. Not only did American concepts of government narrow the field of public responsibility but taxpayers were unwilling to pay for services they deemed non-essential.

Every household disposed of its own garbage, pumped its own water and engaged a scavenger to clean its privy. In 1819 the city spent $122 for abatement of nuisances, nothing at all during the next three years. Yet the community was sensitive about its reputation for being unhealthy. Dr. Henry Huntt became so distressed over the derogatory tales about Washington that he volunteered to collect vital statistics and serve as health officer without salary. Unfortunately his determination to redeem the city's good name
renders his monthly mortality reports suspect. At times they omitted all.

In 1820 the city appointed scavengers to clean all privies regularly and data on Negro deaths. In 1822, when, as Mrs. Samuel Smith noted, "Illious fevers are universal," the corporation created a board of health composed of one doctor and one layman from every ward, but the Board had little authority and no public funds. Washingtonians contented themselves with taking pride in the bathhouse to which $10 would buy a season ticket and where "the apartment . . . fitted up for ladies . . . is so arranged that an exposure is utterly impossible." 46

In citizens' eyes, fire-fighting also, was a task for volunteers. Just as every householder must keep leather buckets in readiness so a city ordinance required every ward to organize a fire company whose president and vice-presidents, each distinguishable at a fire by a "white wand or staff, at least five feet in length, and a good speaking trumpet," might fine any man present for refusing to help; but apparently the ruling was needless. Every ward equipped itself with engine and hose bought from ward funds, and in 1818 the mayor was empowered to build reservoirs in each section of the city. At the same time the Franklin Fire Insurance Company, following the example of an Alexandria company, incorporated in Washington. Public demand for additional precautions mounted whenever serious fires occurred, but the city's financial troubles during the business depression

46 Ltr, Dr. Henry Hunt to Mayor Benjamin Orr, 5 Jun 18. Lewis Grant Davidson Papers (Ms Div, L.C.); Notice, Mayor Samuel Smallwood, 19 Aug 19, D.C. Miscellany, Box 1 (Ms Div, L.C.); Intelligencer, 21 Apr 18, 23 May 17, 10 May, 2 Jun, 4 Dec 10; Joseph M. Toner, Anniversary Address delivered before the Medical Society of the District of Columbia, September 20, 1866, pp. 33-34 (hereafter cited as Toner, Anniversary Address); H. B. Smith, First Forty Years, pp. 158-59; Washington Acts, 8 Jul 20, pp. 23 Mar 22, pp. 16-17.
tempered enthusiasm for any measure that threatened to raise taxes. The corporation kept its budget for fire fighting to about $1,000 a year and in 1819 cancelled its program of digging wells, piping water from springs and installing additional pumps in every ward. Providentially fear for the safety of federal property inspired Congress to appropriate $1,500 for the purchase of two engines and construction of a firehouse near the Capitol and a second near the White House. 147

Whereas the city probably lost little from relying upon volunteers to safeguard health and property, the widespread belief that children's education was not properly a community responsibility to be paid for out of the public purse crippled the nascent school system. Taxpayers doubtless gave lip service to the ideal of a literate, intelligent electorate, but they remained blind to the increasingly evident fact that public niggardliness was allowing hundreds of children in Washington to grow up in ignorance because their parents could not or would not pay tuition to private schools.

For a time the trustees of "The Permanent Institution for the Education of Youth" clung to faith that a Lancastrian school could operate cheaply and effectively enough to win support, but, despite the competence of the teacher brought over from England in 1812, the school had to close in 1815 for want of money and lack of a suitable schoolroom. "Georgetown," the trustees observed enviously, "has built a commodious and comfortable house for the

Lancastrian School, in which more than 500 children are taught." Though the trustees managed to keep Washington's two "academies" open, these were more nearly private than public schools; most of the pupils were "pay scholars," only forty free. And then in 1816, while the trustees were desperately trying to raise money by lotteries, the city councils had a change of heart. They restored the cut in appropriation made in 1808 and created two separate school districts. The delighted trustees immediately drew up elaborate bye-laws, set a graduated scale of fees for pay pupils, outlined a curriculum and established criteria for choosing textbooks: those "best calculated to facilitate the learning of the scholars and at the same time, such as are replete with moral lessons, correct style, national Sentiment and simplicity of arrangement." Under the warming sun of official endorsement, the Lancastrian school reopened, not as hoped in the President's stables at 14th and G streets, but first in a small rented house "opposite the Chapel" in southwest Washington and the next year on northwest F street. For the next decade this was the city's one school for beginners, since the trustees forbade the academies to admit any child who could not "read with facility, a plain paragraph in one of the School Books."

At this point the confusion between public and private education heightened. For all their avowed wish to provide mass schooling, the trustees' eagerness to develop the academies betrayed them into raising tuition and leaning so largely upon pay pupils' fees to foot the bills that any resemblance to a public school system all but vanished. The city took alarm. In 1818, persuaded that such policies were contrary to the principles of public education, the corporation excluded from the school board trustees...
elected by contributors and stipulated that public money "be expended, except in the instruction of Poor Children." The school board might select a few gifted pupils to send for advanced study in private schools, but the cost must not exceed $150 in any year. At a good private school tuition ran to about $200. Several years later the city would hit upon a new method of financing; the mayor was to invest the $40,000 raised by the trustees' lotteries in "safe" 6 percent stocks and use two-thirds of the annual income to maintain two "public pauper schools." Thus the official point-of-view endured: public education was charity; "it shall not be lawful to suffer any child to be taught for pay." 48

In Georgetown and Alexandria the city councils still elected the mayors, but the course of municipal government generally paralleled Washington's, though the older cities escaped some of the capital's difficulties. Georgetown made no attempt to inaugurate a school system supported solely by taxes, but the city fathers voted to the Lancastrian school for the education of poor children $1000 annually out of city revenues of less than $11,000. And the school, divided in 1815 into separate male and female departments, was astonishingly successful. Financed chiefly by subscriptions, it graduated 604 boys and 198 girls between 1811 and 1818. The city opened a workhouse but sent her aged and infirm poor to the county poorhouse or depended upon private charity. Although over a third of her 7500

inhabitants were colored, the presence of Negroes, 900 of them free, apparently caused her little anxiety. Alexandria, on the contrary, kept careful track of every colored person in the city. Doubtless the growth of the slave trade at the port inspired special precautions. In 1821 new regulations required of every Negro resident a $50 bond for good behavior and a certificate signed by two "respectable" whites testifying to his honesty. Penalties for infractions of city ordinances were severe, for gambling or swearing, a heavy fine or a public whipping, and for "riotous" conduct revocation of the license to reside in Alexandria. The city left schooling to parents to provide. Perhaps because of her severe economic reverses, she was keenly aware of the poverty in her midst. Lest epidemics add to other miseries, the mayor at times quarantined vessels arriving from ports where yellow fever was raging, but ordinarily officials felt themselves powerless to do more to relieve distress than maintain a poorhouse. Private citizens must do the rest. 49

The Growth of Organized Charity

Throughout America as cities grew larger, destitution spread in their streets. For the country's vast natural resources and potential wealth did

not prevent suffering and want; medical science had not yet found ways of battling disease and restoring to usefulness breadwinners stricken in early or middle life, and war left the nation a sorry legacy of widows and orphans. Poverty, illness and untimely death took heavy toll in small as well as big communities, but the neighborliness that lightened the consequences in villages and towns no longer sufficed in the cities. Since Americans, steeped from colonial days onward in a tradition of individual obligation, expected little from state or municipality, city dwellers were confronted with the alternative of shutting their eyes to the misery about them or voluntarily pooling their efforts to relieve it. The strict Puritan concept that suffering was a visitation of God's wrath with which men could not interfere had given way by the early 19th century to gentler humanitarian views, and in the South where Puritanism had never had a strong hold, citizens who regarded themselves as Christians saw no alternative at all. Suffering was there. They must do something about it, individually or through church societies whenever possible, but, when the size and complexity of problems precluded reliance on individual or sporadic effort, then through carefully planned organization.

Societies dedicated to charity were by no means an innovation before the War of 1812. Washington had a Humane Society and, along with Georgetown and several other American cities, had formed Washington Benevolent societies pledged to honor the memory of the first President by helping the needy. In the capital and Alexandria also, Thespian Benevolent societies presented plays every winter and distributed the proceeds to people in want.50 But

50 See above, Ch. II, pp. 13 Oct 15, 3 Jan 16.
intermittent good works left distressing gaps, and haphazard doling out of funds was frequently ineffectual. Thoughtful men and women had doubtless long realized the weaknesses of casual, planless charity; war sharpened their awareness.

In 1815 public-spirited women in Washington, deeply troubled by the number of destitute children in the city, concluded they must open a permanent home for orphans where a resident matron could give them a Christian upbringing and a certain amount of schooling. An orphan asylum directed by women was a new departure. The moving spirits behind it were Marcia Burns Van Ness, daughter of the original proprietor of the land upon which the White House was built and wife of the well-to-do banker, John P. Van Ness, and Mrs. Obadiah Brown, wife of the pastor of the First Baptist church. Mrs. Madison, Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith and a dozen others scarcely less notable joined in the planning. A self-perpetuating society would house, feed, clothe and educate the children entrusted to its care and, when they were old enough, bind them out to service. As custom decreed that women should not manage money matters without male guidance, a board of male trustees was to take charge of finances, but otherwise women headed by a "first directress" and a "second directress" would take full responsibility for running the institution in the war-ravaged capital. Once projected, the idea of the Washington City Orphan Asylum rapidly took visible shape.

In late November 1815, six weeks after the women originating the plan first met to discuss ways and means, they were able to announce that the new society had rented a house on northwest 10th street near Pennsylvania avenue and was ready to receive "destitute female orphans." That they were
all to be white children was understood. The decision to take only "female orphans" arose from the society's meagre resources, although shortage of funds did not prevent acceptance of a few children of living, but desperately needy, parents. Thus the home, for years known popularly as the Washington Female Orphan Asylum, opened its doors to a long succession of little girls. The "lady managers," led by Mrs. Madison as "first directress" and after 1817 by Mrs. Van Ness, took their responsibilities seriously; one member of the board visited the Asylum every week. They laid down careful rules about lessons and play-time, daily prayers, daily baths and daily cold water washing of every orphan's close-cropped hair. More remarkable, discipline, if firm, was gentle for an era when whipping was the standard form of punishment: for example, a constantly disobedient child must wear a tag inscribed W.D. on the day of the society's annual meeting, whereas the exemplary child on that occasion was to be allowed to discard the usual green frock and edge shawl and to wear a pure white dress.

The institution quickly captured the imagination of leading citizens. The corporation voted a $200 appropriation, St. Patrick's Catholic church gave $150, the Thespions presented a benefit play and individual subscriptions poured in. Funds were never enough for all the society hoped to accomplish, but in 1822 it was able to move its charges to more satisfactory quarters on northwest 9th street between H and I and six years later into a house built on H street on land given by Mr. and Mrs. Van Ness. In spite of the problems they had to meet, including, one report later noted, frequent ingratitude from their beneficiaries, women of established Washington families for the next hundred odd years considered membership on the board of managers...
an honor and a duty. The social prestige of its founders was a valuable asset to the Asylum, but its many supporters showed appreciation of its usefulness to the community. Here was Washington's voluntary contribution to a civic need. In 1822 a "town meeting" resolved to raise a permanent endowment fund. Whatever the shortcomings of the home for its inmates, for the city the orphanage marked as it did Washington's first venture into carefully planned philanthropy became the symbol of civic conscience. In the years ahead it inspired the founding of a score of other charitable institutions. 51

Alexandria, while supporting church charities and the Thespian Benevolent Society, waited till the 1830's to establish an orphanage. Georgetown women followed Washington's example almost at once. In 1816 the Messenger, remarking that the Female Benevolent Society could not provide for the poor of the entire city, recommended organizing help, church by church, but the asylum that opened on Cherry street in 1818 was, like Washington's, non-sectarian. About the same time citizens tried another approach to the perennial problem of poverty. A "Society for the Suppression of Vice in the South-West Ward of Georgetown" announced its purpose "to procure

a reformation in the moral conduct of the citizens of this ward" through
"removing or alleviating the evils of pauperism by encouraging Sunday-schools
and places of worship." Resembling the aims of the societies in Baltimore,
New York and other northern cities for "The Improvement of the Condition of
the Poor," the ideal of the Georgetown group proved less attainable than the
more practical one of the orphanage.52

The non-sectarian character of the District's most successful
charities did not, however, reflect a waning of church influence. Religious
feeling was still the well-spring of many good works and, if religion did
not obtrude itself constantly into every-day life, men and women in all
three cities still believed in the importance of worship. Negroes excluded
from the benefits of organized secular charity were welcome in the cities' churches on Sundays, though free blacks and slaves as a matter of course sat apart from the white congregations. Multiplying churches made Sunday services in the House of Representaives' hall needless, just as destruction of the Capitol made holding them there impractical. In Alexandria Benjamin Latrobe built the finely proportioned St. Paul's for the Episcopal parish set off from Christ church and in Washington on the square fronting the White House, the equally beautiful St. Johns, the "Court church" which Presidents Madison and Monroe attended. In 1815 James Foxall, moved by grati-
tude that the British had not destroyed his foundry above Georgetown, built the Methodist Foundry Chapel at G and 11th streets northwest. In Georgetown three new churches went up in the course of the decade, and Washington by

52 Messenger, 20 Nov, 21, Dec 16, 2 May 21; Intelligencer, 27 Mar
17, 29 Sep 18.
1822 could count twelve congregations, each with its own place of worship.53

New Educational Organizations

It was the strong religious feeling among Washington Baptists that apparently accounted for the transfer to the District of the Baptist theological school founded in Philadelphia in 1818. During 1820 Luther Rice, agent of the Baptist association for foreign missions, and the Reverend Obadiah Brown of Washington's First Baptist Church successfully raised some $7000 and purchased 46½ acres of land on the high ground touching Washington's northwestern edge. There buildings for the Columbian College rose during 1821. The congressional charter obtained that year expressly stipulated, however, that the college must admit persons of all denominations and recognize no distinctions based upon "religious sentiments." Though Washingtonians still hoped that Congress would sponsor a national university, they felt satisfaction at the opening of Columbian College in 1822. Since seven years earlier Congress had granted the Jesuit college in Georgetown a charter sanctioning its becoming a university, the District now had two institutions of higher secular and religious learning. Local young men seeking admission to either still had to prepare in private schools, perhaps at the new Columbian preparatory school, at the Catholic Seminary established in 1818 next to St. Patrick's or at McLeod's more famous Central Academy. Some students might get scholarships, but they were certainly few. John

McLeod, who boasted in 1819 that his school netted him $3000 yearly, offered
free tuition to mechanics' daughters in return for free repairs to his
building; but the excellent schooling he offered to boys cost too much for
most parents. Old or young unable to afford much formal education might
widen their horizons by paying 25 cents to attend a session of the forum
for "the dissemination of knowledge," but throughout the District of Colum-
bia, as throughout most of the United States, learning remained largely the
privilege of the well-to-do. 54

For men with the necessary background, the years following the war
opened new professional opportunities, as Washington became solidly entrenched
as national capital. Doctors in all three cities gained prestige from
election to membership in the new Medical Society of the District of
Columbia, profitted from the exchange of ideas at its meetings and, through
joining efforts to raise health standards, benefitted their communities
as well. 55 Ultimately of more significance for Washington was the founding
of the Columbia Institute for "the promotion of arts and sciences." Its
forty charter members included men of attainments as varied as those of
the Navy Surgeon Dr. Edward Cutbush, John Quincy Adams, Thomas Law, Benjamin
Latrobe, and Josiah Meigs, one-time president of the University of Georgia
and after 1812 head of the General Land Office. Among their far-reaching

54 James C. Willing, Brief Chronicles of the Columbian College, pp.
Intelligencer, 31 Aug 16, 21 Jun 17, 9 Apr, 9 Jun 17, 1 Jun 20; Jackson,
Chronicles of Georgetown, pp. 219-19; Elliot, Historical Sketches, pp. 233-

55 Intelligencer, 25 Sep 17; Toner, Anniversary Address, pp. 7-10.
interests was the encouragement of botanical studies, to which Congress gave its blessing by setting aside land southwest of the Capitol for a botanical garden. From the impetus supplied by the Institute sprang a Washington Botanical Society in 1817, a catalogue of 296 species of flowering plants in the District and, in the twenties, the American Botanical Register, the first botanical journal in the United States. With the intent of "founding a national museum and library" covering all fields of knowledge, the Columbia Institute began collecting the books, works of art and specimens of minerals which twenty-five years later would form the backbone of the National Museum under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution. Two generations before American universities laid stress upon scientific investigation, the papers read before the Columbia Institute were calling attention to little understood natural phenomena. Men in government posts, it is true, contributed much of the special knowledge that gave the Institute distinction but, because most of them were permanent residents of Washington, their learning and enthusiasm left an indelible imprint upon the city. 56

Divertion and the Devoirs of Official Society

Despite the relatively unhurried pace of life, leisure was rare in most households, for unless a family could afford slaves or, remote possibility, could hire white servants to do the every-day chores--keeping wood

boxes or coal scuttles filled, oil lamps trimmed and cleaned, baking bread, making and mending clothes, scrubbing floors and a host of other time-consuming tasks—the daily routine ate up most hours of the week. The working day for laborers and craftsmen still ran from 6 to 6 or from daylight to dark, and holidays were two: New Year's and the 4th of July. Shops opened early and shut late, and though government offices closed at 3 in the afternoon, more than one clerk eked out his salary by serving private clients in what was left of the day, just as hundreds of federal employees in mid-20th century drive taxicabs or carry other after-hours jobs. Small wonder that only the upper ranks of society attended lectures and regularly enjoyed other amenities of the capital. Yet the humblest citizen could find interest in watching, if from afar, visiting European dignitaries or American Indian chiefs, and at the annual horse races "spectators of all degrees, white, black, and brown" shared in "a little drinking, a little roaring and a little row-de-dowing." Since admission to the theatre or to exhibits of sights as beguiling as a live lion, a "perpetual motion machine" or gas illumination, cost at most 75 cents, "all degrees" of people also occasionally availed themselves of such pleasures. Edwin Booth as Richard III was an experience no one wanted to miss. Anyone could walk through the halls adjacent to the War Department offices to see Charles Bird King’s colorful portraits of Indian chiefs, and anyone unable to pay the fees for membership in the Washington, Georgetown or Alexandria Library Company could browse in the cities’ bookstores. And the duck hunting and the fishing on the Potomac...
for shad, herring, and sturgeon was at once sport and a means of varying the fare of the poor as well as the rich man's table.  

Familiarity with firearms, part of the heritage of the militia system and of frontier days, was common in the District, but widespread acceptance of the Southern "gentleman's code of honor" gave special value to good marksmanship. Northerners, if shocked, were unable or unwilling to force a local anti-duelling law through Congress. During the "era of good feeling," at least four duels occurred, fought, to be sure, over the District line in Bladensburg, Maryland, but none the less fatal to three men. And Washington residents expected to see other personal and political quarrels and in further bloodshed. The city buzzed with excitement when Commodore James Barron, forced by the "gentleman's code" to defend his good name from slander, challenged Commodore Steven Decatur. The handsome arrogant Decatur, hero of the war with the Barbary pirates, was a romantic figure. A brilliant naval officer, a wealthy man thanks to his prize money, husband of a beautiful wife, he entertained magnificently in the chastely elegant house designed for him by Benjamin Latrobe and built on the square north of the White House. There in March 1820 the Decaturs gave a splendid ball in honor of President Monroe's newly married daughter. A few days later Washington learned with horror that the dashing officer lay dead of wounds received on the "field of honor." Public opinion gradually veered to defend Barron as a man more sinned against than sinning, but

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duelling continued long after Congress in 1839 outlawed it in the District.\textsuperscript{59}

Gossip, occasionally the fomenter of duels, always enlivened the capital. Speculation and tales about people's personal lives had wide social currency; Americans as part of their creed of equality believed the private affairs of public men to be rightfully public property, and Washington was still more nearly country town than metropolis. Composed of some six separate villages scattered from Rock Creek to the Navy Yard, as visitors of the early 1820's noted disapprovingly, the city contained fewer than 2,000 white families, of whom not more than 350 at most were a recognized part of "Society." These, together with the ten members of the diplomatic corps and the two or three score senators and representatives who, while living at local boarding houses and eating at congressional "messes," participated regularly in the round of a winter's parties, formed such a small group that no one was safe from comment. Ladies, virtually by definition women who could afford servants, devoted several afternoons a week during the "season" to driving about leaving cards for each other. Although custom sanctioned merely leaving the cards with the servant at the door, the news to be gathered at the tea table of any fashionable hostess made calling in person a diverting pastime all but essential to social success. The evening "drawing rooms" also spread word

\textsuperscript{59} John Quincy Adams, Memoirs, IV, 246, V, 15, 31, 36; Annals, 15c, 25, 8 Feb 19, p. 212-3, 16c, 18, 23, 24 Mar 20, pp. 1670, 1675; William Winston Seaton, p. 148; \textit{~. 318, 20 Feb 39; Star, 1 May 96; Washington Post and Times Herald, 23 Mar 1957 (hereafter cited as Post); The Washingtonian, 17 Dec 36 (RBD, LC).}
of the latest style in coiffure or dress, or who was slated for what appointment, and of the most recent indiscretion, such as the Prussian minister's marrying the governess of Henry Middleton's daughters.

Etiquette underwent some changes when President Monroe took office, for, determined to restore the formality that had obtained under President Washington, he refused to receive foreign ministers save by appointment or at official dinners and levees. The new formality did not extend to barring anyone from the Wednesday evening "Drawing Rooms" at the White House. Twice a month from December to March visitors filled the public rooms to speak to the President and his wife and enjoy coffee, wine and cakes. But as Mrs. Monroe was an invalid and disliked playing hostess to people who came out of curiosity, the receptions lost some of the friendly spirit with which Mrs. Madison had imbued them. Furthermore, Mrs. Monroe's refusal to pay calls offended a good many people and when the President's daughter, Mrs. George Hayes, let it be known that she would make no first calls, resentment increased. The Senate then announced that its members would not make first calls on anyone but the President, a decision that achieved its purpose of enhancing senators' dignity, and still holds to today. Official gatherings thus acquired a new stiffness not always redeemed by good manners. A visiting Englishman described the President's "Drawing Room": "Conversation, tea, ice, music, chewing tobacco and

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excessive spitting afford employment for the evening. The dress of the ladies is very elegant, though that of the gentlemen is too frequently ungentlemanly." To heighten the ladies' elegance, a Parisian hairdresser fresh from Philadelphia offered his "sublime art" in preparing "Frizettes, Kill Beans, Heart Breakers...and a variety of other powerful instruments of love." 61

Whatever its lapses from decorum, the "season" was gay. A young German guest at the Prussian ministry was astonished that the carriage which took her escort and her to the levee at the White House had to stand in line for an hour before it could draw up at the entrance. She also noted in her diary that her connection with the diplomatic corps gave her a position in Washington denied the wealthy Philadelphia merchant and his daughters who had snubbed her in the City of Brotherly Love. Politics entered at every door. At a private reception, "Mr. Adams received formally in one saloon, [General] Jackson in another." Although foreigners spoke with distaste of the behavior in the House of Representatives where Congressmen "lounged...whittling and spitting incessantly," the halls of Congress overflowed with visitors whenever major debates occurred. Henry Clay's speech on the Seminole War in January 1819 drew such a large crowd to the Brick Capitol that in order to send refreshments to the ladies in the gallery men tied oranges wrapped in handkerchiefs to poles and passed

the fruit up from the floor of the House.

Congressmen, however, mingled in Washington society far less universally then in earlier years, partly because more representatives lacked the social graces to make themselves welcome in Washington households, partly because men intent solely upon politics often found constant party-going more expensive and exhausting than rewarding. Dozens of representatives spent such time as they did not devote to official business in sitting about their boarding houses waiting impatiently for the end of the session and the return home. Few of them lived in Georgetown now that accommodations in Washington were easier to find, but the boarding houses of the capital, though permitting every man a room to himself, were dreary enough at best. The taverns were little better. The "Indian Queen," Washington's most noted hostelry, was miserably untidy but charged as much as "the very first London hotel." The discomforts lonely congressmen met with in Washington probably contributed to their lack of interest in the community—"This City," William Lowndes wrote his wife, "which so many are willing to come to & all so anxious to leave." "Many," observed the Intelligencer, "come here with high-wrought hopes of office, emoluments and honors, and when disappointment comes, it is identified with the place." They saw the swamps along the Mall and the city's unkempt vacant lots but found compensating pleasure neither in the people about them nor in the touches of beauty in their physical surroundings. The spacious layout of the city was an

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62 Fearon, Sketches of America, pp. 291-92; Intelligencer, 9 Dec 15, 16 Nov, 1 Dec 16, 28 Dec 20; Washington Gazette, 17 Dec 17; Diary of Louisa Kallisky, 1822-23; Lee Palfrey Papers (Ma Div., L.C.); H. B. Smith, First Forty Years, pp. 130-55.
annoyance; the imposing, rebuilt government edifices and the handsome new houses and churches, were a matter of course; and the dignified but still unfinished City Hall designed by the talented George Hadfield and located in a commanding position looking down from Judiciary Square over the Mall toward the embryo Botanical Garden represented merely a municipal extravaganza. 63

The Character of the Population

In the decade since the outbreak of the war, the District's population had increased from some 21,000 to nearly 34,000 souls, 14,700 of them in Washington. The list of government employees now totalled about 300, but as appointees from Maryland and Virginia alone composed nearly half, Southern attitudes still predominated in government circles. 64 Although some of the newcomers to the District undoubtedly were European-born, all were English-speaking. If some of the Germans from Bremen and the Prussian countryside who had been settling in Baltimore and the western counties of Maryland since the 1790s moved south to the District, they did not form a distinct separate group. Similarly, while yearly celebrations of St. Patrick's Day prove the presence of Irish families, they did not constitute a foreign "colony." Foreigners not naturalized numbered fewer than

63 Intelligencer, 13 Jul 22; Fearon, Sketches of America, p. 292; Diary of Louisa Kalisky; Washington Directory, 1822; ltr, William Lowndes to his wife, 8 Jan 15, Lowndes Papers (SHC).

300 in Washington and made up less than 2 percent of the District's population. New householders, whatever their origins, in no way destroyed the cities' homogeneous character, except insofar as free Negroes ranked as an alien element. The Georgetown and Alexandria of 1822, though having more residents, more dwellings and more shops than in 1800, had changed very little in essentials. Georgetown, now slightly larger than Alexandria, had acquired a handful of English families but they had not altered the tone or temper of the community; the Scottish tinge of 18th-century Alexandria had faded rather than sharpened with the years. Only slightly greater diversity existed in Washington. A half dozen Italian sculptors, come to do the ornamental stonework on the Capitol, composed a tiny artist colony and doubtless found companionship among their compatriots already established here as members of the Marine Corps band; four or five Frenchmen had chosen Washington as a place where their sophisticated skills as chefs, coiffeurs or dancing masters would ensure them a clientele; but the city Directory of 1822 listed primarily English names.

Women now outnumbered men in all three cities, though the differential was small among whites and chiefly noticeable among household slaves. When Congress was in session the proportion of white males rose temporarily, inasmuch as congressmen usually left their wives at home, and visitors seeking government favors were almost invariably men. Women were not yet accepted in government offices, and white servants were still a rarity in southern communities. Governesses, boarding-house keepers, dressmakers or "mantua makers" and milliners made up part of the surplus female population, and the complaints about "odious vice" imply that
prostitutes constituted another segment. The rest presumably were the spinster and widowed sisters and aunts who seemed to be appendages to almost every established household. As the excess of women over men existed also in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore, it suggests that the District cities had achieved a mature, if not a static, urban society.

While the depression at the end of the post-war decade may have lessened the gap between rich and poor, pronounced differences in people's economic status nevertheless persisted. In 1817 Mayor Blake spoke with obvious gratification of Washington's "acquisition of many wealthy citizens," and three years later John Law declared she "is now and daily will become a more desirable residence for those who can retire on their fortunes and enjoy the pleasures of a society which is not surpassed in elegance or taste by any city on the continent." Yet social standing did not depend solely upon material wealth. Federal officials generally had entree everywhere and, while the civil list had expanded very little since 1812, the military was considerably larger. Secretary of War Armstrong, for all his blundering in safeguarding the capital from British invasion, had effected a useful reorganization of the Army and, in establishing its headquarters in Washington, added to the number of high-ranking officers assigned here permanently. The city had always been the headquarters of the Navy Department. Salaries of civilians below Cabinet rank ranged from $600 to $2000 a year, but, as far as his purse permitted, the well-bred clerk could also share fully in the social life of the capital. And

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government clerks considered themselves very much part of the community. Turnover in federal offices was small; most of the names on the rosters in 1810 were still there in 1822. From that continuity Washington derived a certain stability, and as permanent officialdom rarely included wealthy men, it helped to prevent the emergence of a dominant plutocracy.

The most basic change the decade brought to Washington was an intangible. The 60 percent increase in population, the "wealthy new citizens," and the physical improvements visible in many parts of the city were less significant than the new sense of permanence and security that filled the community. But what spelled stability for Washington meant to her neighbors an end to progress, a static condition contrived by governmental mortmain. The next quarter century would intensify resentments in Alexandria and Georgetown and end in the retrocession to Virginia of the trans-Potomac part of the District. In 1822 Washington also felt dissatisfaction over relations with the federal government, but, unlike the older cities, she thought time would iron out difficulties. Hard times were easing. Because she was and undoubtedly would remain the capital, why should she not become the great business metropolis as well as the political center of the nation? Citizens subscribed fully to the sentiments expressed in a Rhode Island newspaper: Washington should be made a magnificent city that would "stand as a monument of wealth and power, as a rallying point for popular partialities, which will exalt the pride of patriotism."
CHAPTER IV

QUIESCENT INTERLUDE, 1823-1846

For nearly a quarter century after 1822, the main outlines of life in the District of Columbia followed the pattern established in the post-war era. While the capital grew steadily, encouraged by improvements in the relationship between city and federal government, Georgetown and, still more noticeably, Alexandria shrank in importance. Between 1823 and 1846, years during which dozens of American cities achieved spectacular growth and faced novel problems of social assimilation, the District of Columbia underwent few significant changes. Contrary to expectations, its cities suffered no drastic political upheaval when the Jacksonians came into office. Economic readjustments though painful to accept were gradual: hope born in the 1820's, upon approval of plans for the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, gave way only little by little to the disillusionment of learning that railroads, not canals, held the key to commercial power. The panic of 1837 touched most of the District comparatively lightly. The change in the climate of opinion about slavery also made itself felt very slowly. Citizens long accustomed to thinking the "peculiar institution" sacrosanct found difficulty in believing that abolitionists could undermine so fundamental a part of the region's social structure. Nevertheless, by the mid-forties every resident felt the impact of the anti-slavery agitation.

The end of a decade of war, boom and bust was also the beginning of a period of quiescence ruffled but not shattered by events in the rest of the country. The year 1846 marked a break with the past in the federal
area merely because it saw the retrocession of Alexandria County to Virginia and because war with Mexico brought Washington and Georgetown new business opportunities. Yet both the loss of Alexandria and the expansionists' war, in the eyes of some men, appeared to be the first fruits of an aggressive Southern campaign to strengthen the slave power. Insomuch as passions over the issue of slavery in the District mounted steadily thereafter, the relatively peaceful interval preceding constitutes a separate chapter in the District's history.

Political and Economic Ambitions of the 1820's

When in 1822 Congress dropped the bill to give the District representation, more than a few people had felt keen disappointment, for they regarded political power as an essential weapon in the fight for commercial preeminence and orderly community growth. Not only did taxation without representation impose an indignity, but also, as Richard Bland Lee, former Virginian and one-time federal commissioner of Washington, proved from his own experience, the denial of legal status equal to that of a state meant in practice that no District citizen, however just his cause, could sue the citizen of a state. Newcomers would naturally avoid permanent residence in an area where such discrimination obtained. Hence in the mid-twenties the struggle for unabridged rights of citizenship resumed. But again opinion divided over whether the best way to secure those rights was through creation of a territory or by retrocession of the area to its parent states.

Again a group of Alexandrians led the opposition to a territory. They assured Congress that "the admission into your venerable halls of a Delegate
from the District would be only a new badge of a hopeless and stigmatising destitution of political liberty." At a meeting in Georgetown, a majority of one favored a return to Maryland, while in Washington advocates of a territory won only half-hearted support.¹

Concurrent petitions for federal assumption of the costs of running the District and for revision of the two antiquated law codes probably confused the issue of enlarged voting rights. A detailed House report on conditions in the Washington jail and the evils of the barbaric criminal code resulted in an appropriation for a new penitentiary, but Congress tabled the petitions for District representation and granted the cities only minor concessions. The capital netted appropriations for roads, Alexandria popular election of the mayor and larger taxing authority, Georgetown exemption from county taxes and in 1830 the right to elect her mayor. In Washington, on the other hand, voting rights contracted: in 1826 the House refused to override the city councils when they struck from the voting list the name every man who paid less than fifty cents in personal property taxes.²

Political frustration faded into the background, however, as plans for a new canal promised economic gains. When the panic had subsided and


business revived in other cities, the ten-mile square failed to keep pace with the rest of the country. Real estate prices in Washington, still declining in November 1822, were slow to rally. Local banks were increasingly wary of making loans to District firms. Manufacturing was virtually at a standstill. Commerically the District was steadily losing ground. Whereas in value of exports the area in 1819 had ranked ninth among the twenty states and territories, within the next few years it dropped to eleventh and in value of imports to fourteenth place. By the early twenties the Washington Canal was too silted up to be navigable at low tide. The Potomac Company was manifestly moribund. Local businessmen concluded they must make a fresh start if they were to exploit the river and tap the trade of the Ohio valley. Inspired perhaps by petitions to Congress from western Pennsylvania for improvement of Potomac river navigation, representatives of the three District cities had discussed the matter in the summer of 1822 and a year later, after a conference with men from Leesburg, Virginia, and Baltimore, called a convention to meet in Washington City in November 1823. From that moment on, District businessmen fastened upon the idea of a canal as their road to salvation.

Delegates to the convention came from Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania.

3 Ltr, William Cranamond to Peter Hagner, 1 Nov 22, Hagner Papers (SHC); H Rpt 800, 2HC, 18, 20 Jun 36, p. 2h, Ser 295; Columbia Gazette, 27 Mar 32; Intelligencer, 9 May 26; Ltr, Thomas Law to Robert Gilmore, 2 Oct 20, Wright Collection (George Washington University).

Ohio and the District, among them men as well known as Albert Gallatin, Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Clay, Francis Scott Key, Bushrod Washington, George Washington Parke Custis and Thaddeus Stevens. Their fame lent importance to the proceedings. John Quincy Adams and other cabinet members attended a dinner given for the delegates, newspapers publicized the convention speeches, and the public read of the doings with intense interest. The doings consisted of passing resolutions urging the linking of the Potomac with the Ohio and the appointment of committees to enlist federal and state aid. The results were gratifying. The President's State of the Union message recommended support for the undertaking, the Virginia Assembly incorporated a new canal company, and Congress soon after appropriated money for a survey of a feasible route and an estimate of cost.

Opposition from Baltimore and Philadelphia delayed endorsement from their states, but the Maryland legislature approved early in 1825, and in March a favorable preliminary report from the Board of Army Engineers led Congress to confirm the Virginia and Maryland acts. Two months later the Potomac Company dissolved, relinquishing all its property rights to the new Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company. Enthusiasts considered the battle now won: the new company need only raise four or five million dollars, dig a canal along the Potomac, and install locks to carry the waterway over the 1900-foot elevation to the Monongahela river, and Pittsburgh would then be only 341 miles distant by water from Washington. The Pennsylvania legislature, 

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5 Washington Gazette, 10 Nov 23; Sanderson, National Project, pp. 52-55; Annuals, 180, 15, 17 Dec 23, p. 5, 21 Apr 24, pp. 530-36; 22 Apr
caught up in the general excitement, chartered the canal company in 1826, and Baltimore decided to send delegates to the organization meeting to be held that December. 6

A shock awaited the promoters. The final report of the Army Board of Engineers put the cost of the project at $22,300,000, about four times the figure expected and far more than the most optimistic canal advocates knew they could raise. Persuaded that the Army had miscalculated, they induced President Adams to appoint civil engineers to reexamine the adverse findings. Most business had continued to languish even when the canal had seemed a certainty. The Bank of Columbia had closed, and its directors gloomily reported, "thirty-two years of bad management, neglect, and confusion" made the chances of salvaging anything dim. While trying to get congressional approval of a new bridge across the Potomac below the Little Falls, Georgetown had declared: "Our town, notwithstanding its local and natural advantages for trade, has been gradually declining; our population is diminished; our homes untenanted; and the people earnestly pleading that the avenues of commerce may be opened." If that statement exaggerated the facts, its purpose was abundantly clear. Washington's mayor and council similarly moaned over "the almost total absence of commerce" in the capital. The federal government must come to the rescue. 7

To the relief of local merchants, in the spring of 1827 the civil

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engineers submitted a report estimating the cost of a canal to Cumberland, Maryland, at the foot of the mountains, at $3,500,000. Congress felt reassured. Georgetown and Alexandria citizens requested their city councils each to subscribe $250,000 to stock, and Washingtonians recommended a corporate subscription of $1,000,000. Congress thereupon authorized the municipalities to borrow the money for stock and to levy taxes to pay the interest on the loans until dividends should cover the costs. Better still in the view of local men, the congressional act sanctioned purchase of 10,000 shares of $100 per value stock by the United States Treasury.

Probably some taxpayers questioned the wisdom of incurring such heavy municipal debts but, if so, their voices were drowned in the general chorus of approval. Representative Wood of New York warned that the District, under the "influence of enthusiasm," might be succumbing to "false lures," but apart from specifying that the United States would not be responsible for either interest or principal Congress refused to curb local investment.

Yet two features of developments during 1827 might well have given citizens pause. First was the truncating of the original plan and second was the emergence of a competing project. Initially the canal promoters had counted on making a commercially usable waterway between the tidewater cities on the Potomac and the Ohio Valley. The very name Chesapeake and Ohio canal advertised their intention of challenging New York City and the Erie canal in the race to preempt the western trade. A canal to

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Cumberland would make the District cities distributing points for the coal
and farm produce of the upper Potomac valley but would not reach over the
mountains into the fertile Ohio country. Perhaps District investors
believed the link with the Monongahela would be easy to finance once the
canal had reached the base of the mountains; perhaps they looked to a
serviceable portage. Whatever their reasoning, District citizens seemed
satisfied with the reduced scope of the undertaking. The second factor
in the situation as it unfolded during 1827 was the chartering of the
Baltimore and Ohio railroad.

District disbelief in the utility of a railroad was doubtless
natural, if only because the project originated in Baltimore, and Baltimore,
would-be rivals could argue, was grasping at straws in desperate endeavor
to prevent diversion to the Potomac cities of her trade with the backcountry.
The Intelligencer dubbed a railroad a costly experiment, certainly not a
transport system that could compete with a canal. While Baltimore bankers
and merchants organized the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company and sold
stock to the Maryland legislature, the city corporation and private
citizens, District businessmen watched with detached interest, as if
witnessing the admirable but futile struggle of a community to halt its
inescapable decline. So far from seeking a share in an enterprise for
which their neighbors had raised $3,000,000 in a few months, Washingtonians
called for redoubled efforts to finance their own undertaking. For more
than forty years American inland towns and cities had pinned their hopes
of commercial progress upon improved river navigation and canals. Now
that the District cities had at last won support for that plan, why abandon it in favor of a new-fangled substitute of doubtful value? As the railroad age opened, they threw their energies into a project that would eat up their resources and sharply limit their economic expansion.9

On the 4th of July 1828 ceremonies inaugurating the two new ventures took place simultaneously. In Baltimore, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, turned the first spade of earth to start work on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, while on the Potomac above Georgetown, President John Quincy Adams broke ground for the Chesapeake and Ohio canal. The superstitious might have seen an ill omen in the President's difficulties when his shovel struck a hickory tree root. Only after he had stripped off his coat and dug fiercely at the obstruction did he succeed in turning the earth. But John Quincy Adams profitted from the setback: for the first time in a long distinguished career he won delighted cheers from the spectators who read into the episode symbolic proof of the triumphant progress of the canal.10

Unhappily altercation among the District cities immediately posed a threat to progress. Washington and Alexandria were determined to have the canal extend far enough downstream to enable the barges to unload in deep water at their wharves. Georgetown, anxious to preempt the canal traffic, argued that the eastern terminus should be at the head of tidewater at the Little Falls; to carry the canal down to a terminal basin on the Eastern


10 Samuel F. Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Union, p. 102; Intelligencer, 7 Jul 28.
Branch would be utmost extravagance. But Washington City, holding four times as much stock as Georgetown, enlisted the support of Richard Rush, Secretary of the Treasury, who represented the million-dollar stock interest of the United States government. The upshot was a compromise largely in the favor of the capital: the waterway was to come through Georgetown into Rock Creek below the present K street and continue thence on the Washington side to the mouth of the Tiber. From that point barges could pass to the Eastern Branch via the Washington canal. Washington had already taken steps to force the impacuous Washington Canal Company to deepen and widen its channel, and when President Adams as one of his last acts in office approved construction of a canal boat basin at "the foot of the President's Square," citizens elatedly envisaged coal barges loaded in Cumberland discharging their cargoes direct on to ocean-going vessels docked on the Eastern Branch. Alexandria's problem was more difficult. If heavily-laden horse-drawn barges were to reach her river front, she would have to build first an aqueduct to take them over the Potomac and then a seven-mile lateral canal into the city. Not until 1830 did she win congressional approval of that costly plan and not until 1832 a congressional appropriation to help foot the bills.  

Meanwhile two more serious difficulties had arisen to interfere

11 Sanderlin, National Project, pp. 65-66; H Doc 102, 135, 25, 26 Feb 25; Ser 118; Intelligencer, 9 May 26; Memorial, Mayor Joseph Gales to President J. Q. Adams, 2 Mar 25, and map showing the proposed location of the basin, D.C. Misc., (Ms Div, LC); Reg Deb, 190, 18, 17 May 26, p. 75; 20 May 26, p. xxvi, 260, 18, 26 May 31, pp. xxiv-xxv, 220, 18, 6 Jun 32, pp. 1052-75, 25 Jun 32, pp. xix.
with work on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal. Because the District cities ran into trouble in borrowing the $1,500,000 they had subscribed, and because some of the 5,100 individual shareholders were remiss in their payments, the company lacked ready capital for land purchases and placing contracts on favorable terms. More alarming, litigation with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company over claims to the right of way in narrow stretches of the Potomac valley below and above Harpers Ferry endangered the entire enterprise. Late in 1829 Richard Rush negotiated a loan for the municipalities from Dutch bankers, but the fight with the railroad dragged on into 1832. The B & O’s delaying tactics cost the canal company precious time and money. Nevertheless, in early 1829 the District of Columbia clung to faith that the “great national project” would restore prosperity to the area, if the Jacksonians in the new Congress did not cut off federal aid.12

The Jacksonian Revolution, Expected and Actual

The ifs about the future under Jacksonian rule loomed large in Washington during the winter of 1828-29. Times had been hard throughout the District. Local bankers, left largely to their own devices since 1822, had succeeded in making money by practices a later generation would condemn, but merchants, craftsmen, clerks and day laborers had suffered. The flight of capital from the region and the banks’ unwillingness to lend money for local enterprises had had deadening effects; the municipal due

12 Sanderlin, National Project, pp. 82-88; Intelligencer, 25 Jan 30; Convention between Richard Rush and Daniel Gormelin & Sons, 1830, D.C. Misc (Ms D, L.C.).
bills were a drag upon the economy; and unemployment had spread. The mayor of Washington had authority to use prison labor on street repair, and even at the Navy Yard wages in most categories had dropped as much as 20 percent since the panic of 1819. The acute poverty and want in the city shocked Amos Kendall on his arrival and he noted approvingly that Congress had voted to donate fifty cords of firewood to needy families. Though government appropriations for District improvements between 1823 and 1829 had totalled nearly twice the amount allotted in the preceding twenty-three years, and though Congress in 1827 had given $20,000 to relieve the victims of a devastating fire in Alexandria, the prospects of any future federal sharing in the recurrent and mounting municipal expenses looked far from bright. 13

General Jackson and his party were avowed opponents of "internal improvements." What would happen to the Chesapeake and Ohio canal? "Old Hickory", champion of "the common man," was the enemy of privilege and the money power. What would happen not only to the Bank of the United States but to District banks chartered by Congress? The "Hero of New Orleans" was a Tennessean. Would he impose rough western customs upon the capital's sophisticated society? Moreover, he was eminently a party man. As his party, proclaiming "to the victor belong the spoils," talked of

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"rotation in office," must not every government employee in Washington share in his boots? Although Jackson adherents included men of wealth and social position in the District, the fact that white working men were among his most vociferous supporters augured a social as well as a political upheaval. Everyone anticipated a full-blown, bloodless revolution. According to their individual interests, men in the District cities awaited it with eagerness or with dread. Since Jackson was a slave-owner, probably only Negroes foresaw no change in their status.

As inauguration day approached, conservative long-time residents of Washington must have looked back to the past with nostalgia. The Virginia dynasty had created a tradition, and its inheritor, John Quincy Adams, had sustained it. The fury in the upper ranks of society stirred up in President Monroe's day over first calls now seemed unimportant. President Adams' lack of popularity had never detracted from the dignity of social life in the capital. Washington had known troubles but there had also been stirring occasions, above all, General Lafayette's visit in the autumn of 1824 and the summer of 1825. Upon his arrival the elderly hero ate a breakfast that impressed William Seaton who met him at the District line: "fine Bay perch, six of which he consumed, bread à dis­cretion, all washed down with generous Bordeaux; the culmination of his enthusiasm, however, being reserved for the unsurpassed canvas-back duck and hominy." School children had paraded for the gallant old Marquis; and decades later elderly ladies still cherished as their dearest childhood memory having

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touched his hand. The city had feted her distinguished guest with a
magnificent reception, dinners and balls at a cost of more than the
entire public school budget. The celebration of a half-century of American
independence on the 4th of July 1826 had marked another memorable day,
obscurred by a huge parade and an impressive and argumentive oration" at
the Capitol. But in March 1829 those splendid moments seemed remote.

A local Jackson committee formed during the campaign had planned an
elaborate inaugural celebration. In the past the marshal of the District
and city officials had made the arrangements. Now, as though to show that
henceforward the party would take charge of everything in Washington,
John P. Van Ness, Duff Green, Thomas Corcoran of Georgetown and other
members of the local Democratic committee ignored Mayor Joseph Gales and
the Republican city councils. Forerunner of the national party committee
that would soon substitute the party convention for the congressional
canvasses to nominate candidates for President, the central committee issued
its instructions for the parade and the inaugural ball. But the committee
had also omitted consultation with the President-elect. General Jackson
had recently lost his wife and refused to permit a great parade with the
corps of Jackson Riflemen escorting him to the Capitol. Like Thomas
Jefferson twenty-eight years before, he chose to walk from his lodgings

15 E. Cooley, Description of the Etiquette at Washington City,
p. 13; Adams, Memoirs, VII, 39, 40; William Winton Eaton, pp. 168, 170;
Rothwell's Digest, p. 300; Intelligencer, 2 Oct 29, 12 Aug, 9 Sep 25,
6 Jul 26; Una Pope-Hennessy, ed., Aristocratic Journey, Letters of Margaret
Hall, p. 26; ltr, John W. Taylor to his wife, 21 Dec 28, John W. Taylor
Papers (Minnesota Historical Society).
and, again like Jefferson, he went unaccompanied by the retiring President. John Quincy Adams had left the White House the preceding night to take up residence on Meridian Hill just north of the city boundary. On the sunny March morning when white-haired Andrew Jackson, bare-headed and clad in long pantaloons, close-fitting coat and ruffled shirt, walked across the untidy stretch of Mall at the foot of the Hill, past the new iron fence about the Capitol grounds to the western entrance, he symbolized to the onlookers the coming of a bright new era.16

The "Revolution" in Society

The social revolution appeared to have begun immediately after the swearing in ceremony which, for the first time, took place outdoors on the east portico of the Capitol. From there people raced to the White House to ensure themselves a place at the reception and a chance at the refreshments. Backwoodsmen, uncouth-looking small-town politicians and farmers who admired Old Hickory or hoped to land appointments to office rubbed elbows with city bankers and blue-coated colonels and commodores. The press of people became so great that the President was jammed against the wall and, finally making his escape through broken furniture and smashed china out the South door, returned to the National Hotel. A story, doubtless apocryphal, tells of a small child lost in the crowd, whose

anxious parents at last found her in one of the President's private rooms. Delightedly jumping up and down on an old sofa, she cried out to her mother, "Just think, Mama; this sofa is a millionth part mine." Later receptions at the White House were less boisterous, but the popular Jacksonian assumption that all government property belonged to all the American people, particularly to all friends of the party, endured and, in enduring, subtly changed the atmosphere of Washington.

Official society, furthermore, soon faced open conflict with the President over his insistence upon having Mrs. John Eaton accorded every courtesy. "Peggy" O'Neal Eaton, wife of the new Secretary of War and daughter of a Washington tavern keeper, was a beautiful, vivacious woman whose earlier life appeared to justify the charge that she was "no better than she ought to be." The pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church indulged in frank criticism of her, only to find himself summoned to the White House to be rebuked by the President for maligning an innocent woman and to lose Andrew Jackson as a member of the congregation. Mrs. Calhoun, wife of the Vice President, and a dozen other gently-bred ladies flatly refused to receive the notorious Peggy. The result was a deep rift in Washington society healed only by time and by Eaton's eventual resignation from the Cabinet. 17

The "Revolution" in Patronage

The anticipated wholesale proscription of office holders in Washington,

17 M. B. Smith, First Forty Years, pp. 296; Intelligencer, 3, 6 Mar 29; James Stuart, Three Years in North America, II, 75; Biography of Margaret O'Neal Eaton.
on the other hand, did not occur. By 1831, of the 301 men who had held government clerkships under John Quincy Adams, 205 were still on the rolls, and of those who were dismissed certainly several had reached an age to warrant retirement. True, the contrast to President Adams' procedures was striking, for he had refused to replace anyone for his political opinions. True also, the blow was severe for competent men who found themselves after years of faithful service turned out to make way for party henchmen. The entire city felt the shock when long-established members of the community had to seek a livelihood elsewhere. William Winston Seaton, owner with Joseph Gloce, Jr., of the National Intelligencer and an outspoken anti-Jacksonian, later wrote: "An intense gloom hung over the city in the spring of 1829." Yet dismissals were far fewer than either party friends or foes had prophesied, and an employee who survived the first year's "house-cleaning" could count with some certainty on holding his job till the next major political upset. In the thirties that moment was not imminent. Furthermore, however genuinely they mourned the departure of old friends, permanent residents of the city could scarcely fail to derive some satisfaction from the increased size of the federal payroll effected by the addition of fifteen clerkships to the Post Office Department and the prospect of more to come.18

Inevitably the District as a whole was more concerned with the

economic policies of the new administration than with its treatment of federal employees. Citizens waited anxiously to see whether the local banks would benefit or suffer, what the "enemies of privilege" would do for the protection of the working classes and whether the Jacksonians would hamper or help the "great canal."

The "Revolution" in Banking

The President's known hostility to the Bank of the United States stood as a threat to the Branch located since 1824 on the site of the present-day Riggs National Bank opposite the Treasury. But local banking houses concluded they had nothing to fear as time wore on and only two congressional reports sounded critical of local practices. District banking capital shrank to a sixth of New York's, less than a third of Boston's and one-half Baltimore's; bank stock sold below par; dividends hovered between a mere 4 and 7 percent; and merchants still complained of the difficulty of obtaining loans. But in the absence of intensive congressional scrutiny of their activities, local bankers believed the new order little different from the old. Even the withdrawal of government deposits from the Bank of the United States in 1833 disturbed District financiers very little; just as the President had chosen the Bank of the Metropolis for one of the federal depositories, so might he not add other local houses to his list of "pet banks." 19

A few months later complacency vanished, for the failure of the...
Bank of Maryland caused three District banks to suspend payments. While some men blamed the disaster on the President's war on the Bank of the United States, others apparently held the "monster monopoly" responsible.

In the voteless District cities, as elsewhere, party affiliation affected judgments on cause and effect. A supporter of Peter Force, the Whig candidate for mayor of Washington, declared that Jackson's acts had "placed upon our city . . . the hand of Death . . . To the truth of this picture, let the answer be given by our suspended banks, the closed doors, depreciated business and protested notes of merchants; by the suspended operations of our brickmakers, carpenters, lumber yards, cartmen, and laborers, and the Sabbath-day appearance of our streets." Whigs in Washington's wealthiest ward formally resolved: "At this important crisis in our national affairs, when the greatest embarrassments exist in our city, . . . it is the duty of all patriots and freemen to oppose the authors of such a state of things."\(^{20}\) The majority in Congress, suspecting that local institutions were largely responsible, ordered the municipalities to retire their due bills gradually and instructed the House Committee on the District to investigate the condition of the District banks. The cities complied. The committee did nothing. Then in December 1835, as the moment for renewing the local bank charters approached, both House and Senate bestirred themselves. The House committee produced some strange findings: bankers,
"respectable citizens," had used the suspension of 1834 for their own profit; their "ruinous desolating" manipulations over the years had measurably retarded the growth of the cities, and bank failures since 1821 had cost the people of the District $1,700,000, money "taken from the profits of labor and...absorbed by adventurers and speculators." Yet, in the face of outraged denunciations from "Old Bullion" Benton, a few other senators and some representatives, a bill passed renewing the charters of the seven surviving banks until 1838 and specifying only that they could not issue notes in excess of their capital. 21

The "Revolution" for Labor

Laboring men, who would have welcomed an investigation of wages and working conditions, were left to fend for themselves far more completely than were bankers. Trade associations had begun to appear in the twenties, though, like the Columbia Typographical Society organized by the printers in 1815, initially they were rather mutual benefit societies than labor unions seeking wage increases and shorter hours. In 1830 the newly formed Association of Mechanics of the City of Washington stated its philosophy that "it is the interest and bounden duty of every member of this community to promote that system of public policy, the tendency of which is to

increase the numbers, diversify the pursuits and augment the happiness of our citizens who look to their own labor for support." They founded a newspaper, The American Mechanic, a courageous venture in so small a city, but not altogether surprising in view of the major importance of the printing industry in Washington. When that paper ceased publication, The Washingtonian replaced it for a few months. In 1833 several trade groups banded together to form a General Trades' Union dedicated to securing "the right of fixing the price of their own labor." In keeping with the announced aims of similar organizations in other American cities, they advocated free public education in place of the mockery of "pauper schools." The "mechanics" opposed the innovation introduced by prison reformers whereby convicts were taught trades and the articles made in prison sold to the public at reduced prices. When bitter conflict over wage rates and apprenticeships broke out between the Typographical Union and Duff Green, former editor of the administration organ, the U.S. Telegraph, and in 1835 publisher of the Reformer, the printers got no encouragement from the party in power in Congress. Inflation and speculation throughout the country produced an upward spiral of prices unmatched by wage increases. Within one three-month period the cost of flour in Georgetown rose from $4.50 to $6.00 a barrel. Unions here like their counterparts in the rest of the country failed in their objectives, with one exception; the reduction in 1810 of hours on federal works to ten a day. Attempts to get the property qualification for municipal voting lowered in Washington were equally unsuccessful. During the thirties craftsmen in the District gained neither economic nor political advantage from the Jacksonian
What benefits unskilled labor hoped to win other than full employment is uncertain, for, white or black, "common" laborers were the least articulate, if the largest, element in the population. In the spring of 1829 they could count on work on the C & O canal, but that summer the company abandoned recruitment of local labor and resorted to importation of European workmen under contract. Unless Congress authorized extensive public works and, unlikely event, forbade the practice of hiring slaves for all but the most difficult tasks, any immediate help for free labor appeared unlikely. Except for some work on the new penitentiary under construction on the arsenal grounds at Greenleaf's Point, government building in Washington had come to halt in 1829 when the Capitol and the grounds about it received the finishing touches. Though the commissioner of public buildings employed some men on maintenance and repair, those were chiefly craftsmen. In 1831 as digging began on the Alexandria canal and on widening and deepening of the Washington canal, common labor fared better, but not because of Jacksonian policies. Not until 1833 did federal spending of $115,000 on macadamizing Pennsylvania avenue and grading the President's square and $23,000 on piping water into the Capitol and public offices

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provide work for the unskilled, and then the first consideration was congressional convenience, not the welfare of labor. 23

The "Revolution" on Internal Improvements

Wage-earners, employers and the real estate owners whose prosperity depended upon a growing community all had an interest in seeing Congress support internal improvements within the District and along the Potomac. But when President Jackson, after rejecting the national Maysville Road bill, vetoed a bill authorizing a government subscription to stock in the Washington Turnpike Company, citizens had reason to imagine all federal contributions to the District at an end. They were mistaken. Within the next three years Congress voted and the President approved nearly a million dollars for District projects, several of which were only incidentally useful to the United States government. Such largesse was without precedent.

First came small appropriations to Georgetown and Washington for draws in the bridges over the Potomac and the Eastern Branch. Next the Democratic Congress, in spite of its principles, invested $400,000 in the Alexandria canal and voted first $80,000 and then another $200,000 to buy out the Washington Bridge Company, build a solid causeway at the foot of 14th street and put up the "Long" bridge over the Potomac. A few months later Georgetown got $150,000 of federal money--the "congress fund" citizens called it--to clear the river channel of obstructions and dispense with the tolls on the Little Falls bridge and the turnpike to the Virginia line.

23 Intelligencer, 14 Jan, 23 Sep 29, 19 May 34; Captain Basil Hall, Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828, III, 46; H Doc 19, 230, 15, 20 Dec 33, Ser 234.
At the same time a like sum of federal money relieved Washington City of an onerous debt contracted in purchasing the Washington canal and attempting to deepen it to the four feet needed to allow C & O barges to move from the terminus at 17th street on through the city to the Eastern Branch. 24

Nor was this all. After three years of debate and resistance, Congress in 1836 saved the District cities from bankruptcy by assuming their debts on their C & O canal stock. Delays in completing the canal as far as Harpers Ferry had deprived the cities of the revenues from which they had expected to pay the interest on the Dutch loan. For Washington that charge alone amounted to $55,000 annually. To meet it she had borrowed a quarter million dollars by 1834, on top of increasing her tax rate from 56¢ to $1.10, a higher figure per $100 than that of any other city in America. Building the City Hall had saddled her with another $197,000 of debt because the managers of the lottery, conducted to pay off the costs, had pocketed the proceeds. All told the municipal debt of a city of 21,000 souls, a sixth of them slaves, had reached $1,719,000. An annual deficit added another $25,000 yearly. She had appealed in vain to Congress to authorize her taxing federal property. Upon learning that agents of the Dutch creditors had arrived in the city to collect by forced sale of property in the capital, Congress had appropriated $70,000 to fend off that disgrace, and the next year granted an equal amount annually for five

years. But by January 1836 Washington had again fallen in arrears on her interest payments. Alexandria, burdened with debts undertaken to finance the aqueduct and Alexandria canal, had not yet defaulted but foresaw having to do so shortly. Although Georgetown had remained solvent, she too had concluded she must sell her O & O stock. Fifty percent tax increases and five-year congressional appropriations of $17,500 for both cities were not enough. Manifestly the municipalities could no longer help themselves. National honor was involved; the United States was a stockholder in the canal company and, many people asserted, had encouraged the District cities to extravagant investment in the original scheme and its later costly extension. In any case, neither Democrats nor Whigs in Congress could allow foreign bankers to control most of the property in the American capital. In May 1836 the United States government assumed the cities’ $1,500,000 canal debts.25

Legal Reform and Additional Financial Relief

Meanwhile Congress had shown surprising awareness of other District problems. In 1831 the long wanted modification of the antiquated criminal code became law. It made imprisonment the punishment for most of Washington County’s fourteen and Alexandria County’s thirty capital crimes.

Henceforward conviction for burglary of goods valued at five shillings no longer meant hanging but at most seven years' imprisonment, a change that promised to induce juries, formerly unwilling to convict, now to bring in true verdicts and thereby ensure a more orderly community. Appropriations of some $75,000 to complete the federal penitentiary perhaps lessened citizens' disappointment at not obtaining a new civil code, but at least Congress a few years later removed debt from the list of crimes and forbade imprisonment for debt of less than $50. Moreover, twice during the early thirties the Jacksonian Congress spent federal funds for relief of the local poor. In the severe winter of 1831 and again in 1835 strict interpretation of federal powers yielded sufficiently to human feelings to carry through votes donating firewood to needy householders. 26

The Jacksonians also showed unexpected generosity toward Washington's colleges and eleemosynary institutions. In 1832 Congress turned over lots in Washington valued at $25,000 to debt-ridden Columbian College as a permanent endowment, $10,000 in land to the Washington Orphan Asylum and the same amount to the orphanage opened by the Sisters of Charity in 1825 and incorporated in 1831 as St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum. The next year Georgetown College in turn received lots assessed at $25,000. Though the city corporation objected to congressional endowments in the form of land that

the city hoped to control, proponents of the gifts to the colleges declared support of education a legitimate use of federal funds comparable to the reservation of public lands for schools in the territories. No one attempted to explain the legality of the gifts to the orphanages. Each of the three institutions, to be sure, soon found itself land-poor, unable to convert the lots into cash, since Washington real estate, when salable at all, brought far lower prices than either Congress or the city expected.

President Jackson himself had no qualms about public gifts to Washington charities: he had the Numidian lion presented by the King of Morocco sold at auction and the $3350 of proceeds divided between the city's two orphanages. Indeed Washingtonians discovered that the President whose coming had seemed to many to imperil the well-being of the capital was one of its warmest friends. At the time of his retirement a popular subscription raised money for a portrait of this true "friend of the people" to be placed in the City Hall.27

Clarification of the Relationship between the Government and Washington City

If the series of congressional concessions to local exigencies ran counter to strict Jacksonian principles, realization that the position of the District of Columbia was unique obviously salved the conscience of

27 Ltr, Obadiah Brown to Philip Richard Fendall, 26 Jan 47, Fendall Papers (Duke University); Intelligencer, 10 Jun 23, 31 Dec 25, 8 Jun 29, 11 Apr 35, 18 Feb 37; Reg Deb, 18C, 28, 30 Dec 34, pp. 90-96, 22C, 13, 14 Jul 32, App., p. xlviii, 22C, 28, 2 Mar 33, App., p. 26; S Doc 67, 18C, 15, 19 Apr 31, Ser 91; S Rpt 128, 21C, 15, 20 Apr 30, Ser.
Democratic congressmen who voted for the measures. Between 1834 and the
summer of 1836 three careful reports analyzed the peculiar situation of
the unrepresented District and federal responsibilities toward its citizens.
Although none of these documents presented a plan for a permanent fiscal
adjustment, the Southard report, in particular, named for its principal
author and submitted to the Senate in February 1835, offered a closely
reasoned justification for federal spending within the federal District.
The national capital, the Southard report stated, was the concern of the
entire nation. Alexandria and Georgetown, having suffered by their separa­
tion from their respective states and by the creation of a rival city in
their vicinity, deserved help also. Washington's financial difficulties
derived partly from the C & O canal but more largely from her expenditures
on the public streets. Congress should reimburse her for at least half
that total. The United States had contributed $10,000 to the cost of
building the City Hall, but the federal courts occupied half the space
rent-free, a patent inequity. The Government had paid nominally $36,099
for land within the city, in actuality nothing, inasmuch as sales of lots
offset the purchase price. In short, the United States acquired gratis
property worth over two and a half million dollars) if taxed from the
beginning it would have brought the city twice the sum now proposed for her
relief. The indisputable figures and dispassionate argument of the Southard
report carried weight. For the next eighty years whenever Washington's
financial problems came up for discussion in Congress, men quoted from
that classic on the subject. 28

28 H Rpt 366, 23C, 18, 25 Mar 34, Ser 262; S Doc 97, 23C, 28, 2 Feb
35, Ser 268; S Doc 111, 21C, 18, 2 Feb 36, Ser 280.
Opponents of any scheme that placed the District in a special category contended that none of the three cities merited more consideration from Congress than any other town in the country; the federal payroll and the constant flow of visitors who came to the capital on government business provided compensating advantages. In the midst of an acrimonious debate, one congressman declared indignantly that he had never known the House to discuss any question concerning Washington without some members attempting to curry favor at home by ridiculing citizens of the capital. Representative John Robertson, a Virginian Whig, made a point of visiting the Senate when District problems were occupying the House; like many another member, he found them boring and unimportant. The chairman of the House District Committee spoke of the "unpleasantness" of his task because of "the tone and temper with which the most ordinary appropriations for the benefit of the District are received in this house. Some gentlemen seem to regard the District of Columbia ... as a rat under an exhausted receiver, where political empirics may display their quackery without any danger of being called to account for their folly or ignorance." Perhaps a few congressmen who in the thirties again advocated a territorial government for the District with a delegate in the House believed the plan would give the District cities greater dignity in the eyes of their rulers. Like the earlier proposals, these were defeated chiefly by the argument that the diversity of interest within the three communities made the solution ...
unsatisfactory. 30

In 1836 derision and accusations of always standing hat in hand
mattered less to Washingtonians than formerly, for the long debates not only
brought the city immediate financial relief but, by creating a wider under-
standing of her peculiar problems, laid the foundations for a sounder
relationship between Congress and community than had existed since the
government moved to the banks of the Potomac. Freed of the canal debt,
Washington quickly regained financial equilibrium. Though she still carried
a debt of $450,000, within a year the tax rate returned to normal and muni-
cipal income exceeded outgo. The city still lacked funds to pave and light
the streets properly and to provide adequately for the indigent aged and ill.

A vigorous campaign to persuade Congress to build a public hospital where
transient paupers could receive care when ill took two decades to win a
response, in spite of proof that in most years only one in four of the
patients at the Washington Asylum and two in every five inmates of the
poorhouse were local residents. At last in 1841 Congress took the first
step in admitting federal responsibility for part of this burden; an appro-
priation met the costs of caring for the indigent insane in an asylum in
Baltimore. The next two years brought appropriations for a hospital for
the bodily ill. When President Tyler in person inspected the work in
progress on refitting the old Judiciary Square jail for use as the new
Washington Infirmary, citizens dared think an equal partnership established

30 Reg Deb, 22c, 18, p. 1199; H Rpt 537, 22c, 18, 28 Feb 32, Ser 226;
Cong Globe, 25c, 28, 20 Dec 37, p. 40, 28 Mar 38, p. 270, 6 Apr 38, p. 265;
25c, 38, 31 Dec 38, p. 88.
between the government and the city. Though these hopes were not fully realized, the contrast to earlier days was sharp. 31

Civic and Business Enterprise in Washington, 1830-1846

Thirty-odd years of disappointments in obtaining congressional cooperation had taught Washingtonians that they must rely primarily upon themselves to make the city a good place to live in. Hampered though they were by federal control of much of the property in the capital, by constitutional restrictions on their freedom of action, and by the persisting indifference or condescending attitude of many members of Congress, individual citizens and the municipal corporation nevertheless made valiant efforts to lessen the wretchedness of the poor. If philanthropy be a sound gauge of civic-mindedness, the two orphan asylums, the generous voluntary contributions yearly to funds for the needy, and a succession of charitable societies bear witness to a well-developed social conscience in Washington. The Howard Society organized in 1825 sought to "give relief to indigent females by providing work, fuel and other necessities of life." Under the society's direction, in buildings furnished on Eastern and Centre Market Squares, women spun yarn, picked oakum and sewed clothing which, sold at a small profit, made the women self-supporting and helped finance the work of the society. It began to lose public endorsement toward the end of the thirties and disappeared in the early forties.

Another group headed by the Irish schoolmaster, John McLeod, founded the

Washington Relief Society in 1830, dedicated to helping "indigent and disabled emigrants" and other distressed people who by local law could not be admitted to the city almshouse. In one winter the organization boarded forty people in private homes or taverns and in 1833 opened an infirmary for destitute foreigners. Four years later the Female Union Benevolent Society came into being, with the avowed purpose of assisting the poor only after the lady managers had made "careful observation and inquiry as to the needs."

President Van Buren contributed to its work by donating the proceeds from the sale of the remaining 700 pounds of the 1,000-pound cheese presented to President Jackson toward the end of his term. Year after year, St. Vincents and the Washington Orphan Asylum, now open to boys as well as girls, took care of scores of children. Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith gave the managers of the older orphanage the manuscript of her first book, What is Gentility, one of the earliest of the numberless novels about Washington society; sale of copies at a benefit fair netted the Asylum a considerable sum of money.32

Meanwhile belief that intemperance lay at the root of much of the misery in the city inspired the organization of temperance societies and campaigns to prohibit the sale of "ardent" spirits in Washington. Formidable statistics seemed to prove that alcohol had sent to the workhouse or jail a large proportion of the inmates of both. The city councils tightened the

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licensing laws and outlawed the sale of liquor on Sundays but could neither halt drunkenness nor cure poverty. When the Washington Asylum which served at once as a hospital, workhouse and poorhouse became unfit for use, the corporation undertook to replace it, but, in spite of a successful appeal to President Van Buren for permission to build on part of the Marine Hospital Square bordering the Eastern Branch, delays followed, the corporation stock issued to finance it was hard to market and the new Asylum not finished for occupancy till 1847.33

Taxpayers and hence the officials they elected, though ready to make voluntary contributions to the poor, were still unwilling to have city taxes raised to a level to permit more expensive public service, whether for relief, health supervision, protection of property or schools. Men considered the rate of the mid-thirties excessive, and when federal assumption of the canal debt enabled the councils to lower taxes, the city saw fit to keep them low by holding expenses to a minimum. The point of view of much of Congress encouraged that kind of economy, however costly in the long run. An unnamed senator, when questioned by a German traveller about the desperate poverty in evidence everywhere in Washington, replied: "I am glad the people here are poor and unable to give splendid entertainments. . . . From these evils [the corruptions of wealth] we are happily exempted by the almost hopeless condition of the inhabitants of this place."34

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34 Francis J. Grund, ed., Aristocracy in America, From the Sketchbook of a German Nobleman, p. 258.
While payments on the city debt yearly ate up half the municipal revenue and poor relief and upkeep of the streets a large slice of the remainder, few people wanted to see money spent on "trimmings." What constituted a trimming varied somewhat with circumstances. In the summer of 1832 a severe epidemic of Asiatic cholera struck, first among the workmen on the C & O canal, and later in the District cities. The Board of Health did what it could, forbidding the importation into the city of fresh fruits and vegetables, "abolishing" hog stys within the city limits during the emergency, prohibiting public entertainments and annulling licenses to sell liquor for ninety days. City funds and private subscriptions provided three temporary hospitals in rented houses and a staff of doctors, but the death toll in some two months' time came to 459--251 whites, 162 free Negroes and 46 slaves. Every morning the "dead carts" made the rounds; the drivers blew horns and called out "Bring out the dead." Marcia Burns Van Ness, wife of the mayor, died of the disease. Yet when the epidemic subsided, public health regulation vanished with it, for the Board of Health implied that unusual circumstances accounted for the spread of the disease: "A large number of foreign emigrants had recently arrived in the city, and were employed on the public works. Most of these were from Germany and Ireland, men who neither understood our language, nor were accustomed to our climate, habits and mode of living. . . . The cholera. . . was also extremely fatal to our colored population, and more especially to the free blacks." A few months later when small pox appeared in Washington, doctors of the Medical Association undertook to vaccinate poor people free of charge. Otherwise sanitation was a concern of the individual
citizen. To a surprising extent for a property-conscious community, police and fire protection also was left largely to volunteers. Ward constables served only part-time and were rarely on duty at night. When robberies and incendiary fires became alarmingly frequent, "respectable citizens" volunteered to form a night patrol. An unpleasant episode in the summer of 1841 increased their awareness of the need, for a drunken crowd, angered at President Tyler's veto of a bank bill, gathered one night on the portico of the White House to hiss and jeer at the chief executive. A year later Congress, fearful for the safety of government buildings, established an "auxiliary guard" which for the first time provided Washington with some night-time policing. The guards were federal officers, paid out of federal funds and charged with safeguarding federal property, but lest they turn into a presidential "praetorian guard" Congress specified that the mayor of Washington select the captain, and the captain pick his subordinates. The mayor thereafter declared the city relatively free from disorder. Volunteers still did the firefighting. Under a curious arrangement inaugurated as early as 1819 Congress supplied the engines and station houses for three of the six fire companies, the city the rest. But membership in the companies gradually changed in

35 Washington Acts, "Report on Revenue," 26 May l85, pp. 117-19; Intelligencer, 8, 9, 11, 20, 24, 29, 31 Aug, 3, 6, 10, 18, 29 Sep 32, 7, 8 Jan, 10 Apr 33; Alexandria Gazette, 14 Jul 36; Sunday Star, 22 Sep 18 (hereafter cited as Sun Star).

character; mature men no longer wished to bother and irresponsible boys took their place. After the incendiary fire that burned the Treasury to the ground in 1833 and the fire that destroyed the General Post Office and Patent Office three years later, Congress took steps to induce conscientious men to serve. It exempted members of the companies from militia duty and chartered a new insurance company in which only they could hold shares and thus obtain reduced rates on their policies. The scheme did not work. By the forties young rowdies made up the fire companies, turning the engine houses into headquarters for gang warfare. Occasionally on Sunday evenings one company or another sounded the fire alarm in the vicinity of a church for the sheer sport of watching the frightened congregation pour into the streets. Law-abiding citizens accused the unruly "firemen" of deliberately starting fires in order to enjoy the commotion of putting them out. "English Hill," east of the City Hall, the Navy Yard section, "Frogtown," south of the Capitol, the "Northern Liberties" above G street between 6th and 12th streets, and the "Island," the area southwest of the Washington canal, each had its gang, each more interested in fighting its rivals than in fighting fires.37

Economic status naturally affected concepts of public obligation. Whereas the large taxpayer generally preferred to restrict city functions, the poor man wanted them enlarged. And for him the property qualification for voting was a constant irritant. As the expiration of the municipal charter drew near in 1840, a summary of the city's shortcomings appeared

37 Intelligencer, 5 Dec 36, 11, 25 Jul 37, 22 May, 1 Sep 40, 11, Feb 12, 30 Sep 37, 14 Apr 45; U.S. Stats, III, 525, 3 Mar 17, IV, 266, 2 May 28, IX, 507, 679, 2, 3, Mar 77; H Doc 22, 223, 28, 12 Dec 34.
Our charter, almost out of date
Has only served to help the great.

We want a better one indeed -
One that will give us what we need,
A good police, and lamps by night,
A place to keep the widow's mite,
A District School, to teach our sons,
Who wander now like Goths or Huns,

Safety from Fire, from riot bands,
And from the midnight robbers' hands,
And more than all we want the right
To vote for those who rule in might.

Congress professed interest in local manhood suffrage, but about five-eighths of the existing electorate, some 550 men, petitioned against change. Congressional inaction allowed the city to continue under the old charter for another eight years.38

Had propertyless citizens had votes, the history of Washington's schools would have been longer and brighter. Taxpayers' ideas of what taxes should go for left the public schools from 1826 to 1841 dependent upon the income from the lottery fund raised by the trustees in the years after the War of 1812. The 6 percent interest derived from that $110,000 sufficed to keep the two "pauper" schools in operation with a little left over yearly, but too little to build more schoolhouses; mayor and councils simply added any surplus to the original principal. But the city was growing and the number of children who, for lack of space, could not be admitted to the two

charity schools was increasing rapidly. Petitions for federal aid that would enable the municipality to inaugurate true public school systems began in the early thirties, while Washington with some indignation watched Congress vote gifts to the colleges and orphanages and ignore pleas for help for common schools. In 1839 a survey revealed that of the city's 5200 white children some 900 were in private schools, 293 in the pauper schools. Girls were excluded entirely from the Western school and rarely accepted in the Eastern, since influential people objected to "the immoral tendency of mingling a great number of the two sexes together." But in 1840, when ladies of the Presbyterian churches opened "female charity schools" financed by the city from the surplus of the lottery fund, citizens protested against this form of sectarian education.

Foresighted Mayor William Winston Seaton, deeply troubled at the prospect of a predominantly illiterate community, urged the city in 1842 to follow the New England example and make free schooling available to every child. A special levy for schools should meet the cost. His proposal had many supporters among all classes of people; it also met unyielding opposition. Rather than abandon the plan altogether, he modified it: let the municipality build at least one new school from public funds, open all the city schools to all children, rich and poor alike, but charge fifty cents a month tuition for any child whose parents could pay. In December 1842 the city councils, perhaps influenced by Baltimore's recent adoption of a public school system, accepted the mayor's plan. An ordinance created four school districts, each of which was to have a schoolhouse. Money squeezed out of the regular annual budget and the lottery fund built one new schoolhouse.
near the City Hall on Judiciary Square and another on the Island. These, together with the two long used for the pauper schools, provided the four. A single school board composed of three men appointed from each district by the councils took charge of mapping out the curriculum, engaging the teachers, ordering supplies and generally supervising the work of schools. The board at once recommended no more than fifty or sixty pupils to a teacher. Though taxpayers still shied away from a fully tax-supported school system, here was a long step forward.\(^{39}\)

Yet in spite of considerable illiteracy and the grim poverty of much of the population, by 1840 Washington in many particulars was flourishing. Her economy, though limited, was sounder than that of cities whose business had over-expanded in the boom days of the mid-thirties and then shrivelled in the panic of 1837. Disappointed hopes over the "Grand Canal" and threatened municipal bankruptcy had not checked Washington's growth. Her lack of overseas commerce, the narrow span of her domestic trade, and her want of manufacturing other than hand-made wares for the local market were unimportant compared to the assets she had in the $500,000 of government salaries paid regularly in gold and silver, the dependability of the Navy Yard payroll and the government building program begun after the destruction of the Treasury and the Post Office. Furthermore, the presence of the federal government

made the city a printing center which published eleven newspapers and periodicals, a good many books and numberless government reports. When the tracks of the branch line of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad reached the capital in the summer of 1835, the improvement in communication with the country to the west and north promised to open up new resources to Washington. Nor was the canal investment a total loss, for in 1834 the link from the Rock Creek basin to the foot of the President's square was finished, complete with lock and the lockkeeper's house that still stands at 17th street and Constitution avenue. With the "big ditch" by then dug beyond Seneca, Maryland, barges laden with limestone were docking in Washington, and kilns built at L street at the edge of the creek began to produce lime. The rebuilt Washington canal also served some purpose. Opened from the Eastern Branch to 17th street basin in 1837, it was deep enough at first to admit vessels of six and seven-foot draft, and even when tidal wash from both rivers reduced that depth, it still sufficed for smaller craft used in delivering fuel and building materials within the city. The work force had expanded, thanks to the men imported to dig the C & O canal who had then settled in Washington, and if those laborers lowered rather than raised per capita wealth, still tradesmen benefited from supplying necessities to a growing population. Between 1823 and 1840 nearly three hundred new shops were built in the city. And partly balancing the influx of the unskilled was the increase in numbers of professional men—engineers, lawyers, brokers and claim agents.  

When the panic struck in May 1837 District banks, like those in the rest of the country, suspended specie payment, but Mayor Peter Force, himself a businessman with a printing establishment to maintain, declared in July that no business had failed: "The late pecuniary embarrassments of the country...have scarcely been felt here. We, so far, have suffered little more than a temporary inconvenience, arising from the sudden conversion of a specie into a paper currency." Though people were worried over their inability to get credit and over the shortage of silver and coppers, the government payroll and small issues of municipal due bills tided the city over without major disaster. Bankers wailed over their troubles and were rebuked by hard money men in Congress, but in 1838 the bill for a two-year renewal of the charters passed. The next year the District banks again suspended payments, causing great hardship to small businessmen and wage-earners. Thereafter until 1845 every change of party control in Congress produced new laws: in 1840 the Democratic majority, refusing to grant new charters, ordered all local banks to wind up their affairs and go out of business; in 1841 the Whigs reversed that ruling; in 1844 the Democrats reenacted it. The banks, however, did not go out of existence; from then until the Civil War era, they simply operated as partnerships under the common law. Shifting congressional policy, like the suspensions, brought confusion and losses in its wake but, while individuals suffered, the community as a whole continued to grow. Between 1840 and 1846 over one hundred new shops and nearly 1700 new dwellings, a third of them brick and therefore presumably substantial houses.

41 Alexandria Gazette, 15, 23 May 37; Intelligencer, 17, 23 May, 5 Jun, 8 Sep 27; Metropolis, 21 May, 3 Jul 37; Potomac Advocate, 7 Aug 37.
were built. For the first time in more than two decades, instead of complaints about Washington's sorry situation, self-congratulation became the normal order. 42

The Plight of Georgetown and Alexandria

Virtually every civic problem Washington encountered the other two District cities also had to meet. Both smaller municipalities had trouble in maintaining their streets, in providing for police and in preventing fires; both were badly hit by the cholera epidemic and when it was over they, like Washington, allowed health regulation to lapse. Petitions for aid to education poured in upon Congress from both sides of the river. Georgetown moved sooner than either Washington or Alexandria to open public schools, for she abandoned the Lancastrian school in 1840 and two years later inaugurated a free school system wholly under public control, an appointed school board supervised expenditures and program; taxes met the cost. Alexandria waited till the late forties. Both older cities felt the burden of the poor, and both appealed to Congress for help; they escaped only the necessity of caring for scores of transient paupers. Georgetown, furthermore, benefited from a legacy of $5000, the bequest of John Barnes, whose will specified that it be used for a city poorhouse. When the building was finished in 1831, citizens cheerfully announced "the problem of the poor has now been solved." But, as in all parts of the District, the poor were always with them. In 1831

philanthropists in Alexandria followed the earlier example of Washington and Georgetown in opening an orphanage. Neither the Alexandria nor Georgetown asylums got gifts from Congress. Non-taxpayers barred from voting in elections in the older cities resented their exclusion as deeply as their fellows in Washington, and with equal futility. Indeed Alexandria's charter still vested the right to elect the mayor in the city councils. In short the social and political problems of all three cities were identical in kind, if not always in degree. The difference between the capital and her neighbors lay in the realm of economics.

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Georgetown's complaints about her declining prosperity gave way in the early thirties to fresh expressions of hope. "Since the commencement of active operations on the canal," an editor noted in 1830, "there has been a very perceptive improvement in every branch of trade." Eighteen months later he wrote:

A gratifying spectacle was exhibited to our citizens yesterday. This was no less than the passage of the waters of the river Potomac through the canal into Rock Creek. Hundreds, if not thousands, flocked to witness it.

The packet boats were towed down to the first lock, between Congress and Jefferson Streets, and the Charles Fenton Mercer was passed through the locks into the Creek, amid the cheers of the multitude.

On 8 and 9 May 1832 ninety-nine "boats and arks," carrying 11,322 barrels of flour, 277 barrels of whiskey, 400 tons of granite, as well as coal, wood, and farm produce, passed through the Georgetown locks. The new draw in the Potomac bridge promised to ease navigation for sailing vessels beating their way upstream to the city's wharves, and when "the Congress fund" enabled the municipality to purchase the Chain bridge and remove the tolls, citizens believed they could recapture some of the Virginia flour trade lost to Alexandria. A 14 percent half-yearly dividend paid by the Potomac Fire Insurance Company in 1832 perhaps increased confidence in good times to come.

But in 1834 disasters began to multiply. The C & O canal debt weighed heavily, suspension of the banks created embarrassments, and perpetually widening sand bars in the Potomac hampered navigation and reduced the volume of the river trade. Jealousy of Washington and the feeling that Congress

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had favored the capital at the expense of the rest of the District piled resentment upon worry. Scarcely had Congress assumed the C & O debt than businessmen began clamoring for the retrocession of Georgetown to Maryland. Held in abeyance by the panic of 1837 and realization that the District was better off than most of the country, the petitions for a return to Maryland resumed in 1838. Residents of the county west of Rock Creek joined with Georgetowners in signing a memorial to the Maryland legislature declaring "without reference to the political advantages of retrocession to Maryland, the pecuniary interest and general prosperity of our citizens will promoted."

The state appeared to favor the plan but took no positive action. In Congress the Committee on the District reported on the petitions adversely and the House then tabled them. Yet, in spite of some improvements in her flour trade, by 1843 the one-time busy little port had lost much of her shipping business. Silt ing up of the river channel prevented all but small vessels from reaching her wharves and thus killed her foreign trade and much of her coastwise commerce. The completion of the Alexandria canal and aqueduct threatened to divert the rest. Population had dropped from 9441 in 1830 to 7300 in 1840, a 22 percent decline. The city had in fact fewer inhabitants than in 1820.45

As the exodus of young men to Washington went on, talk began of
building flour mills and cotton factories that would use water power drawn from the canal. After the collapse of the woolen factory and flour mill in 1821 Georgetown had no factories equipped with power-driven machinery. The cannon foundry, since 1815 owned and managed by General John Mason, was still in operation but on a curtailed basis after the War Department decided to build its own foundry. Otherwise, a few cabinet-making establishments, shoe-makers' shops and the silk "cocoons" that its owner, John Mason, Jr., hoped to see produce five hundred pounds of raw silk a year were the nearest approach to industrial enterprises the city could claim. Only when citizens were convinced of the futility of seeking help from either Maryland or the United States government did they undertake to raise the capital to start manufactures.16

Alexandria had greater cause for discouragement than Georgetown if only because the older city had made tremendous efforts but achieved little or no progress since the turn of the century. In 1800 she had expectations of becoming a commercial power able to challenge Baltimore's regional dominance. Business and civic leaders had built good roads fanning out from Alexandria in order to foster trade with the back country and had poured money into construction of the aqueduct and Alexandria canal to provide connection with the C & O canal. During the thirties the three principal slave-trading concerns and individual firms engaged in the flour and grain trade had apparently prospered. Alexandrians spoke with pride of their shipyards and the variety of local manufactures—rope, iron, tin and copper wares.

16 The Washingtonian, 20 Sep 36; Advocate, 23 Jun 40; Madison Davis, "The Old Cannon Foundry above Georgetown," CHS, Rec, XI, 29-37;
brick, shoes, cabinetware, crackers, beer and ale. Wharves on deep water and good warehouse facilities kept the city as the chief port for the District. Nevertheless she found herself, like the Red Queen, running faster faster to stay where she was. In the thirty years between 1810 and 1840, while Baltimore was becoming the third largest city in the United States, Alexandria's white population rose from 4,903 souls to only 5,659. At the same time a nearly 100 percent increase in the number of free blacks—1627 in 1820—to 1840—did not enhance the community's economic stability.

Some eight hundred taxpayers, most of them whites, were carrying a public debt of $560,000 even after the United States government had assumed the municipality's debt on C & O canal stock. Interest payments and poor relief ate up nearly three-quarters of her revenues yearly. Property was assessed at double its market value. Georgetown profitted from proximity to the capital. Not so Alexandria, unless the government's building of the Long Bridge over the Potomac ranked as a "fringe benefit." In over forty years, apart from the emergency appropriation of $20,000 for victims of the fire of 1827 and $250,000 to liquidate "the Holland loan," Congress allotted Alexandria County $441,700—$400,000 for the Alexandria canal, the rest for a courthouse and a county jail—out of the total $9,707,000 spent in the District.

The city, watching local real estate and commodity prices sag, felt herself

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17 Avery Craven, Soil Exhaustion, pp. 128-30; Columbian, 12, 14; Apr, 7 Jul 31, 16 Jul 32; Intelligencer, 3 Jul 33, 20 May, 10 Jul, 5 Nov 35, 27 Apr 36, 26 Apr 37; Washington Metropolis, 12 Mar 39; Advocate, 13 Nov 37, 15 Aug 38, 1, 8, 25 Nov 39; Alexandria Gazette, 2, 6, 9 Jul 33, 17 May, 6 Jun 37, 27 Apr, 19 May 38, 20 Apr 43; Reg Deb, 23c, 28, 8 Jan 35, pp. 966-68; Third and Sixth U.S. Census, 1810 and 1840; Tyrone Power, 218-20.
treated like a poor relation, as unhappily she was. Cut off from sharing in
the business visitors brought to the capital and with very limited access to
the specie that government salaries kept in circulation in Washington, Alexan-
drians considered the congressional refusal to renew their banking charters
a high-handed and crippling blow. The petitions of 1840 and 1841 for retro-
cession to Virginia were a predictable consequence.48

In spite of seven hundred signatures on the first petition and a city-
wide referendum in October 1841 which produced the second appeal to Congress,
both petitions were rather expressions of indignation than organized plans
of action. They failed. But confidence in the future of the city revived as
the aqueduct and the Alexandria canal approached completion. If Alexandria
could capture the bulk of the C & O canal traffic, her recovery might be
rapid, the slights of Congress notwithstanding. On the 4th of July 1843,
twelve years after the start of the expensive and difficult engineering project,
officials of the Alexandria Canal Company let the first trickle of water into
the aqueduct and thence into the canal. Six months later the formal opening
of the new waterway took place. The results were disappointing. C & O barges
brought barrels of grain and flour to the city's wharves, but the volume of
the flour trade in 1843 still fell far short of that of 1831. Unless the
C & O canal reached the coal fields at Cumberland, the $1,500,000 spent on
the aqueduct and lateral canal would be money thrown away. It was probably
anxiety to see the main waterway finished that had led Alexandria and Georgetown

48 U.S. Stats., V, ch. CLXVII, 262-63; Cong. Globe, 29th, 1st, 8 May 40,
App., p. 779; H Rpt 60th, 21st, 15, 22 Apr 36, Ser 295; H Rpt 51st, 29th, 1st,
25 May 41, Ser 446; Alexandria Gazette, 24 Apr 38, 9 Jun 40, 26 Jan 42, 1
Mar 43, Supplement; Petitions S24A-S4, 5 Jan 37, S26A-55, 18 Jul 40, H 29A-
G3.1, 13 Dec 41.
to approve the congressional decision of 1842 to turn over the District cities' canal stock to the state of Maryland, by then the C & O's chief sponsor.

Maryland, however, had overextended herself in promoting internal improvements and work on the canal continued to lag. Early in 1846 Alexandrians concluded that their only source of help lay in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This time they mapped out a careful campaign. 49

On 8 Jan 1846 the municipal common council again declared in favor of retrocession to Virginia. The council sent two men to Richmond to secure the endorsement of the Virginia Assembly, and Mayor Rustis wrote to Robert N. T. Hunter of Virginia, a member of the House Committee on the District of Columbia: "Some of our most wealthy and influential citizens who were then opposed to the measure are now its warmest advocates." The reason, he added, "is manifest, and can be given in three words as well as a volume—We are disenfranchised." While a sense of political justice coupled with personal political ambitions was reason enough for some petitioners, the basic motive of more was patently economic. "It is a fact, which it is useless longer to attempt to conceal, that we have long been and are yet in a very depressed state; that our business, in a measure, is paralyzed; that our mechanics are not kept employed; that many of them have been compelled to leave us; and that more must follow them unless we speedily obtain Retrocession and Relief." Melancholy experience had proved that Congress neither could nor would bestow time and attention upon Alexandria, whereas Virginia legislators

49 Columbian, 7 Jul 31; Alexandria Gazette, 30 May, 3, 4 Jul, 27 Dec 43, 1 Feb, 3 Apr 44, 2 Jan, 10 Mar 45; Intelligencer, 6 Dec 43; Sanderlin, National Project, pp. 47-48; Petitions, H27A-G5.3, 8 Jul 41, H28A-G5.4, 16 Feb 44.
had "mostly like feelings and interests with ourselves." The Virginia Assembly voted to support the petitioners. Two weeks later "Mad Tom" Hunter submitted a report to Congress recommending the retrocession of all Alexandria County. Residents of "the country part of said County" and over 350 townspeople objected, largely because they expected heavier taxation under Virginia than under congressional rule. Both sides in this local controversy claimed to represent at least two-thirds of the property involved.

Congress displayed a surprising indifference to the questions at stake. In the spring of 1846 the probability of war with Mexico was a more pressing matter. While Georgetown remained officially silent, the Washington city councils took a stand against retrocession: it might "prove the first step toward abrogating or destroying the compact by which the seat of government was permanently located in the District, and result in the removal of the capital to some other place." Neither house of Congress debated the bill seriously. On 8 May it came to a vote in the House. Unmoved by Hunter's skilful advocacy, sixty five members, nineteen of them Southerners, voted nay, but ninety-six ayes carried the measure. Three days later President Polk announced that Mexican troops had crossed the border and a state of war with Mexico existed. Alexandria's affairs had to wait. When the Senate acted on 2 July, the bill passed quickly. The act contained only one proviso, that a referendum including the votes of men without property must show a majority in favor of return to Virginia.

The referendum took place at the Alexandria Court House in early September. Voting by voice, 763 men declared for retrocession, 222 against. Appeals of the dissidents to the Virginia Assembly were unavailing, and when the state not long afterwards subscribed to a large block of Alexandria canal stock and a little later guaranteed some of the company bonds, dissatisfaction apparently evaporated. In 1850 when the C & O canal reached Cumberland, Alexandria would reap her reward for her courage in constructing the aqueduct and canal, for she then became the chief terminus of all C & O traffic.

For the slave-owning South the return of a third of the ten-mile square to Virginia was a victory. No one, not John Quincy Adams himself, labelled it so. Compared to the annexation of Texas and the predictable outcome of war with Mexico, the enlargement of Virginia was indeed a minor matter. The very brief discussion of the bill in the House had skirted the question of how retrocession would affect the abolitionists' campaign; in fact the only allusion to slavery was practically an aside and went unchallenged.

Yet no member of Congress could have failed to realize the retrocession, the slave trade and the perpetuation of slavery in the District of Columbia were intimately connected. In 1836 a confidential letter of John Robertson, Congressman from Virginia, had spelled out the relationship between retrocession and the proslavery interests of the South.

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52 Cong. Globe, 29C, 18, 8 May 46, p. 778.
I have a very strong notion, Robertson wrote his brother, of submitting a resolution for the retrocession of the District to its former owners. I see no necessity for the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress over ten miles square. The security of their property, public buildings, etc., might be guaranteed. . . . The slave-holding states I should suppose, would be anxious for this effectual barrier against the plots of the abolitionists and many of the Northern members I should suppose would view it as a means of getting themselves out of an unpleasant dilemma. 53

Neither Robertson's resolution nor a similar one offered in the Senate by William Preston of South Carolina had won majority approval. Two years later when the Georgetown petition came before the House, John Quincy Adams had supported the motion to table it because debate would entail consideration of abolition and a change of the seat of government. Henry Wise of Virginia had angrily declared it was the abolitionists who sought to retain the District of Columbia for their own purposes; he himself would join with "the gentlemen of the West" to move the capital if Congress persisted in ignoring the pleas for return of the federal District to the states. His associates had not bowed to his threat. Yet eight years later opposition to a very similar bill yielded quickly. Not until 1861 would a Republican Congress, recognizing the cost to the Union of the loss of the trans-Potomac area, talk of undoing the act of 1846. 54

Slavery and the Slave Trade in the District

Growth of the Slave Trade

The slave trade in the District of Columbia had been growing steadily

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53 Ltr., John Robertson to Wyndham Robertson, 6 Feb 36, Robertson Papers, (Univ. of Chicago).

54 Ltr., John Robertson to Wyndham Robertson, 7 Mar 36, Robertson Papers; Cong. Globe, 21C, 15, 7 Mar 36, p. 211, 25C, 28, 10 Apr 38, pp. 296-97, 16 Apr 38, pp. 308. See below ch. VI.
since 1815. The human tragedies it brought so distressed a young man visiting that year in Washington that he wrote A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States. Largely an eye-witness account, it was one of the first effective pieces of anti-slavery propaganda in America. Torrey described a coffle of slaves he watched from the door of the Capitol: "a procession of men, women and children, resembling that of a funeral... they were bound together in pairs, some with ropes, and some with iron chains." Calling the federal jail a "storehouse" for slave merchants, he explained that "several hundred people, including not legal slaves only, but many kidnapped Freedmen... are annually collected at Washington (as if it were an emporium of slavery) for transportation to slave regions." Familiarity with scenes such as Jesse Torrey wrote of had not made them acceptable to much of the local public. Early in the century the Grand Jury of Alexandria County had vainly protested against the inhumanity of the trade. In 1819 the mayor and councils of Washington equally fruitlessly had begged Congress "to prohibit the transportation of slaves through the city, or depositing them in the city for the purpose of transportation." Foreigners were shocked by sights they could not avoid. A sordid business at best, usually conducted by men whom reputable citizens despised, it nevertheless expanded under the mounting demand of Southern planters for field hands. By the early thirties dealers in Washington and Alexandria were advertising with some regularity for two or three hundred Negroes at a time; the numbers of auctions rose proportionately. Virginia planters undertaking intensive improved farming to which slave labor proved ill-adapted disposed of their field hands as rapidly as possible, while firms like Franklin and Armfield of Alexandria paid good prices for them.
1835 the District had become "the very seat and centre of the domestic slave trade."  

The legal basis of the traffic rested upon 18th century laws inherited from Maryland and Virginia. Their very antiquity created some uncertainty about what was lawful, what an abuse. A Maryland statute of 1796, though allowing the passage of slaves through Washington County, forbade their importation for sale or residence; much of the trafficking in slaves in Washington City was therefore patently contrary to law. A more distressing feature of the business was, however, entirely legal. A Maryland law of 1719 strengthened by the municipal slave code sanctioned the jailing of any Negro unable to produce proof of his freedom and therefore presumed to be a runaway slave. If no white man came forward with evidence of the black man's free status and no master claimed him, the federal Marshal of the District advertised him for sale. Even if he established his legal freedom but could not pay for his keep while in prison, the Marshal sold him into slavery to recover the jail fees. Alexandria had devised a less harsh system of binding out the Negro to meet the jail fees and selling him only if at the end of a year he still could not furnish proof of his freedom.

55 Jesse Torrey, A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States, pp. 33-34, 41; Petition, H16A-C5.5, 13 Dec 19; Captain Basil Hall, Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828, III, 31-48; James Craven, Soil Exhaus-
Congressional Attitudes toward the Slave Trade

In 1826 a free Negro from New York, come to see the sights of the capital, was arrested in Washington and jailed as a runaway; only the intervention of the governor of the state saved him from being sold into slavery for life. For years past Washington newspapers had carried occasional notices of the sale of a Negro for jail fees; the procedure was routine. But now a New York congressman demanded to know what law authorized such action. The House investigated. The remedy proposed was not the repeal of the statute but an arrangement whereby the city corporations should pay the jail fees for a free Negro arrested as a fugitive slave. The bill met with an indignant outcry from Georgetown. Congress dropped the plan.56

Two years later Congressman Charles Miner of Pennsylvania told the House that thirty years of neglect of the local slave laws had allowed "numerous and gross corruptions" to creep in; slave dealers exploiting their general "impunity" had made the District their headquarters; they used the federal jails freely to house their chattels in transit. He objected to allowing officers of the federal government to receive "emoluments" from the trade. If, he asked, a free Negro was sold for $300 in order to recoup $50 in jail fees, what happened to the remaining $250? It did not go into the public treasury but into the Marshal's pocket. Investigation showed, Miner asserted, that in five years' time the District jails had lodged 452 slaves and 290 Negroes taken as runaways; fifteen Negroes had later proved to be free men but five had nevertheless been sold into life slavery. Miner's inferences

56 Intelligencer, 11 Apr 16; Reg Deb, 19C, 28, 26 Dec 26, pp. 555-56; H Doc 71, 19C, 28, 31 Jan 27, Ser 151.
about kidnapping needed no elaboration. The House called for a report but
took no other action. A hundred years later a study in the Journal of Negro
History presented the thesis that kidnapping in the District of Columbia was
relatively rare, that most of the Negroes taken into custody and sold had in
fact been fugitive slaves. Legal or illegal, the traffic distressed numberless
citizens. 57

Congressional Attitudes toward Emancipation in the District

Henry Clay of Kentucky, toward the end of his life known as the "Great
Compromiser," reminded the public in the 1830's that the slave trade was a
necessary concomitant of slavery itself. Had southern congressmen not fully
accepted that view, they might have consented to curbs upon the trade in the
District if only as a means of removing a constant irritant to Northerners in
the capital. Willingness to consider such a plan vanished, however, as
petitions began to multiply urging not only prohibition of the slave trade
but also of slavery in the District. No one suggested that local slaveowners
abused their bondmen. On the contrary, people familiar with conditions in
the District cities admitted that slaves, mostly household servants, were
generally well-treated and were in some ways better off than free Negroes.
But the memorials pointed out, the federal District was the one place in the
United States where a simple majority in Congress could put an end to an evil

57 Reg Deb 20c, 28, 6-9 Jan 29, pp. 157, 176-77, 191-92; H Doc
215, 20c, 15, 21Mar 29, Ser 173; H Doc 60, 20c, 28, 29 Jan 29, Ser 190;
William T. Laprade, "The Domestic Slave Trade in the District of Columbia,"
Journal of Negro History, XI, no. 1 (Jan 1926), 19-34.
institution, a "dishonour to the nation." By 1831 when John Quincy Adams began his sixteen years of service in the House, the number of anti-slavery petitions was mounting rapidly and in the sessions of 1837-38 reached a total of no less than 130,200.59

Before 1835 both House and Senate referred the petitions to the District Committees, the committees recommended rejection and votes to table followed quickly. Occasionally a proponent of the peculiar institution would declare it beneficent and state that Congress had no power to legislate it out of existence even in the District of Columbia, while Northerners replied that "exclusive jurisdiction" over the District gave Congress the authority to act. In these exchanges both sides strove to keep a temperate approach lest a breach between North and South become irreparable. But as the volume of petitions rose ever higher, Southerners became increasingly angry and alarmed, for they saw in agitation for emancipation in the District merely the preliminary to attacks upon slavery in the states. A long House Report pronounced any congressional interference with the institution in the District a breach of faith with Maryland and Virginia, an invitation to slave insurrection, certain to bring economic disaster, and, because District citizens had not expressed a wish for change, a despotic, unwarranted act. During 1835 and 1836 violent speeches in the Senate had their counterpart in the House where


infuriated Southerners tried to muzzle John Quincy Adams, while "Old Man Eloquent" parried and thrust in his fight for freedom of petition and freedom of speech. The "Gag Rule" voted in the House in 1836 and kept in force till December 1844 failed to silence him, though it meant that the House refused to receive any petition relating to slavery or the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Perhaps his hard-won triumph in 1844 in getting the gag rule rescinded accounts for his not speaking out in 1846 against the retrocession of Alexandria. Skirmishes could be lost if the battle were won.60 Except for releasing Alexandria County to a slave-holding state, Congress took no action whatsoever on slavery or the slave trade in the District. The heated arguments netted nothing but a sharpened awareness that the lull of the mid-forties could not last.

Local Attitudes toward Slavery

Permanent residents of the District, whether they approved or disapproved, recognized slavery as an established part of the social order. Except for families like the Adams, most of "the best people" from the

President down owned slaves. Masters often hired them out as servants to householders who did not themselves own slaves. Hence the "servant problem" already known to the North scarcely existed in the District cities and life for the upper classes was proportionately pleasant. Yet in the 1820's moral scruples about the peculiar institution assailed many thoughtful people. They abhorred the by-products of the system, such as the public sale of slaves to satisfy the debts of a bankrupt owner. In 1827 the newly organized Washington Society for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia published a summary of slavery's "deleterious influence upon the welfare and prosperity of our city." Disclaiming any "squeamish sensibility" and passing over "the detrimental effects of slavery upon the morals of the community" as "too obvious to need illustration," the officers of the society declared "the first evil consequence...the prostration of industry; an effect especially visible in the labouring classes of the community, but felt in its remote ramifications in every class of society." Although the city levied a large tax on the slaves of non-residents, the use of hired slaves on public works continued, leaving free laborers unemployed. As masters usually allowed their hired slaves only a pittance to live on and that little frequently went for intoxicating liquor, "the burden of the support of many of these labourers falls upon society at large, while the proceeds of their labour go to fill the coffers of a distant master." Under such circumstances "industrious and enterprising men, from various parts of our country" refused to settle in Washington. 61 Observing that immediate wholesale emancipation might endanger

the "tranquility" of the South, the society urged for the District where slaves were relatively few a system of gradual emancipation and, a far more radical idea, "enfranchisement of all that shall be born after such period as the wisdom of Congress may determine upon." 62

Perhaps it was alarm at so revolutionary a proposal as enfranchisement and fear of its drawing more Negroes to Washington that led the municipality in 1827 to place larger restrictions upon blacks—heavier fines for disturbing the peace, a stricter curfew and, as guarantee for good behavior, for every free Negro family a $500 bond signed by two white men. When enforced, the curfew prevented Negroes from attending the theatre as they had once; Joseph Jefferson informed the city councils that the regulation cost his company $10 a night, since colored people, forced to leave early, no longer formed part of his audience. On the other hand, the councils were eager to check the slave trade; they imposed a $400 license fee upon every slave dealer in Washington, only to have the circuit court rule that they had exceeded the city's charter authority. 63

Official obstructions notwithstanding, anti-slavery sentiment spread. The six hundred District citizens who petitioned Congress in 1828 to institute gradual abolition appeared to be merely the vanguard of a growing local army determined to rid the District of slavery. Faith that the American colonization Society could resolve the problem of a large free colored population by


persuading Negroes to return to Africa fed the zeal for emancipation. Though local Negroes as early as 1817 had declared themselves against removal from the United States, whites in Washington organized the African Education Society in 1829 to provide "persons of color destined to Africa" with schooling "in letters, Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts." Gratitude for such opportunities and for freedom should induce Negroes to depart en masse for Liberia. No Washingtonian objected in 1830 to William Lloyd Garrison's advertised plan of publishing a weekly abolitionist paper, the Liberator. He chose Boston instead of the capital only because Benjamin Lundy decided to issue his Genius of Universal Emancipation from Washington.64

Unhappily in August 1831 a bloody slave insurrection in southern Virginia caused a revulsion of feeling. Whites throughout the South were terrified. Nat Turner's rebellion destroyed all hope for the gradual emancipation bill then before the Virginia legislature. In the District of Columbia householders were the more frightened because only a week earlier one of Mrs. William Thornton's slaves had attempted to murder her. Hearsay had it that the man had been "inflamed" by abolitionist teachings. In the eyes of otherwise sensible citizens, abolitionists became dangerous agitators. Slaves were creatures "unfit for freedom; ignorant, servile and depraved." For the first time in her history Georgetown enacted a black code. Less drastic than

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Washington's or Alexandria's, the new ordinance listed among the punishable Negro offenses the possession or circulation of literature "calculated to excite insurrection or insubordination among the slaves or colored people... and particularly a newspaper called the Liberator." Eight months after the Turner insurrection Benjamin Lundy noted that "opposition to everything like emancipation runs high, and the abolition society here has not met for some time." Fear of the "inflammatory" nature of abolitionist pamphlets and newspapers gradually gave rise to a hysteria which the avalanche of anti-slavery petitions pouring in upon Congress heightened. 65

Tension reached the bursting point in the summer of 1835. A botany teacher who had come to study and lecture in Washington had brought with him specimens wrapped in abolitionist newspapers; a visitor to his lodgings, seeing the wrappings, denounced him as an abolitionist agent seeking to stir up local Negroes. His arrest was but the start of a week's witch hunt in Washington, carried on, like many another race riot in America, largely by gangs of boys and irresponsible young men out of work. The mob's main objective was the intimidation of Negroes, "the apprehension of a very few obnoxious colored persons, and the punishment of such as have circulated the incendiary pamphlets."

The mayor, knowing that the half-dozen ward constables could not restrain several hundred angry men, called for military protection. Soldiers and clerks guarded government buildings while citizens enrolled as patrols under the command of the mayor and Major General Walter Jones of the District.

65 Intelligencer, 12 Aug, 19 Sep, 8 Oct 31; Columbian, 8 Nov 31; H Rpt 691, 2d, 13, 18 May 36, p. 16, Ser 295; Stampp, The Peculiar Institution, pp. 133-36; Benjamin Lundy, p. 257.
militia. No Negro was injured bodily and the damage to property was not severe. A Negro school and several Negro tenements demolished, the windows of a colored church broken, a house of ill fame burned, and a fashionable restaurant razed because the mob thought the mulatto restaurant-owner, Beverley Snow, guilty of derogatory remarks about the wives of white mechanics. But the damage to the spirit of the community was enormous. Snow published a defense of his own character; other Negroes kept their feelings to themselves. Upper class whites, ashamed and grieved at such demonstrations, attempted to explain them as inspired by riots in Baltimore or the result of some weeks of layoffs at the Navy Yard. "Mechanics" deprecated the lawlessness and denied responsibility for it. Perhaps testimony to the depth of public chagrin lies in the fact that no similar outburst ever recurred in Washington. Nevertheless the "Snow storm" had bitter, far-reaching results.

Whites had directed their fury primarily at free Negroes in the community. Shame over the violence intensified rather than lessened resentments at the mere presence of free blacks in Washington: "We have already too many free negroes and mulattoes in this city, and the policy of our corporate authorities should tend to the diminution of this insolent class . . . A motion is now before the Common Council for prohibiting shop-licenses henceforth to this class of people. If they wish to live here, let them become subordinates and laborers, as nature has designed." The city councils passed the new ordinance. Thenceforward Negroes could drive carts and hackneys but

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could not obtain licenses to run taverns or eating houses. Urged on by complaints that the black code had "resumed its old character of a dead letter," the municipality also increased the bond required of every Negro family to $1000 and denied colored people without special permits the right to be on the streets after 10 at night for any purpose. 67

The cessation of local petitions for prohibition of the slave trade further indicated a change in the prevailing temper of the community, but until 1837 citizens chose to ignore the battles raging in Congress. The gag rule in the House which forbade acceptance, let alone discussion, of Northern pleas for abolition seemed suitable to men like Joseph Gales, William Seaton and Peter Force who disapproved of slavery but believed that the District cities should be left to settle their own domestic problems. The labor paper, The Washington, advocated hanging Northerners who invaded the South to interfere with slaves. In 1837 members of the Grand Jury of Washington County protested to Congress at what they labelled outside interference: until then they had maintained silence in hopes "that time and due reflection" would cause critics of District institutions to stop "their iniquitous proceedings," but since they continued, let Congress intervene. Georgetown, long the most liberal of the three cities in matters of race relations, added her objections to being "the political football of the nation," and in 1839 leading Washingtonians filed a similar statement.

It is not, [they declared,] that your memorialists are slave-holders . . . many of them do not own slaves, and some of them might be forbidden

by conscience to hold any, but these, nevertheless, unite with others in this prayer. ..not only from the just respect due to the legal rights of those of their neighbors who do possess slaves, but from a deep conviction that the continual agitation of the subject by those who can have no right to interfere with it is calculated to have an injurious influence on the peace and tranquility of the community.

If permanent residents felt that only they should act, the course of events since mid summer 1835 persuaded them to do nothing about slavery and to discourage free people of color from making their homes in the District. 68

The Free Negro Community

In spite of the efforts of white people to keep the colored population small, the number of free Negroes grew steadily in each of the District cities. The increase was most pronounced in Georgetown and Alexandria where, of the free inhabitants, 18 and 20 percent respectively were colored in 1820, but 27 and 29 percent twenty years later; in Washington the change was comparatively slight, 19 percent in 1820, 22 percent in 1840. Still at the later date 1,800 free Negroes seemed like a great many to Washington's 16,800 whites. The number of slaves had declined in all three cities, by nearly half in Georgetown; all together in 1840 had fewer than 3,800. 69 Manumission and slaves' purchase of their freedom obviously accounted for part of the growth of the free colored population, but migration of Negroes into the District from Maryland and Virginia or farther south was an even larger factor.


69 Fourth, Fifth and Sixth U.S. Census, 1820, 1830 and 1840.
In view of the severity of the municipal black codes the question arises of why colored people chose to move into the District. Answers are several. Unless free Negroes were willing to venture into the Northern states they could not count on more generous treatment. Apparently the North seemed alien country. Southern states had harsher black codes than the District cities and enforced them more rigorously. Here, once any given crisis passed, public opinion tended to allow relaxation of the strict letter of the law; and the half dozen constables could not have enforced it if they wished to. Northerners in Congress, furthermore, though tacitly pledged to non-interference, probably represented to colored people safeguards against excesses. The Snow riots occurred when Congress was not in session. Finally, as long as Negroes carried their permits of residence with them and observed all other municipal regulations, the laws that restricted their activities also provided them with some protection from kidnapping and unwarranted molestation.

Voluntary manumission was more frequent in Delaware and Maryland than in the District, but here also it was not uncommon. Kindly owners at death might bequeath their slaves freedom, just as some masters provided schooling for the slave children of their households and willed bits of property to them when freed. More often the bondsman purchased his freedom with the savings he accumulated by various means, usually by selling fruits and vegetables raised in the garden patch his master allowed him. Once free, the Negro's first concern ordinarily was to buy the freedom of members of his family. Colored women in turn bought freedom for husbands and children. The task might take years. People with the tenacity and ambition to accomplish it were people of character. Not every free Negro, to be sure, was a wholly admirable
person. Poverty, discouragement and, above all, lack of recognition as responsible citizen might undermine his determination to live by white men’s standards. Whites occasionally pointed to the crime statistics to prove Negroes’ unreliability: half the inmates of the penitentiary and jails were colored, whereas Negroes made up less than a third of the population at large. Thieving, drunkenness and disorderly conduct were the most common charges against them. Although a seemingly unprejudiced witness described Washington’s free Negroes as “ignorant, poor and vicious,” Judge Cranch remarked of the Methodists among them: “They are seldom or never brought before the criminal courts for misconduct.” Among fair-minded whites the consensus was that the District’s free Negroes of this era “constituted a very superior class of their race.”

That superiority derived partly from education. While the African Education Society of Washington announced its intention merely “to avoid the hindrance or discouragement of day schools for Africans,” individual whites from time to time opened schools for colored children. First in Georgetown, later in Washington, Mrs. Mary Billing, an Englishwoman, taught Negro children; at the end of her life two fellow countrymen carried on her work in Washington and Georgetown, while a third opened a colored school in

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Alexandria. Many of the District's Negro teachers of a somewhat later date received their education from Mrs. Billings or from the eccentric Maryland philanthropist, Thomas Tabbs, who taught classes outdoors when he couldn't find indoor space. Before the Nat Turner insurrection hardened the hearts of white congregations, Sunday schools also offered opportunities to colored people. Two churches organized Sunday evening classes where adult Negroes might learn to read, and every denomination enrolled Negro children in Sunday school, at first in classes with white children, later, as the colored population increased, in separate units. That form of Christian endeavor ended in 1831; thereafter only the Roman Catholic church welcomed Negro children.

Meanwhile in 1827 Father Vanlomen, priest of the Holy Trinity church in Georgetown, founded the first seminary for colored girls and himself taught classes of Negro boys. Moreover, contrary to the assumption of later generations, during the first thirty years of the 19th century, colored children in the District sometimes attended white day schools.

Self-respecting Negro families believed passionately in the importance of educating their children. Long unwilling to rely exclusively upon white charity and in the 1830's unable to count on help from benevolent colored people opened and maintained schools at their own expense. Lack of money forced some to close, but others replaced them; eager pupils were never wanting.

About 1822, after the Resolute Beneficial Society had had to shut its school, Henry Smothers provided a classroom and taught his neighbors' children free of charge; he then built a schoolhouse at northwest 14th and H streets where as many as a hundred pupils attended. When he could no longer finance the enterprise, John Prout took it over and charged every child 12 ½ cents a month
tuition. There John F. Cook got the training that he then put to use as a teacher. The school rarely had fewer than 150 pupils. As its head in 1835 and thus a leader of the Negro community, Cook had to flee for his life during the "Snow storm", but he returned a year later, reopened the school and taught until he was ordained as Washington's first colored Presbyterian minister in 1843. That year John Thomas Johnson, another pupil of John Prout, started classes that quickly enrolled nearly 175 pupils. Five or six other schools were in operation in the meantime. One of some note was Louisa Parke Costin's school on Capitol Hill. Louisa's father provided the schoolhouse. For twenty-four years a trusted messenger at the Bank of Washington, William Costin was a remarkable man. His father was believed to be a member of a distinguished Virginia family and his mother, grand-daughter of a Cherokee Indian chief, was reputedly the child of William Dandridge, father of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington. William Costin, by Virginia law born free because of his Indian ancestry, bought his wife's freedom from Eliza Custis, then Mrs. Thomas Law of Washington. He inspired in his daughters a passion for service to their race. Louisa conducted her school till her death and her younger sister carried it on until 1839. All told, several hundred colored children yearly obtained some schooling during the thirties, and a still larger number during the forties.

In the development of a distinctive Negro community, colored churches like colored schools played a considerable part. In 1814 Henry Foxall's liberality had enabled Negroes in Georgetown to build the colored Mt. Zion Methodist Episcopal church, but for many years that remained subject to the parent white congregation. Complete separation from white churches began in
1820 in Washington when a group of Negroes withdrew from the Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal church to form their own. In the course of a few years they purchased the building erected by Presbyterians early in the century on South Capitol street. Then as every Protestant denomination began relegating its colored members to the rear of the gallery and expecting them to take communion after their white fellows, Negroes, angered at this change in the treatment accorded them, broke away, until mixed congregations became the exception. A separate Negro Baptist church appeared in 1833, and two additional Methodist churches before the end of the decade. Colored Sunday schools followed, designed as much to teach children to read as to understand the Bible. In 1841 a group of Presbyterians met at John Cook's schoolhouse to lay plans for a Negro Presbyterian church. In that case white friends helped. Six months later the Presbytery of the District of Columbia gathered in Alexandria to accept the new church. When the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian church for Negroes opened its doors in 1843 and John F. Cook was ordained its minister, whites were as impressed as Negroes at the dignity of the ceremony. 72

These churches from the moment of organization became the center of Negro social as well as religious life. Colored people without church affiliation were likely to be of an irresponsible type more given to dicing and drinking than to establishing themselves as solid citizens in the Negro

Class distinctions within that community developed early: in mid-twentieth century they still mark it. Lower class Negroes apparently looked up to superior colored persons as fully as the upper class looked down upon the inferior. All Negroes reserved the prefix Mr. or Mrs. for their respected intelligent fellows; their lessers remained Tom and Sam or Mary and Sally. The leaders were the ministers and teachers who created and strengthened the cohesive sense of responsibility of every member of the group for all their people in the area. It was John Prout who presided at the "large and very respectable" gathering at the African Methodist Episcopal church of Washington where in 1831 Negroes repeated their earlier rejection of the Colonization Society's program. The meeting formally declared that "the soil that gave us birth is our only true and veritable home." Determination to prove their right to remain and be acknowledged as Americans probably contributed to the stress upper class Negroes placed upon exemplary behavior.

Little by little free Negroes overcame the worst of the hostility under which they suffered between 1831 and 1836. The panic aroused among whites in that period gradually subsided, and citizens slowly came to accept their colored neighbors with relative equanimity albeit without enthusiasm. When William Costin died in 1843, white men as well as black attended his funeral; John Quincy Adams paid him special tribute.

73 Intelligencer, 4 May 31.
74 Spec Rpt Comm Ed, 1871, p. 212.
blacks were still sharply limited and the Washington City Directory of 1846, unlike earlier editions, omitted all Negroes from its listing. Nevertheless, by the mid-forties life was less difficult for free Negroes in the District of Columbia than in any of the slave states. The chief threat to the local Negro community lay in a possible inundation of blacks from the South whose coming might revive the fears of white men.

Social Life and Diversions

Pastimes in the District of the thirties and early forties differed little from the diversions of earlier years. Negroes, hampered by the curfew, no longer attended the theatre, and the Jockey Club races waned in popularity till they stopped altogether in 1839, but most of the familiar simple pleasures and a few novel ones were available to everyone—fishing or swimming in river or canal, a regatta to watch, the excitement of a balloon ascension, and, at a cost of twenty-five cents, a look at the Siamese twins. Fourth of July parades and public celebrations of other great events still provided universal entertainment both for participants and spectators. At the instigation of the Association of Mechanics of Washington, in 1830 the city organized an elaborate parade to mark the victory of "the working men of Paris" in the new French revolution. Marines and companies of the District militia led the procession, and then came the President, his cabinet, and members of the French Legation, followed by "the various Societies...the Printers, with a Press and other apparatus, on a large car, printing and distributing an ode written for the occasion—the Cordwainers' Society, the Hatters Society, etc., all having stages on which members were at work at their respective trades." That evening citizens who could afford tickets
attended a ball at Carusi's Assembly Rooms. Still more beguiling were the parties of Indians who from time to time came to Washington on tribal business. Interest in Charles King's portraits of Indian chiefs paled before the thrill of seeing red men in the flesh. In 1837 when the celebrated Black Hawk, Chief Keokuk and some thirty Sac and Fox braves got off the steam cars at the B & O railroad depot, fascinated crowds gathered and followed them up Pennsylvania avenue to the beat of Indian drums and the wail of Sac musical instruments. Washingtonians delightedly told of fierce Winnebagos who, persuaded to enter the rotundo of the Capitol and there seeing the frieze of Daniel Boone slaying a savage, suddenly uttered a dreadful war whoop and raced from the building. 75

Men in this disenfranchised city, furthermore, found a kind of vicarious satisfaction in national party manoeuvrings. Pre-convention rallies in Washington were often lively affairs, whether conducted by the Central Old Hickory Club, the Hard Cider Boys who erected a log cabin on Centre Market Square, or Henry Clay enthusiasts who paraded on the Avenue with "bands of music, flags and barges of every description." Regardless of the election outcome, men, women and children looked forward to the inaugural celebration. On 4 March 1833 bitter weather, only 11° above zero, and President Jackson's feeble health ruled out a parade; the President took the oath of office and

delivered his address in the House of Representatives and then retired to bed. In 1837, however, warm sun shone as Martin Van Buren set out for the Capitol in a phaeton built of wood from the frigate Constitution, while a splendid military escort added color to the procession; as in 1829, the swearing in ceremony took place on the east portico of the Capitol. Four years later local Whigs arranged an enormous parade which began at the City Hall and moved on up to the Treasury before accompanying the President-elect on horseback to the Capitol. To enable the crowds gathered there to see and hear old "Tippecanoe", the inaugural committee had a platform built out over the steps, a plan followed ever since. The most memorable feature of 4 March 1845, on the other hand, was the result of squabbles among President Polk's supporters: two rival halls, at the larger of which lack of a checkroom produced a "chaos of cloaks and hats" which took days to untangle, while at the smaller to which tickets cost $10 the astonished managers discovered they had $1000 profit; they divided the windfall between Washington's two orphan asylums. 76

Despite steam ferries, improved roads and new bridges, social intercourse among the District cities was less general than at the opening of the century. Alexandrians now rarely took part in public functions north of the Potomac. Their handsome 18th-century theatre was still running in the 1830's, but they could no longer "afford to be merry," Tyrone Power observed, and the

76 U.S. Telegraph, 5 Mar 33; Intelligencer, 6 Mar 33, 6 Mar 37; Globe, 5 Mar 45; ltrs, William A. Graham to his wife, 4 Mar, 6 Jul 41, William A. Graham Papers (SHC); ltr, Spencer Jarnagin to his wife, Mary Jarnagin, 1 May 44, Jarnagin Papers (SHC).
popular Irish actor, who played to packed houses in Washington, noted with pique that his name did not draw a large enough audience in Alexandria to warrant a performance. Georgetown, where a few congressmen still boarded and some government employees lived, was less aloof, but here also householders conducted their social affairs independent of Washington's.77

Meanwhile the upper ranks of Washington society developed a kind of double life, when Congress was in session a routine of calls, dinners and receptions, in late summer and autumn a relaxed, intimate give-and-take among friends. Few permanent residents had as yet built summer homes on the city's outskirts, although Amos Kendall acquired a farm and Samuel Harrison Smith, Robert Brent and Thomas Law had long had country houses in areas that would be densely populated parts of 20th-century Washington. Boardinghousekeepers and tradesmen catering to transients doubtless dreaded the off-season, but well-to-do people took special pleasure in the months when city reverted to village. As government offices closed at three and the customary dinner hour was four, late summer afternoons brought leisurely householders out for a stroll. The "Avenue" turned into a gay promenade where friends and acquaintances exchanged greetings and news and later adjourned for tea at each other's houses. Twice a week young and old gathered on the western terrace of the Capitol to hear the Marine Band play. At such times, freed of "the whirl of congressional excitement and strife," Washington was at her best. Between August and December tourists were few, and citizens gratefully reclaimed the

77 Tyrone Power, Impressions of America, I, 218-50; ltr, James Graham to William A. Graham, 1 Apr 31, Graham Papers (SHC).
Nevertheless all Washingtonians with entree to official society acknowledged its charms. Once the Peggy Eaton feud had worn itself out, receptions at the White House resumed their former hospitable character, and people who had been horrified at President Jackson's first inaugural reception and uneasy over his relaxing his predecessors' rules of etiquette were delighted at the elegance of his dinner parties. "Such a variety and profusion," wrote a sophisticated Southerner, "and costly table furniture I have never seen." President Van Buren, a tactful and gracious host even in the opinion of bitter political enemies, continued the traditional "drawing rooms" but refused invitations except to dine with department heads and foreign ministers. Soon after his inauguration, the recently widowed Mrs. James Madison returned to live in Washington in the house built by her brother-in-law on Madison Place, from which she then till her death in 1819 her house was a center of the city's social life; New Year's callers customarily went directly from the White House to pay their respects to her.

John Tyler, hurriedly sworn in as President when eight-year old President Harrison died five weeks after his inauguration, was less popular

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78 M. B. Smith, First Forty Years, p. 376; Intelligencer, 1 Jun 38, 22 May 39, 23 Sep 42, 12 Jul 45; Washington Metropolis, 11 Nov 39.

79 M. B. Smith, First Forty Years, p. 306; ltr. James Graham to William Graham, 19 Jan 34, Graham Papers (SHC); Chevalier de Bacourt, Souvenirs d'un Diplomat, Private Letters from America during the Administrations of Presidents Van Buren, Harrison and Tyler, p. 87; Adams Memoirs, II, 118, 162.
in Washington than any of his predecessors. His term in the White House
nevertheless afforded the official world considerable to think about and
vast amusement. In addition to the diplomatic triumphs—the settlement of
the northeastern boundary dispute between the United States and Britain and
the annexation of Texas—the capital saw interesting scientific developments.
In 18W1 the new National Observatory was finished; cutting the skyline on the
hill at the river's edge west of the White House, the mighty span of the
revolving 24-foot dome seemed to promise rapid advances in astronomy. More
marvelous was Samuel Morse's "Magnetic Telegraph" tested in the Supreme Court
room in May 18Whi; the crowd assembled there heard with their own ears the
famous message sent in a few seconds over wires strung from Baltimore: "What
hath God wrought." That year came the launching of the Navy's new steam-
powered cruiser the Princeton. A visitor inspecting her prophesied "The
agency of steam and the large guns will in all probability produce a new era
in naval warfare." A week later on a trial run down the Potomac with President
Tyler and other dignitaries aboard, one of the Princeton's "large guns" in
firing a salute burst, killing several men in the party. Among the victims
was the father of twenty-year-old Julia Gardiner whom the widowed President
had been courting. Tragedy was but the prelude to comedy. "Miss Gardiner
who you recollect was said was going to marry him [Tyler] has kicked the old
man," wrote Senator Jarnagin to his wife. Reminding her of Mr. Gardiner's

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80 Ltr, William Graham to his wife, 14 April 41, Graham Papers (SHC);
Force, Picture of Washington, pp. h7-h8; Diary of John Houston Bills, 20 Mar
46 (SHC); Ltr, James Irvin to James M. Bell, 21 Feb 41, James Bell Papers
(Duke Univ); Intelligencer, 29 Feb, 27, 28, 29 May 41; Alexandria Gazette,
9 Oct 41.
death, Jarnagin added, "it is believed by many, if he had lived, he would have made his daughter marry old Tyler to get the Collectorship at New York for himself." But in July the fifty-six year old President brought his bride to the White House. There, seated in a large armchair on a raised platform in the Blue Room, young Mrs. Tyler received guests at formal receptions.

Adopting the ceremonial of Windsor Castle, she had each guest announced as he came into the presence. When she took the air, two spanking pairs of horses drew her carriage. No First Lady before or after Julia Tyler caused such a buzz of talk.\(^{81}\)

In 1834 Congressman James Graham in writing of Washington's gaieties remarked: "I very rarely meet any of my colleagues at the parties. They appear to be afraid of the urblenity of City company." Scores of men, unwilling or unable to mingle with "city company" were, in Tyrone Power's observation, without "better means of keeping off ennui than gin-sling or the gaming table."

Gambling, while by no means confined to members of Congress, thus became a standard diversion. One congressman reported a loss of $3500, nearly nine months' salary, in a single night of play. After 1829 the theatre provided some additional distraction, for companies then played during the winter season instead of only on summer tour. Mrs. Trollope described the auditorium as "very small and most astonishingly dirty and void of decoration," but a new building erected in 1835 on the site of the present day National Theatre

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\(^{81}\) Ltr, Spencer Jarnagin to Mary Jarnagin, 19 Apr 44, Jarnagin Papers (SHC); Intelligencer, 3 Jul 44; Laureace A. Gobright, Recollections of Men and Things at Washington during the Third of a Century, p. 67 (RBD, L.C.); Jesse Benton Fremont, Souvendia of My Time, p. 99.
contained tiers of boxes "embellished with sketches in imitation bas-relief
and surrounded by correspondent ornaments, representing brilliant events
in...maritime history and discovery." But the theatre season was short and
repertoires were limited. Loneliness still lay in wait for men separated from
their wives and families. Even the men who joined in the winter's round of
festivities often wearied of their sameness. Hostesses habitually invited
more guests than their houses would hold. "Mustaches, whiskers, enaulettes,
estars and ribbons are badges of a Washington party.... The ladies sport
a chain or braid around the head, with a jewel on the forehead. And all
waltz like children's tops." But, Senator Graham explained, "it is a congre­
gation in a great measure of strangers who never met before, and don't care
(most of them) if they never meet again." However much women liked it, this
was not satisfying that week in and week out for the male of the species. In
the mid-fourties a number of congressmen began to see the solution: abandon
the congressional mess, rent a house or hotel rooms and bring wife and chil­
dren to Washington for the winter. Such an arrangement was expensive, and
not everyone thought it desirable. By 1846, however, 19 of the 52 senators
and 72 of the 227 representatives had their wives or entire families in
Washington.82

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82 Ltrs, James Graham to William Graham, 19 Jan, 23 Feb 34, 21 Jan 38,
and William Graham to his wife, 9 Jan 41, Graham Papers (SHC); ltr, James W.
Clark to his wife, 7 Sep 29, 26 Jan 30, Henry Toole Clark Papers (Duke Univ);
ltr, Spencer Jarnagin to his wife, 9 Mar, 1 Apr 46 (SHC); ltr, John Robert­
son to Wyndham Robertson, 16 Feb 37, Robertson Papers (Univ Chicago); Power,
Impressions of America, I, 210, 212; Trollope, Domestic Manners, pp. 218, 233;
Intelligencer, 3 Feb, 2 Mar 29, 23 Nov 32, 19 Jan 33, 12 Mar 34, 20 Apr, 7
Dec 35, 28 Jan 36, 3 Feb 37; Force, Picture of Washington, pp. 132-43; George
The Looks of the City

Twenty-three years of growth changed Washington's appearance in many particulars. New government buildings, the completion of the City Hall, a number of handsome new houses, particularly in the vicinity of Lafayette Square and the White House, and nine new churches, combined to give dignity to parts of the city. The new Treasury building that replaced the one burned in 1835, was, to be sure, so located that it interrupted the sweep of the Avenue from the Capitol to the White House, for Congress concluded that efficiency required use of the old Treasury site and President Jackson, left to choose the architectural design, unfortunately accepted Robert Mills' which strung the building lengthwise along 15th street. Mills defended his work by pointing to the difficulty of reconciling the Congressional demand for economy with the Treasury's need for 114 rooms in a building on a narrow lot, but the structure nevertheless constituted the first deliberate break with L'Enfant's original plan. Like the Treasury, the new General Post Office on northwest E and 7th streets and the Patent Office to the north suffered from lack of space around them, but the Patent Office, its portico a replica of the Parthenon, commanded universal admiration. Designed by the gifted William P. Elliott, the noble proportions and the broad flight of steps leading up to the columns of the main F street entrance gave the building a stateliness hard to imagine after 20th century changes sheared off the steps. Robert Mills, by 1836 architect of public buildings, supervised the construction. In the early 1840's the botanical garden occupied the north part of the Patent office square; since the Columbia Institute, by then defunct, had never developed the plot on the Mall, the Commissioner of Patents, responsible for the government's extensive collection of plants, placed the government greenhouse and garden adjacent to his headquarters. 83

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83 H Rpt 737, 25C; 28, 29 Mar 38, Ser 335; H Doc 38, 250, 28, 21 Dec 37, Ser 522; Force, Picture of Washington. For a listing of the churches and dates of their building, see Bryan, National Capital, II, 188-90, 258n.
Visitors to Washington often divided most of their sightseeing between the Patent Office with its garden and the Capitol. The fencing and planting of the Capitol grounds enormously enhanced the appearance of Capitol Hill.

On the west terrace rose the Tripoli monument to the heroes of the war with the Barbary pirates; the column, brought from the Navy Yard in 1831, stood in the center of a stone-faced reservoir that fed water into the Capitol. After 1843 the colossal marble statue of Washington which Congress had commissioned of Horatio Greenough occupied part of the lawn on the eastern front. Although "the spectator will always be shocked at the nudity of the figure," everyone agreed upon the suitability of some memorial to the first President, and until the Washington Monument Society, organized in 1835, raised money enough to start the Washington Monument, Greenough's twenty-ton figure must suffice.

Money spent on planting trees along Pennsylvania avenue and improving the President's square further redeemed the one-time bedraggled looks of that segment of government property. The city's appearance gained, moreover, from well-tended private gardens, even when they were fenced or walled off from the eyes of the curious passerby. Mayor Peter Force, in the 1830's still affecting knee breeches and ruffled shirts, daily walked among the lilies and lilacs of the garden adjoining his house on D street. And scores of other well-to-do citizens lavished care upon their flowers and shrubs. 84

Much of the city, on the other hand, including both federal and privately owned land, was still untidy in the extreme. Unpaved streets, some without

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sidewalks, pools of stagnant water, and vacant lots used as dumps disfigured some part of every section of Washington. The Centre Market on the square where the National Archives stands today was a shambles of filth and disorderliness. Sheds and lumber yards lined the Washington canal, and the Mall beyond was an unsightly stretch of marsh. Tyrone Power marveled in the 1830’s at "the utter indifference with which Americans look upon the exceedingly unworthy condition of their capital." In 1840, the Chevalier de Bacourt, French minister to the United States, complained of the "continual uproar" at night, "the reason for which is that the inhabitants all own cows and pigs but no stables, and these animals wander about all day and night through the city." When he enquired why the city tolerated this nuisance, a senator assured him that most American cities relied upon pigs to scavenge refuse; to bar them from the streets would be disastrous, as "nothing was more convenient or conducive to health." If few citizens felt equal complacency, fewer still relished criticism from outsiders. Sensitivity to foreigners' disparagement was not peculiar to Washington, and most Europeans obviously thought all Americans much alike; but derogatory comment from fellow Americans was peculiarly irritating to taxpayers keenly aware of the handicap of having half the property in the capital federally owned and hence tax-free. "Poor Washington seems to be an eternal butt for the small wits of our country" remarked one man..."No newspaper paragraphist, or scribbler of any sort, can visit our city for a few brief months without giving his 'first impressions' of its
locality, the style of its architecture, its society, manners, customs, etc."
Washington certainly lacked the compactness and relatively finished air of older communities like Philadelphia and Charleston, but no American city of the period was without eyesores, and none of comparable size could boast of much greater orderliness.

Character of the Population

Americans impelled to set down their "first impressions" of the capital rarely attempted analyses of the city's inhabitants. Still less did visitors bother to characterize residents of Georgetown and Alexandria who seemed after all little different from householders of other small Southern river towns of equal antiquity. One of the few writers to discuss Washingtonians as people listed four types, "those who keep congressional boarders and... the subordinate officers of government;... secondly the laboring class; thirdly what may be called the better sort; and fourthly the free Negroes."

Anne Royall pronounced the "decided traits of the bulk of the citizens" in 1824 to be "ignorance, impudence and pride." But she observed: "Perhaps no body of people can be found equal to the number in which there is less similarity than in Washington." Had she known northern cities better her comments might have run differently. Certainly twenty years later every big Atlantic seaport and dozens of rapidly growing inland cities contained a far larger proportion of foreign-born than did the capital. In the early thirties.

Irishmen imported to dig the C & O canal added a slight foreign tinge, and
enough Germans to organize St. Mary's German Catholic church had come by
the mid-forties. But the population of all three District cities was still
preponderantly native American. The one other pronounced difference between
Washington and cities in the rest of the United States was her seasonal expan-
sion and contraction. Congressmen and their hangers-on were part-time
residents. While New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore also saw streams of
transients, nowhere was their coming so predictable as in Washington or their
influence so uncertain.

86 Anne Royall, Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the United
States, pp. 155-57; Columbian, 23 Mar 30.
CHAPTER V

THE EYE OF THE TYphoon, 1846-1860

In the years between the Mexican War and the election of Abraham Lincoln in the autumn of 1860, Americans confronted the double challenge of enormously expanding economic opportunity and intensifying conflict over slavery. Men who had opposed the war and denied that "our Manifest Destiny" was "to overspread the continent" shared in the excitement of exploiting the new territory which the peace treaty added to the United States. In 1849 the discovery of gold in California heightened that excitement. The Oregon country was already drawing new settlers. From every major city in America during the 1850's iron rails crept out in a spreading network to build new commercial empires. In older sections of the country, vigorous manufacturing enterprises were laying the foundations of an industrial nation. A growing population, multiplying naturally and by a swelling tide of immigration from Europe, was peopling a vast hinterland, simultaneously increasing national output and creating wider markets. Although reckless speculation and over-rapid expansion brought a severe depression in 1857, before the end of 1859 the business cycle was again moving rapidly upward. Yet year by year the shadow of the slavery controversy grew steadily longer and blacker.

"The slavery question," wrote a young Washington business man in the summer of 1848, "is here the all-absorbing topic of the day." ¹ During the next two years the fight in Congress over the extension of slavery into

¹ Ltr, Benedict J. Semmes to Jorantha Jordan, 21 Jul 48, Semmes Mss (SHC).
the territory acquired from Mexico threatened to burst the bonds of the Union. The Compromise of 1850 averted that catastrophe without resolving the problem, for the South felt it had given more than it won when it agreed to the admission of California as a free state and the prohibition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, while the North found its own concession, a new Fugitive Slave law, increasingly hard to swallow. Scarcely had the acts that made up the compromise passed than both sections of the country were voicing deep dissatisfaction. In Congress the struggle resumed in 1854 over the territorial organization of Kansas and Nebraska, sharpened in 1856 over the settlement of "Bleeding Kansas," reached a new peak of bitterness in the North with the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case in 1857, and two years later produced the violence of John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry. Through this succession of crises, public opinion North and South crystallized, swiftly cutting the gulf between the sections.

Washington, the battleground of the legislative fight, nevertheless benefited from the nation's growing material prosperity. Situated though she was in a commercial backwash, she acquired new importance simply because she was the capital. Speculation in public lands inevitably had its headquarters in the city where Congress determined the disposition of the public domain. The location of the General Land Office here gave citizens of Washington, and of Georgetown too, special openings. If currency and banking were no longer primary national issues, new tariff laws and land grants to interstate railroads could make or break enterprises in spots remote from the Potomac. While state governments thought of themselves as sovereign and their senators in Washington as emissaries of those sovereignties, promoters
of great enterprises were coming to view state lines as mere paper obstruc-
tions to be wiped out by manipulating the general government. To a greater
degree than ever before, the capital became the arena in which ambitious
men fought for official favors for themselves and their clients. Consequently
when business slumped elsewhere, activity in the District rather increased
then shrank.

National pride in the meantime was expressing itself in adding to the
public buildings in Washington, and, through organization of the Smithsonian
Institution, seeking to turn "the seat of empire" into a center of American
culture where the works of artists, writers and scientists would add to the
lustre of other national achievements. While Congress, in endeavor to
strengthen national unity and enhance national prestige, discussed what the
Smithsonian could and should do for all the United States, Washingtonians
began to envision a new role for the city. Some men still hoped to see her
become the chief "emporium" of the continent, but others gradually put to
one side their concern for commercial preeminence and almost unconsciously
substituted as their first aspiration the transformation of the city into a
combination of ancient Athens, Victorian London and the best of artistic
Paris. Material wealth and influence could indeed go hand in hand with
leadership in the realm of art and science, but only if an enduring Union
ensured an enduring national capital.

Hence the more violent and outspoken the sectional hostility in the
rest of the country, the more discreet the citizens of the District of

2 E.g. Washington Saturday Evening News, 30 Jun 47, 6 Aug 53, 1
Nov 57 (hereafter cited as News).
Columbia became. Whatever opinions about Southern rights they voiced within the four walls of their homes, men no longer aired their ideas unguardedly in public. Demunciation of the "impudence" of free Negroes in Washington ceased to appear in the local press after the early 1850's. Citizens discussed plans for new railroads, talked of the spread of juvenile delinquency, and took strong positions on city politics, but they were noncommittal on the race question. Abide by the law, but say nothing, do nothing, that might upset the precarious balance. The fiercer the storm blew roundabout, at the center the greater the quiet. It was like the stillness at the eye of a typhoon. Not until the Republican victory in November 1860 threatened to change a repressible into an irrepressible conflict did citizens of the District of Columbia admit that the time for voiceless inaction might have passed.

Economic Plans and Achievements

Attempts to Promote Industry

In the spring of 1846 Washington's main purpose in sponsoring a national fair had apparently been to display her business potentialities and attract investment capital to the city. If the strategy worked at all, it did not take the desired form of launching new industrial ventures in Washington. Throughout the United States of the 1840's most communities still depended upon local money to finance local enterprise. In the District of Columbia such large accumulations of capital as existed were controlled by banking and brokerage firms/had bigger game in view than any Washington or Georgetown could offer. Deals in western lands and loans to
influential politicians obviously promised greater rewards. District brokers advertised they could make 40% to 60% for their clients. At the end of the Mexican war large scale land speculation and its frequent accompaniment, investment in railroads, drew off money from the District. The banking house founded in 1843 by W. W. Corcoran and George Riggs, Jr., for example, after making a handsome profit on negotiating the government loan to finance the war, purchased large tracts of land in Wisconsin and Kansas, and, when the partnership dissolved in 1853, each man singly or with other associates bought thousands of acres in Illinois, Mississippi and Iowa. While Corcoran also bought some real estate in Washington and Georgetown, he no longer had an interest in local commerce or manufacturing. The "big money" men in the District invested their funds elsewhere.3

With little capital and no available water power, Washington's industrial enterprises in midcentury were few in number and generally small-scale. In 1850 two printing establishments, John Rives' which published the Congressional Globe, and Ritchie & Co., were capitalized at $50,000 and $35,000 respectively; Rives ran four, Ritchie six, steam-powered presses. William McDermott had $30,000 invested in his carriage making shop. But otherwise, unless the Washington Monument Society with $96,000 of capital be counted, no firm was capitalized at more than $70,000, and the $5,000. Those figures

partly explain the extremely limited use of power-driven machinery, since coal was not yet abundant or cheap in Washington. The government arsenal and the Navy Yard were equipped with some machines and together had several hundred men on their payrolls, but of the privately-owned plants only ten-four printers', three foundries, a brewery, a lumber mill and a small machine shop—used anything but manpower. Only Ritchie & Co., employed as many as eighty hands; most concerns had fifteen or fewer. In the course of the next decade the growth of Washington's population expanded the local market and brought about some increase in production. By 1860 thirty-four firms, using coal brought down the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, had installed steam engines. The Washington Brewery in Foogy Bottom, the Baldwin sash and blind factory and John Rives' printing house had each an annual output valued at over $75,000, and twelve newspapers, five of them dailies, were publishing in Washington. On the other hand, Nashy's shipyard, McClinny's foundry and several other enterprises of which promoters had at one time expected much had dwindled in importance or disappeared. A still greater blow was the transformation of the government arsenal from a manufacturing armory into a storage depot and the decline of ship building at the Navy Yard. "In view of the great expense and inconvenience attending the building and equipping of ships at a point so distant from the sea, and the delays consequent on the difficulties of getting ships to sea," the Navy Department recommended in 1860 that the Washington Yard make only anchors, cables and stern engines. Manufacturing in Washington remained, in short, primarily handicraft production of household wares, clothing, and building.
supplies for local customers. 4

Georgetown, thanks to the C & O Company's permission to draw surplus water from the canal, in 1850 boasted three flour mills, a cracker factory, a tan bark mill, a saw mill and a cotton factory, which all ran at least partly on water power. In the county above Georgetown three additional flour mills used water power. The cotton factory built in 1846 represented the largest industrial venture. Capitalized at $85,000, the company employed 114 people to tend its 2560 spindles and 64 looms. Though only two of the city's other firms had over $10,000 of capital, the three millers each reported an annual product valued at more than $100,000. In spite of this promising beginning manufacturing shrank during the 1850’s. The Pioneer Cotton Factory reduced operations, one flour mill went out of business and only one of the two surviving milling establishments ground as much as $50,000 worth of flour annually. All told, whether because of insufficient capital, too small a force of skilled labor or inadequate shipping facilities, the District could claim little industrial progress in a decade and a half in which factories were multiplying throughout the North. 5

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4 Enumerators' returns for Seventh and Eighth U.S. Census, 1850 and 1860 (Mss microfilm, hereafter cited as mss mf, L.C.); News, 21 Jul 117, 22 Feb 51, 5 Aug 53; Frederick Law Olmsted, Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853-1854 (1904 ed.), 1, 14, 15; Daily National Era, 9 Jan 54 (hereafter cited as Ntl Era); H Ex Doc 34, 35c, 18, 2 Mar 60, p. 75, Ser 1048.

5 Enumerators' returns for Seventh and Eighth U.S. Census, 1850 and 1860 (mss mf, L.C.); News, 15 May 117, 22 Mar 51, 26 Jun 52; Georgetown Advocate, 31 Nat, 1 Apr, 3 Oct 46, 28 Aug 46; Anl Rot Sec/Int, H Ex Doc 1, 313, 25, 12 Oct 50, p. 316, Ser 595. (Hereafter annual reports of the Secretary of the Interior will be cited only by year and serial number.)
Attempts to Expand Commerce and Improve Transportation

The commercial development of the District was only less disappointing.

In 1841 when sailing vessels were still the principal common carriers, Charles Lyell, the famous English geologist, observed that "the estuary of the Potomac is so long and winding that to ascend from its mouth to Washington is said often to take as long as to cross from Liverpool to the mouth of the river." That circumstance, he suggested, denied to Washington and Georgetown the commercial advantages of other cities at the head of tide water.

If Lyell's specific data were faulty, the fact remained that Baltimore's easier accessibility for ships, her superior port facilities and her rail connections with the West syphoned off the foreign and coastwise trade the Potomac cities wanted. For Georgetown, moreover, the problem of the silting up of the channel above the Long Bridge became yearly more acute. Her shipowners blamed the location of the bridge and causeway. Washingtonians insisted that the bridge was not an obstruction, and army engineers pointed out that deforestation of the upper valley caused a steady downwash of soil that built up mud banks at the bend of the river below Georgetown; the only solution was constant expensive dredging.

But since the Eastern Branch was deep enough for ocean-going vessels and during the Mexican war the Secretary of War had contracted with several local firms to ship supplies

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7 Resolutions, in Georgetown Ordinances, 6 Mar, 6 Nov, 27 Dec 17; Ex Doc 2l, 30C, 15, 12 Jan 48, Ser 51, 9; Long Globe, 32C, 29, 19 Feb 53, pp. 725-76; 31C, 15, 21 Mar 56, pp. 599-701; News, 26 Jun 52, 8 Jan 53, ptms, H31A-Pi.15, 1 Feb 50, H32A, F5, 19 Jan 52. The Legislative unit of the National Archives contains for the decade 1847-57 scores of petitions begging for removal of the Long Bridge or for its continued use. The pieces cited here are merely samples. Ex Doc 22, 31C, 15, 21 Jan 50, Ser 576;
to Key West and Texas, Washington was more hopeful. She looked to the
day when steamships would replace sailing ships. In 1849 a letter to the
Intelligencer asserted "that the prompt and unobstructed arrival of the
Hecate (a British steamship), and her anchoring within gunshot distance of
the Capitol before her presence was even suspected, is a practical refuta-
tion of all the reports which have tended to give our noble river a character
of impracticability."

Unhappily neither steam freighters nor sailing vessels could make the
District cities busy commercial ports as long as a thinly settled, relatively
infertile hinterland produced scanty surpluses and manufacturing lagged.
As mercantile firms that had begun life in the area transferred their
business to Baltimore, New York or the West, trade in the District became
almost exclusively local. Farms in the neighborhood supplied the cities'
public markets with fruit, vegetables, milk, butter, pork and some beef;
shopowners imported via New York French wines, Parisian millinery and fine
English woolens and laid in stocks of Kentucky Bourbon, Maryland rye and
cheap New England cottons; but lack of outgoing shipments created commer-
cial imbalance. Occasionally local craftsmen accused the buying public of
a snobbish perversity in preferring to purchase articles from New York or
Baltimore; merchants assigned the stagnation of trade to irresponsible
banking practices and bankers blamed congressional currency restrictions.
But most people knew that until the District had other commodities than
political news to sell, commerce would not expand.9

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8 H Ex Doc 46, 29C, 28, 19 Jan 49, Ser 499; Intelligencer, 22 Dec 49.
9 News, 1 Nov, 5 Nov, 18 Dec 47, 22 Apr 48, 16, 30 Nov 50, 13, 16 Oct 52; Cong
Dec 54, p. 376; S Rpt 29, 35C, 18, 28 Jan 58, Ser 236.
In 1847 and 1848, as the C & O canal neared the coal fields about Cumberland, men reluctant to rely solely on government patronage revived the twenty-year-old dream of making Washington and Georgetown the principal outlet for Maryland coal. Hopefully they ignored the fact that the B & O railroad, which had reached Cumberland in 1842, was able to run in winter as well as summer and had already turned Baltimore into the chief coal entrepôt of the region. Uneasy, however, lest the aqueduct and Alexandria canal carry the bulk of the trade in prospect to Alexandria, Washington and Georgetown merchants clamored for fresh public support: "Citizens, arouse from your supineness, awake from your lethargy, and the day of prosperity is at hand!" While some Georgetowners again agitated for retrocession to Maryland, others petitioned Congress for aid in dredging the harbor, persuaded the city to vote some tax money for improving navigation and for a time talked of a municipal investment of some $50,000 for a new canal boat outlet basin with locks to the river. Washington businessmen and the city councils similarly discussed feverishly alternative schemes for exploiting the long awaited completion of the C & O.  

The sorry fact was that in spite of all the elaborate planning and earlier spending, in 1849 neither city had in readiness a usable canal boat basin or outlets by which barges could reach wharves in deep water. Silt

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had filled the basin in Rock creek and the canal extension to the foot of the President's Square, while constant tidal wash from both the Potomac and the Eastern Branch had gradually made the Washington canal useless except at high tide. Proposals for dredging the Washington canal to a depth of at least four feet at low water in order to take barges through the city to the Eastern branch met with counter proposals for new waterway along Virginia avenue or a sea wall from 17th street to the Long Bridge which supposedly would open up the Potomac channel and permit coast-wise vessels to pick up coal from barges at the 17th street canal terminus. In 1849 Congress settled the matter by appropriating $20,000 for clearing the city canal where it passed through the public grounds, on condition that the municipality dredge the rest of the three-mile stretch. Work on deepening the canal its entire length began soon afterward. 11

The 3 & O canal reached Cumberland in October 1850. Two weeks later a barge laden with about eighty tons of coal docked at the Navy Yard. "It is much to be regretted," the Washington News noted, "that, owing to the bed condition of the so-called Basin at Georgetown, as well as that of our city canal (the progress of which has been so unaccountably delayed) it was necessary to use a Steamer to tow the Boat from the outlet of the Canal to the Navy Yard." Indeed the basin was never fully restored and, in spite of the thousands of dollars spent on dredging, some stretches of the Washington canal became impassible almost as soon as the first round of work ended in 1852. For two or three years boats drawing up to 3 1/2 feet of water

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passed from 17th street as far east as the Centre Market and from the Eastern Branch north to the Mall, but before 1856 the intervening section along the foot of Capitol Hill was unnavigable. Pleas to Congress for an appropriation to connect the canal with the James creek which entered the Eastern Branch just above the arsenal grounds on Greenleaf's Point met with no response, although the petitioners urged that the cut would not only ensure free passage for boats but, by draining the swampy land adjacent to the creek, improve the health of the city. Congress and a good many Washingtonians in the mid-fifties concluded the city's canal project a failure. Barges moved through the aqueduct over the Potomac and on to Alexandria or discharged their cargoes in Georgetown for transshipment, but the few boats that nosed their way along the Washington canal to the coal and lumber yards on its banks west of the Centre Market represented civic disillusionment. After 1855 commerce depended upon river boats and land transport.12

Yet not until 1853 did Washington businessmen give serious considera-
tion to developing railroads as an alternative to water transport. In 1847 a letter couched in flowery language had suggested that the city, standing "in the centre of a vast system of improvements... has only to tap them," and that a railroad connecting Washington with Fredericksburg would hasten the moment "foreshadowed by General Washington, who looked upon this city

to be in the future the great metropolis of the Union." Alexandria was already urging the Virginia legislature to charter a railroad from the southern end of the Long Bridge to Parkersburg at the head of "perpetual navigation" on the Ohio river, a road that not only would bring Alexandria prosperity but "would quiet forever agitations respecting the removal of the seat of Government. . . . The many advantages of this route over all others thicken so fast to the reflective mind that it would be a task to state them." Virginia chartered the Orange and Alexandria railroad in 1848 to run to Manassas and thence west and four years later another railroad to connect Alexandria with the main lines to the south. But Washington merchants, whether lacking "the reflective mind" or merely lacking cash and credit, delayed concerted efforts to pursue any comparable plan. 13

Meanwhile the city fathers, instead of seeking additional means of communication with the outside world, divided their energies between pushing work on the Washington canal and carrying on a running fight with the B & O railroad over fares to and from Baltimore, the company's refusal to pay Washington taxes, and the location of a new depot. The city lost the battle for taxes and reduced fares, though perhaps she consolled herself with the idea that cheaper rates on the B & O would only take more business to Baltimore and aggravate the already alarming tributary relationship of Washington to northern cities. The long-drawn out disagreement over a depot within the city limits came to an end in 1852. Until then, Washington, like New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, refused to permit locomotives to run

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into the city. Locomotives on the B & O's branch line to Washington stopped
outside the city limits and horses hitched to the "steam cars" drew passengers
and freight to the sheds at 2nd street and Pennsylvania avenue. When the
company at last agreed to erect a depot on New Jersey avenue at C street
northwest and in August 1852 opened the brownstone building complete with a
seventy-foot quadrangular tower, sky-lighted hall and "elegantly furnished
dressing rooms, supplied with mirrors, sofas, water closets of peculiar
construction, and numerous little comforts," only then did the discovery
that the tax-free B & O had increased its local business "at least fivefold"
in a year prod the city into taking steps to introduce a competing railroad. 14

While the municipal councils of Washington were belatedly putting
out tentative feelers for connections with the Orange & Alexandria railroad,
Georgetown hurriedly enlisted congressional approval of a railroad to run
west from her limits to a junction with the B & O tracks at Point of Rocks,
Maryland, near Harpers Ferry. That route would bring freight direct from
the West into the smaller city, freeing her from vassalage to her larger
neighbor. For that reason Washington took no interest in the project. In
1853 Maryland chartered the western section under the name of the Metro-
politan Railroad and Congress chartered the District section as the George-
town and 3octin Railroad, but even when company promoters enlarged their
original plans to extend tracks into Washington, they won little support
in the capital. Congress provided no federal land grant and the corporation

14 Intelligencer, 11, 25, 29 May, 1 Jul 46, 25 Jan, 19 Apr, 4 Aug
L7, 26 Nov 49; News, 11 Aug 47, 27 May, 3 Jun 48, 15 Feb 51, 21 Aug 52;
of Washington gave no encouragement. Georgetown in the face of protests from small taxpayers thereupon chose to finance the road by a special levy of ten cents on every $100 of assessed property, but in 1856 when a few miles of grading of the right of way were finished Mayor Henry Addison refused to pay over further installments of money, and construction came to a halt. Nevertheless Georgetown's enterprise spurred on Washington. Partly because her rival had preempted the best route to the West and perhaps partly because Virginia rather than Maryland had long been the District's chief source of local supplies, Washington focused her attention on developing a line to the South. 15

To link Washington by rail with a Virginia railroad posed the problem of crossing the Potomac. That question, in turn, involved Congress in acrimonious debates over the use of the Long Bridge and the streets of the capital. In the summer of 1854, after the Virginia Assembly chartered the Washington & Alexandria railroad, Congress grudgingly agreed to let the municipality determine a route into the city as long as the tracks did not run on Pennsylvania avenue, but opinions in House and Senate divided over whether to allow the company temporarily to lay rails on the Long Bridge until a permanent railroad bridge could be erected above Georgetown. Three times in a decade freshetts had washed out sections of the Long Bridge. The

damage done in the flood of 1852 had given Georgetown opportunity to argue that Washington's pleas for rebuilding were "but an insidious scheme, on the part of our neighbors and rivals, to perpetuate an oppression which our people...have so often, and so unavailingly, complained to Congress." Once tracks were laid on the bridge, Georgetown contended prophetically, they would stay, ending all hope for a permanent railroad bridge above the Alexandria aqueduct. Congress, though voting to repair the Long Bridge, postponed a decision about permitting rails on it.16

In the course of the congressional debates the speeches of senators who strongly advocated an unbroken rail connection between North and South gave Washington the courage to act with unaccustomed swiftness. The corporation underwrote $60,000 of the railroad company bonds and authorized tracks from the Long Bridge along Maryland avenue to the foot of Capitol Hill, thence across the Mall and Pennsylvania avenue to terminate at the B & O depot. When Congress convened in December 1855, astounded members beheld rails laid along most of the route through the city and the line nearly complete except over the bridge. The outcry that arose on the Hill came largely from Northerners. "Washington," declared Senator Stuart of Michigan, was "not intended to be a great business mart." Senator Pugh of Ohio charged the municipality and company with deliberately flouting the

prohibition of tracks on Pennsylvania avenue because of counting upon Congress to acquiesce when confronted with an accomplished fact. The inconvenience to congressmen, argued the outraged, would be considerable as long as horse-drawn cars traversed the Mall at the foot of the Hill, but when the inevitable moment came for the company to run locomotives over its tracks through the city the annoyance to Congress would become intolerable. James Mason of Virginia and Robert Toombs of Georgia defended the deed. Rails crossing were not rails along the "Avenue," and cars on tracks would be no greater nuisance than the omnibuses that discharged passengers at the base of Capitol Hill. Furthermore, the entire country would welcome the closing of the one break in rail connections between New England, New York and the deep South; only on the stretch between Washington and Accquia Creek below Alexandria were travellers obliged to resort to stage coach and steam ferry.17

When the Virginia section of the railroad from Alexandria to the southern end of the bridge went into operation late in 1856, congressional opposition weakened. The upshot was an act permitting the company to use horses to draw cars through the city on the tracks laid across the Avenue and the Mall as far as the bridge. At that point passengers had to transfer to stages; freight went by water. Disappointment over this half loaf was apparently lessened by belief that Congress would shortly charter a street railway to run from the Navy Yard to Georgetown and thus help modernize the means of communication. But for the time being Congress refused further

concessions.18

Economic Status in 1860

Thus in 1860 both District cities found themselves still dependent on the Baltimore and Ohio for rail links with the North, while, despite the Washington & Alexandria railroad, the broad Potomac barred the route to the South. Though federal money had built a new wagon bridge at the Little Falls above Georgetown in 1857, when a freshet again washed away a span of the Long Bridge, Washington, unable to extract an appropriation for repairs, undertook the work with only a vague commitment of future reimbursement from Congress. Worse, in 1858 the Alexandria & Washington railroad defaulted on its bonds, forcing the city to shoulder payment of the interest on the $60,000 the councils had underwritten. Furthermore, earlier expectations that free bridges over the Eastern Branch would revive the tobacco trade with Maryland had proved ill-founded. Congress had bought the Benning’s and Navy Yard toll bridges in 1848, but the benefits to the District were negligible. Soil exhausted by years of tobacco-raising no longer produced marketable crops, and after mid-century the city-owned warehouses in Georgetown and southwest Washington lay empty. Attempts to obtain toll-free roads into the more fertile regions northwest of the District line were also unsuccessful. Nor had steamships greatly increased traffic on the Potomac. Access to Washington and Georgetown was scarcely easier than in 1835.19

18 Cong Globe, 34c, 35, 21 Jan 57; ptms, H35A-Ch, 3, 17 Dec 57, 2 Mar 58, H36A-Gh, 1, 21 Feb, 30 May 60; Star, 20 Mar 58, 6, 20 Jul 59.

Georgetown felt the full effects of this isolation. In three decades she failed to regain the 9,400 population of 1830. During the 1840s she added 10,700 inhabitants, but between 1850 and 1860 only 400, bringing the total number of residents to some 8,798 whites, 1,558 free Negroes and 577 slaves. Leading citizens ceaselessly sought ways of reviving her commerce, including in 1856 a last attempt to obtain retrocession to Maryland, but neither her shipping nor her manufacturing expanded. On the contrary. Except for some traffic in coal and wheat, shipments of up-country produce were meagre. A canal boatman in 1858 noted that from Cumberland to Georgetown the Chesapeake and Ohio canal ran "through an uninhabited solitude."

Lack of capital or ill-directed effort threatened to defeat even Georgetown's plan to exploit her nearness to Washington by extending the Metropolitan railroad into the capital or else by organizing, building and controlling a new street railway. If Georgetown bankers and brokers continued to make money, their success merely underscored the community's dependence upon federal business in Washington. 20

Washington, on the other hand, grew steadily. Population nearly trebled between 1840 and 1860 to reach 61,000; of these 50,000 were whites. Not only additions to government buildings but new dwellings, big hotels and new shops yearly increased the city's air of settled prosperity. Lots that had sold for four cents a square foot in 1843 commanded thirty cents in 1851, and real estate values, as well as building costs, continued to

rise through the rest of the decade. Gas lighted the Avenue, the government offices, hotels, and a number of private houses. Omnibuses running with some frequency now eased communication within the city and men talked confidently of the improvements in prospect as soon as a street railway appeared. True, trade with the West had made no headway and exporting direct to Europe had ceased altogether. True also that Washington, fourteenth largest American city in number of inhabitants, ranked forty-ninth in manufacturing, while Albany with about the same population stood twenty-first and San Francisco, smaller and younger, ninth. To permanent residents of the capital comparative statistics no longer mattered greatly. 

Whereas the failure to attain the commercial and industrial position that the Potomac location had once seemed to promise had troubled the first generation of Washingtonians, and remnants of that anxiety had lingered on into the 1850's, after 1846 citizens rarely voiced doubts about the future.

Government clerks and mechanics in the 1850's suffered from rising prices unmatched by increases in pay, but among the most articulate groups of society the consensus ran that Washington enjoyed an enviable security. In the autumn of 1857 when other American cities were paralyzed by panic
and depression, the Washington News commented: "To say that our city was entirely free from the influence of the panic, would not be to speak the exact truth; but we may affirm without contradiction that it prevailed to a very limited extent." Eighteen months later the Star observed: "Few, indeed among us, who were injuriously affected by the general temporary prostration of trade have failed to recover from it so as to be in a far better condition than before the blow came. There never was more hard cash in the hands of our fellow citizens than at this time." The increase in city revenues in spite of cuts in the tax rate bears out the truth of that estimate.\textsuperscript{23} (See Table, p. )

Most people refused to worry about the obvious fact that Washington's economic stability derived not from their own activities and social graces but almost solely from the presence of the federal government. Insofar as they accepted the ideal of a purely federal city, a center of the arts where men could disdain money-grubbing, they abandoned the struggle for economic independence. Hopes once centered on the C & O canal now revolved about the new federal Smithsonian Institution. If the widespread acquiescence in the loss of civic initiative stirred misgivings among a thoughtful minority, the rebuttal was persuasive: since the community could not alter the course of national developments, why not enjoy the benefits they brought, regardless of who created them? An editorial of October 1859 reflected the prevailing attitude:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Federal Metropolis has improved in the way of the addition of many first class buildings. . . . A fair proportion of the finest}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[23] News, 3 Oct 57; Star, 1 Mar 59; ltr, Benedict Semmes to Jorantha Jordan Semmes, 9 Oct 57, Semmes Lss (SHC).
\end{footnotes}
new private mansions referred to above are being built for temporary
homes of persons of wealth and taste from a distance, who are coming
more and more to appreciate the advantages and pleasures of having a
home among the public men of America while the latter are assembled
together. Nowhere else in this country is equal intellectual and
social society within the reach of any and all respectable persons as
here, if anywhere else in the wide world.... In the northern cities
what is termed fashionable society is intensely exclusive; the key to
admission to it being a golden one. Here, the lock is off and the
door stands wide open for any to enter who may be so intelligent,
entertaining and well-behaved as to prove agreeable acquaintances.

Reasons for this changed point of view are not hard to perceive.

By the end of the 1850's most of the Washingtonians who had known the
distresses of earlier years were gone or too old to sway the thinking of
younger men. Peter Force had withdrawn into the sanctuary of his study and
his bibliophile pursuits; John P. Van Ness and Samuel Harrison Smith had
died in the forties, Judge Crauch, deaf and feeble, in 1855, and Mrs. Smith
had gone into retirement before Dolly Madison's death in 1849. John Quincy
Adams, Henry Clay, and a dozen other famous public servants who, though
never permanent residents, had always taken a warm interest in the city's
well-being were dead. William Winston Eaton, upon returning from a pro-
longed tour of Europe, was no longer active in city affairs. In July 1860
when a funeral procession of more than a hundred carriages followed the
body of Joseph Gales to the cemetery, the community realized it had lost
one of its wisest conservatives, the person who, Henry Clay had said, "knew
more of the institutions, men and measures of this country than any man in
it." Washington's younger generation had seen more of prosperity than of

24 [Era, 3 Oct 50, 17 Mar 53; News, 25 May 50, 18 Dec 52, 10
Sept 53, 1 Apr 55, 31 Jan, 8 Apr, 5 Sep 57; Intelligencer, 1 Jan 55, 27
Mar 58; Star, 3 Oct 59.]
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Sept 53, 1 Apr 55, 31 Jan, 8 Apr, 5 Sep 57; Intelligencer, 1 Jan 55, 27
Mar 58; Star, 3 Oct 59.
adversity. William Thompson, publisher of the News and passionate defender of the city, his rival editor, William D. Wallach of the Star, the imper-turbable Irishman Dr. William Magruder, mayor from 1856 to 1858, Magruder's successor the suave James G. Perret, and newer-comers like Sayles J. Bowen, Dr. Joseph Toner and the school teachers, Zebulon and A. E. Richards, knew Washington of the 1820's and 1830's mostly by hearsay. They could believe that the past proved the futility of trying to shake off congressional domination in order to make the city the "business mart" that Senator Stuart declared she was never intended to be. Nearly two decades of substantial growth inspired faith in her capacity to preserve and better her recent gains.25 Millions of dollars spent on the capital in the 1850's justified confidence that the federal government would never move from the Potomac as long as a federal government endured. Unless the Union itself were to crumble, Washington therefore had nothing to fear and no cause to strive for impossible and perhaps not wholly desirable goals.

Federal Public Works and Relations between Congress and City

The Smithsonian Institution

While assurance that Washington would always be the national capital formed the basis of the city's self-confidence, the immediate cause of much of her growth was the federal building program inaugurated in 1846. When after three years of hesitation over accepting the Englishman James Smithson's bequest and another eight years of debate about how to use the money,

25 News, 21 Nov 55, 31 Jan 57; S Ex Doc 5, 357; 28, 15 Dec 56, Ser 980; ltr, W. C. Brockeveler to Joseph Gales, 1 Nov 55, Gales and Seaton MSS (LC); Star, 25 Jul 60.
Congress passed an act in August 1846 creating the Smithsonian Institution and calling for a building to house it, Washington's vague hopes became imminent reality. Smithson's will had specified that the United States should establish in Washington a foundation dedicated to "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men," but the long delay coupled with uncertainty about how Congress would interpret its obligation under the will had dampened the city's interest. Now Mayor Seaton declared that "since the legislation of the year 1814 and the rebuilding of the Capitol nothing has occurred calculated to exert such an influence on the fortunes of the city, even unto the most distant future, as the founding of this great and annually growing institution." It meant far more to Washington than a new government edifice.

The Smithsonian was the direct spiritual descendant of the Columbian Institute and its successor, the National Institution for the Promotion of Science. Founded by individual Washingtonians in 1840 and at its height claiming 1600 members, the National Institution had held in 1844 the first congress of American men of science. The society's mineral and botanical collections, placed in the Patent Office along with the specimens brought back by Meriwether Lewis and later government exploring expeditions, became the material backbone of the new national museum. The bulletins of the National Institution before its demise in the 1850's, as well as the work of the United States Coast Survey begun in the thirties and of the Navy's somewhat newer depot of charts and observatory, contributed to giving the

Smithsonian the direction it ultimately took. For disagreement about how best to insure "the increase and diffusion of knowledge" split the original Board of Regents. Some men, notably Rufus Choate of Massachusetts, believed a great national library should be the first objective, others put primary emphasis upon an art gallery and museum, and some talked of a university where the range of studies would be wider than science or art alone.27

While the regents debated these questions, lesser controversy arose over selection of the site and the architecture for the building. The location chosen in early 1847 lay on the south side of the Mall midway between the Hill and the Potomac. The regents, undeterred by the classical style and white stone of other public buildings, accepted James Renfrew's design, a Norman castle of red sandstone. On May 1st the ceremony of laying the cornerstone took place in the presence of 6000 people. Because Congress, acting upon John Quincy Adams' pleas, had specified that only the income of the bequest be spent, the building took eight years to finish. In the interim any dismay citizens had felt about the location yielded to pleasure in the "romantic" appearance of the bizarre red turrets rising against the southern skyline. And no one forgot what this unique institution represented for the city. "If there be one question set at rest in this community," declared a newspaper correspondent, "it is that public opinion has decided that the national metropolis shall be distinguished for the cultivation of the mind."28

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Dissension about the true interpretation of Smithson's will, however, continued. Half the income of the fund went into the building and a considerable sum to a library, museum and art gallery, but in the end it was the views of Joseph Henry, first secretary of the Institution, that prevailed. At the time of his appointment in 1846 Henry was professor of Natural Philosophy at the College of New Jersey, the future Princeton University. From the beginning he favored some support of applied research: soon after his coming to Washington he arranged to have telegraph offices in every part of the country send in regular weather reports on the basis of which meteorologists could in time evolve a weather forecasting system. Yet, Henry, like government scientists a hundred years later, felt the United States gave disproportionate attention to the diffusion and practical application of knowledge and too little to its increase, in short to basic research. The function of the Smithsonian, he believed, was "to give an impulse to original thought, which, amidst the strife of politics, and the inordinate pursuit of wealth, is of all things most desirable." His report for 1854 noted: "A miscellaneous and general library, museum and gallery of art, though important in themselves, have from the first been considered... to be too restricted in their operations and too local in their influence, to meet the comprehensive intentions of the testator; and the hope has been cherished that... the whole income of the Smithson fund may be devoted to the more legitimate objects of the noble bequest." Complaints sounded occasionally in Washington at the small number and excessively erudite character of the Smithsonian's public lectures, but before 1860 Henry had won over his principal opponents, and he endeared himself to...
Washingtonians by his interest in the community and his personal encouragement of new organizations like the Teachers' Institute and the Mechanics' Institute for the promotion of manufactures. His official program, though chiefly confined to the physical sciences, brought a succession of brilliant men to the capital, some of them temporarily, some to stay. In the 1850's their work and their influence made the city the headquarters of scientific research in America. 29

The Range of Other Public Enterprises

The founding of the Smithsonian, however significant, was only the first of a series of measures that between 1816 and 1860 gave the capital new dignity. Having taken the first step, Congress seemed suddenly to obtain fresh perspective. In 1847 an act authorized a "solar gas" light on the dome of the Capitol; the inventor, James Crutchett, placed his sixteen-foot lantern on a seventy-five-foot mast on top of the dome, and though the fumes were malodorous and the light feeble, in the next two years solar gas illuminated the halls of Congress and the Executive Mansion also. Congressional approval of a site for the Washington Monument at the Potomac end of the Mall below the President's Square enabled the Monument Society on the 4th of July 1848 to lay the cornerstone of the obelisk designed by Robert Mills. "The assemble on Monument Hill," wrote Benedict Bennes, "was estimated at over one thousand persons." The Masonic lodge of Washington took charge of the ceremonies and, Bennes added a little unkindly,

29 U.S. Doc. 16, 30C, 28, 19 Feb 49, Ser. 533; S. Doc. 120, 31C, 15, 1 Jan 50, Ser. 563; News, 1 Nov 51, 16 Aug, 11 Sep 52, 14 Sep, 10 Dec 53, 6 May 54, 17 May 55; S. Doc. 73, 33C, 15, 25 Jul 51, Ser. 705; H. Rot. 1H11, 33C, 27, 1 Mar 55, Ser. 608; S. Doc. 73, 31C, 15, 25 Jul 56, Ser. 835; N. Ill. Terra, 21 Dec 51, h, 18 Jan 55; Star, 16 Feb 60. See below, p. 216.
"Mrs. Madison, bedaubed with Pearl powder and rouge, and Mrs. Alexander
Hamilton were in the procession." Congress as a body appropriated no money
for the monument, but subscribers, among them federal officials and the
corporation of Washington, watched with satisfaction as the shaft rose from
50 to 100 and then to 170 feet. There for lack of money it stopped in 1854.
Meanwhile Congress voted funds to ornament the public grounds and to complete
the exterior of the long-neglected City Hall where the United States District
courts sat.30 Then one after the other came appropriations to build a
greenhouse and lay out the Botanical Garden at the foot of Capitol Hill,
to add two enormous wings and a massive new dome to the Capitol, to extend
the Patent Office, establish a home for soldiers incapacitated in the
Mexican war, place an equestrian statue of General Washington in Washington
Circle on Pennsylvania avenue, construct a mighty aqueduct to supply water
to protect government property from fire, open a government hospital for
the insane, and erect an armory on the Mall for the District military.
Fifteen years later Americans might have seen in this unprecedented spending
evidence that Congress was seeking to parry every blow that weakened the
Union by pouring money into stone and mortar, the outer and visible signs
of impregnable national strength.31

30 Intelligencer, 4 Mar, 15 Dec 47, 17 Apr, 6 Jul, 22 Dec 48, 1 Jan,
23 3pr, 19 Ser, 10 Dec 19; Union, 14 Dec 17; News, 21 Aug, 6, 20 Nov 17,
1 Mer 48, 17 Mar, 3 Nov 49; ltr, B. J. Semmes to Jonathan Jordan, 5 Jul 48,
Semes Piss (SHC); Cong Globe, 30C, 15, 16 Jan 48, p. 197, 33C, 15, 13 Jul 54,
521; Washington Acts, 31 May 50; H Ex Doc 34, 30C, 15, 16 Jan 48, Ser 510;

31 H Ex Doc 2, 320, 17, 2 Dec 51, p. 23, Ser 634; H Ex Docs 57, 68 and
79, 329, 15, 6, 20 Feb 52, Ser 611; Cong Globe, 324, 25 , 17 Jan 53, p. 329,
Sep 52, 9 Nov 53; Intelligencer, 2 Jan 52.
In midcentury, the federal building project most important to Washington was the extension of the Capitol; the hundreds of thousands of dollars appropriated for it attested to the permanence of the capital on the Potomac, building operations would give employment to hundreds of workmen, and, when finished, the magnificent edifice with its towering dome should attract visitors from every state in the Union. The laying of the cornerstone on the 4th of July 1851 thus became a portentous occasion.

Every federal dignitary from President Fillmore down attended, as well as the "venerable Justis, a distinguished surviving member of the Washington family, our worthy fellow citizen Z. Walker, who was present at the laying of the cornerstone of the Capitol in 1793," and R. B. French, Grand Master of the Masonic Fraternity of the District of Columbia, wearing the apron that Washington wore and bearing the gavel which Washington used in 1793." To save the cost of raising the level of the Hill on the south and the west, the President had approved a plan that put the new wings at right angles to the main axis of the Capitol and placed the dome off-center almost over the eastern portico. The imbalance that would offend architects for the next hundred years elicited no criticism while the work was in progress. In December 1851 fire destroyed the Library of Congress in the main building. That catastrophe delayed work on the wings but emphasized the necessity of solid construction. Five hundred men were employed on the job during 1852, but in 1858 when Congress moved into its new halls the pillars of the eastern porticoes were not yet in place. For the next four years huge blocks of marble cluttered the grounds and the streets nearby.

The dome would not be finished until 1863.  

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32 5 Rpt 273, 31C, 25, 8 Feb 51, Ser 593; H Ex Doc 2, 32C, 18, 2 Dec 51, p. 23, Ser 631; Rpt Sec/Int, 1852, pp. 503-05, Ser 650; News, 5 Jul, 27 Dec 51, 29 Sep 52; Rpt Sec/Inf, 1850, pp. 74-51, Ser 976.
In 1853 the Soldiers' Home opened its doors to about forty invalid veterans. Although a drive out to the well-tended 240-acre farm two miles to the north of Washington made a pleasant summer outing, city dwellers knew little about the Home until President Buchanan, and later President Lincoln, took up summer residence in a house on the grounds. The Government Hospital for the Insane, on the contrary, immediately interested citizens. It was the fruit of Dorothea Dix's long crusade for humane treatment of the mentally ill. She it was who induced Thomas Flagden to sell his farm on the rolling hills beyond the Eastern Branch and her eloquence that persuaded Congress to put a qualified physician in charge of the hospital. The spacious, well-lighted building, its beams cut from the woodland and the brick kilned from the clay on the farm, received its first inmates in 1855. Here under the watchful care of Dr. Charles Nichols, the first superintendent, mentally unbalanced soldiers and sailors and residents of the District, men and women, white and colored, underwent treatment; for most patients the household and farm chores were useful therapy, in sharpest contrast to the enforced idleness at the city jail. Indeed the establishment of the asylum was as epoch-making in its way as the Smithsonian itself.33

water system planned on a scale to supply a million people promised a sanitary revolution. Since the early years of the century pumps in the public squares had furnished spring water to householders in every neighborhood. Until the forties when some well-to-do families had cisterns dug and pumps installed in their kitchens, slaves or small boys had fetched the day's supply of water in buckets; every morning the slave woman with a pail of water in each hand and another balanced on her head was a commonplace of the Washington scene. Yet other American cities had water works—Philadelphia as early as 1801, New Orleans before 1820, while New York's magnificent Croton works and Boston's huge system were in use before 1812. Proposals for something comparable in the capital dated back to 1830; Robert Mills after studying other municipalities had prepared detailed recommendations for Washington, but as the city had to obtain congressional approval and some federal funds, the plan had lapsed. Congress had settled for piping spring water into the Capitol and the White House and somewhat later into the departmental offices. But the meagerness of the means of protecting government property from fire was self-evident; Congress sponsored surveys in 1851. That December the burning of the Library of Congress emphasized the necessity of action. In 1853, the President chose the most comprehensive of several alternative plans, and though it entailed at least $2,000,000, Congress voted to build at government expense.

The most costly feature of the system mapped out by Lt. Montgomery Neigs of the Army Engineer Corps was an enormous aqueduct running from the Great Falls ten miles northwest of Georgetown through rocky hillsides and over a deep ravine at "Cabin John" to empty into receiving and distributing
reservoirs above Washington. The very magnitude of the engineering task aroused widespread interest. While the District cities appointed water registrars and laid mains in the principal residential areas—work financed by a $150,000 loan in Washington and by a special tax in Georgetown,—private householders looked forward to the moment when running water in every house would make outhouses needless. The autumn of 1858 saw the first phase of the great work finished. On 3 January 1859 the surface water accumulated in the temporary receiving reservoir was turned into the mains, and for the first time Washingtonians beheld the now familiar sight of public fountains playing: "The jet of aqueduct water rose...from the basin west of the capital to the height of one hundred feet or more." The more difficult of the Gargantuan task, laying the twelve-foot conduit from the Great Falls to a distributing reservoir, would take another five years. In the meantime residents of Washington and Georgetown rejoiced at being able to pipe "Powder Mill Creek" water into their houses. 34

These major developments overshadowed lesser improvements. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the City Hall symbolized civic dignity, citizens were gratified to see stucco cover the outer walls and a pillared central portico added to the conspicuously placed building. The handsome new wings of the Patent Office, the carefully tended trees and rare plants in the Botanic...
Gardon relocated on the mall at the foot of the Hill, and the new armory adjacent to the Smithsonian also gave Washingtonians pleasure. Moreover, the unveiling of the first equestrian statue in the capital evoked civic pride. The Jackson Democratic Society had commissioned the bronze of Clark Mills who had made his name as a sculptor in Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1853 when his statue of Andrew Jackson mounted on a rearing horse went into place in Lafayette Square, patriotic sentiment acclaimed the work as testimony to American artistic skill. Critics of Captain Feigs who was responsible for engaging talent to decorate the Capitol declared that Feigs "ostracized American artists, employing a host of French, German and Italian workmen"; the achievement of the American Clark Mills should now confound such an error. Congress, proud of having a bronze cast in the United States and impressed at the sculptor's feat in balancing a horse weighing several tons on its hind legs, overlooked the accusations of Mills' rivals that he had simply poured cannon ball into the tail; admiration for the result won him a $20,000 bonus and a congressional commission for an equestrian statue of George Washington. On the 22nd of February 1860, virtually every Washingtonian of consequence took part in the ceremonial dedication of Mills' bronze of the General placed in Washington Circle. That day marked the last great public non-partisan demonstration in the ante-bellum capital.35

Relations between Congress and City

Contrary to hopeful assumptions, this federal largesse failed to encourage cordiality between Congress and city. For a brief time at the end of the 1810s better rapport did obtain. In 1817 a senator objecting to a grant for the Washington canal noted that "it was useless to oppose District appropriations, because the District, having nobody to represent it on the floor, has everybody." The next year, Mayor Seaton, stout Whig though he was, thanked the Democratic Congress for its "kind consideration" of the city. But friendly feelings toward the local community, never universal among members of Congress, diminished with every new benefit bestowed. After 1851 representatives and senators expostulated with increasing frequency over the city's dependent attitude: Washington neglected to pave and clean the streets properly; freed of the C & O canal debt, she soon asked for help on restoring the city canal; despite a huge federal payroll largely spent in the city, she perpetually cried poverty, while keeping her tax-rate at a ridiculously low level. Federal public works offered her laborers and mechanics well-paid employment, added to her population and enriched her tradesmen and her real estate dealers. Indeed the generosity of Congress, declaimed members, created endless opportunities for all Washingtonians. It gave them a magnificent Capitol and a spectacular dome, completed their City Hall, lighted and policed their streets at night, built them water works, provided an armory, hospitalized their insane and, through funds for a school for the deaf, dumb and blind, educated their handicapped children.36

Two speeches will suffice to reveal the temper of critics on the Hill. In opposing a bill of 1856 to repair the government-owned Long Bridge, Senator Brodhead of Pennsylvania declared: "I know very well that most people in the cities of Washington and Georgetown live from the drippings of the Treasury." Besides projecting an expenditure of from three to five millions to supply Washington with water, "Congress has now voted to build a dome on the Capitol and the cost will be $500,000 to $1,000,000." The extension to the Patent Office and the Treasury were costing several hundred thousands more, and three to four millions for the War and Navy Department buildings would be next. "These demands on the public Treasury--the people's money--for purposes of expenditure in the cities of Washington and Georgetown are shameful; and the manner in which our money is poured out to these people is shameful." Two years later Senator Iverson of Georgia held forth in somewhat similar vein: "There is no city, perhaps, in the world, in which, for the population, so much money is expended out of the public Treasury as in the city of Washington. At the last session of Congress there were over four million dollars appropriated, to be expended within twelve months, in the District of Columbia...and then when you come to consider the money spent here by members of Congress, by strangers who visit the city on public business, and by the clerks and other officers of the Government, you find there is a vast amount of money expended here for the benefit of the resident inhabitants." But always they asked for more, and before long "the Federal Treasury will have to feed and clothe the citizens." No one pointed out to the senator that that money invested in consumer goods was not productive capital or that the seasonal character
of federal building operations frequently forced upon the city the burden of caring for workmen's families during winter lay-offs.37

Yet Washington did not lack for defenders both in the executive departments and in Congress. Captain Meigs reminded the New York Tribune that the aqueduct was a national project because it was necessary to protect irreplaceable government records and public buildings. "A large part of the population of Washington is composed of strangers who are brought here by the Congress. . . . Are the citizens to build an aqueduct out of their miserable salaries to protect the United States?" He might have added that the municipality had contributed $1,000 when Congress voted $500 for the initial surveys and that many district citizens advocated building the water system by private rather than government enterprise. Senator Brown of Mississippi with more earnestness than humor rebuked his associates for attributing the new Capitol dome to Washington's greedy opportunities; Congress itself had demanded the dome as a work of national glory and the new wings on the building entirely for congressional convenience. From time to time the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Interior also championed the city. Her councils were fully justified in requesting an armory for the District militia; it had to have a suitable place to drill and to store the arms needed to safeguard the capital from "illegal combinations." Other officials noted that the government rarely or never consulted the wishes of local citizens but acted purely in its own interests. In 1859 the Commissioner of Public Buildings, the man best acquainted with

the municipality’s situation, set the official record straight.38

Those who are uninformed not infrequently accuse the city of relying too much upon the government and not doing anything for itself. To show that this charge is founded in error, it is only necessary to state one or two facts. During the last ten years the corporation has raised by taxation the sum of $2,376,042.86, which has been expended for general purposes; and the city has, from first to last, opened and made more than fifty miles of avenues and streets, at a cost of about a million and a half dollars. It may be safely affirmed that no city, in proportion to its population and wealth, has done more for itself than Washington, notwithstanding nearly one half of the property within its limits belongs to the government, and is not subject to taxation.

Taxpayers of Washington and Georgetown generally saw fit to overlook the barrage of criticism directed at them. Some of it they well knew was intended for congressional constituents at home and had little bearing on the passage of legislation. As long as Congress continued to vote money for District improvements, derogatory speeches made on the Hill were harmless. For Washington the one disturbing new element in her relations with the government grew out of the sale of the last federally owned building lots in the city. Ever since Congress had agreed in the 1820’s to use the proceeds of sales of land acquired from the original proprietors to reimburse the city for work undertaken on federal property, the city corporation had watched the shrinkage of salable lots apprehensively. By 1853 the

number left was fewer than five hundred, by 1855 only valueless sites remained, "the refuse lots that have been in the market more than sixty years," and by 1856 no unsold lots whatsoever. Here was disaster, particularly for the school board. From the beginning of Washington's public school system, the school trustees had counted on a grant of public land when and if Congress denied them every other form of federal aid. Now with the possibility gone of drawing on funds from local sales, the Senate Committee on the District reported a gift of western lands inexpedient and of "doubtful constitutionality." If that view persisted, differentiating between the universally approved measure of federal land grants to support schools in the states and territories and similar aid for the District of Columbia, Washington knew she could expect little help on other local projects. After 1857 the only concession she won was conditional title to the Pennsylvania avenue site of the sixty-year old Centre Market, a grant contingent upon the city's completing before mid-1862 a new market-house to replace the dilapidated old white-washed, moss-covered frame building. That condition, plus the congressional fiat to increase the municipal debt to pay for the building, robbed the gift of most of its value. Still, all things considered in the late fifties, carving at Congress was worse than useless, and Washington knew she had fared better than Georgetown.

The stream of petitioned petitions to Congress continued, but their tone was placative. Citizens avoided recriminations.40

City Administration

The Charter of 1848

Meanwhile the introduction of white manhood suffrage under a new city charter of 1848 widened the base of political power and altered the character of municipal administration. The ground swell of dissatisfaction with the limitations imposed by the charter of 1820 had risen steadily after 1844. At ward meetings and city "conventions" to which non-voters as well as taxpayers sent delegates, men discussed heatedly the pros and cons of the charter amendments proposed to Congress in 1846 and variations thought out later. In February 1848 a referendum showed an overwhelming majority in favor of opening the polls to all white men who had resided in the city a year and paid a poll tax to be levied for school support. By act of Congress the new charter incorporating these provisions went into effect on the 15th of May. Three weeks later 2800 voters quietly cast their ballots, double the number in any previous election but fewer than the excitement over removal of the property qualification had seemed to predict.41


The financial powers granted the city met with general approval, particularly the 75-cent tax ceiling and the prohibition on borrowing without the express authorization of two-thirds of the electorate. All but a few people welcomed the corporation's new power to tax stocks and other securities, since that revenue should lighten the burden on real estate. Occasionally someone objected to the poll tax, and a handful of men protested at having offices like those of police magistrates and constables appointive instead of elective. But satisfaction with the form of municipal government was sufficiently widespread to kill all attempts to revive interest in a territory of the District of Columbia with or without representation in Congress. Though the city councils came in time to think their police and taxing powers too limited, charter amendments of 1854 and 1856 enlarging their authority silenced most complaints for the rest of the decade.43

Faith in the form of government unhappily failed to engender public confidence in the men elected to office. The relative unanimity of officials during William Seaton's ten years as mayor gave way after 1850 to a partisan feuding that confused civic issues and lessened administrative efficiency. Every election till 1860, when James Barrett won a second term, put a new mayor into office and, more disruptive, a preponderance of petty self-seekers into the city councils. The growing bitterness of the campaigns may have

12 News, 6 Mar, 11 Dec 17, 8 Jan, 17 Jun 18, 16 Feb 50, 10 May 51, 27 Mar 52; Intelligencer, 8 Jun 19; ptms, H31a-31.2, 8 May 50, H32a-35.2, 23 Mar and 5 Apr 52.

been partly a reflection of nation-wide stresses as Know-Nothings and Free Soilers emerged and the old Whigs and Democratic parties disintegrated, but class consciousness was clearly a stronger force in local politics than national party realignments. The anti-Catholic and anti-foreign Know-Nothing position which found favor in 1854 and 1856 was itself largely an expression of class consciousness. Men long denied the franchise were loath to return "aristocrats" to office and preferred to trust the time-servers in their own ranks. On the other hand, Georgetown, whose charter until late 1856 limited voting to property owners, escaped civic turmoil. Henry Addison, first elected mayor in 1855, held the post until 1857, and then unseated for a two-year term, returned to office in 1859. Unlike Washington, Georgetown elections were peaceful, her councils' debates too tepid to command attention. Furthermore, she was still a small town and perhaps owed much of her political calm to discouragement over her economic stagnation and the painfully slow growth of her population, whereas Washington's rapid expansion multiplied conflicting demands for services and intensified internal dissensions.44

City Finances

The constant turnover in Washington's City Hall prevented the rise

of a powerful political machine with graft as its lubricant, but the loss of pride in the highmindedness of officials lowered the city's respect for herself. Oddly enough, though opportunists ruled in the councils and disinterested concern for the community as a whole but vanished, economy was the watchword of each administration in turn. The curtailment of funds for debt reduction and the upward trend of expenditures for streets and water mains might seem to foreshadow the phenomenon seen in boss-ridden cities later in the century when corrupt politicians, while lining their own pockets, spent more for useful public works than taxation-minded reformers, absorbed in their budgets. But as Washington's revenues mounted, her councils instead of using the money for the needs of the growing community cut the tax rate slice by slice, from 75 cents to 60 and in 1859 to 55 cents, half the figure of the early thirties when the city was less prosperous and contained less than half as many people. (See table).

Georgetown, with far less wealth, during most of the 1850's kept to a tax rate 25 percent higher than her neighbor's.15

Washington's mayors, if sensing the wisdom of enlarging the budget, lacked the singleness of purpose and the vigor to make headway against the crosscurrents of opposition to bond issues for any public service. Washington-born Walter Lenox, undistinguished successor to Mayor Seaton, was well-

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** Including salaries of ward commissioners and the pay of ward scavengers.
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intentioned but wanting in persuasiveness. Gentle John Maury, beloved as a man, was a singularly inept politician, while John Towers, a printer elected by the Know Nothings in 1854, was the creature of his party; bluff Dr. William Magruder divided his energies between his medical practice and his mayoral duties to the cost of both. The self-important ex-Postmaster and lawyer, James Perrot, displayed greater interest in remaining in office than in bettering conditions in Washington. All five mayors tended to accept the concept of Washington as a monument to the nation rather than an entity in her own right and accordingly let themselves think that Congress should bear a larger share of the cost. In adopting that attitude they unwittingly helped lower civic morale.46

Law Enforcement

Growing lawlessness was above all a source of humiliation to citizens who, in spite of the firehouse gangs, in the past had taken pride in Washington's peacefulness. "I believe there is no place of equal population," wrote Mayor Seaton in 1849, "in which there is so little of riot, breach of the peace, or serious crime as in this city; but I apprehend there is scarcely one which is more disturbed by idle, rowdy and disorderly boys." That judgment, doubtless sound for the forties, ceased to apply to the fifties. Until the city enlarged the police force in 1858, every year

worsened the record of vandalism, arson, prostitution, thievery, robbery and assault. Several congressmen, to be sure, noted that crime quickly subsided in Washington as soon as Congress adjourned; its presence attracted criminals like flies around a honey-pot. Those perceptive editors and devoted Washingtonians, Joseph Gales and William Seaton, viewed the rise in the crime rate as a natural if unpleasant accompaniment of rapid expansion; Washington was suffering the growing pains felt in most American cities of the day. Indeed mounting violence marked the decade throughout the country. Senator Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, pointing to Baltimore, New York, Cincinnati and New Orleans, observed: "Pockets are picked, men are garroted and robbed in those cities as well as here." But citizens of the capital found scant comfort in knowing they had companions in misery. "The troubles and disorders," the District Marshall reported, "have increased much faster than the population."

Some of these troubles were manifestly the fruit of extreme partisan feeling. The "Pope stone episode" was an example: in 1854 a band of Know Nothings, passionate anti-Catholics, gathered at midnight at the Washington Monument, locked up the watchman and then defaced and threw into the Potomac the block of marble from the Temple of Concord in Rome which the Pope had

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47 Washington Acts, Mayor's Rpt, 6 Aug 49, p. 112; Rpt Sec/Int, 1858, p. 701, Ser 974; Cong Globe, 35C, 1S, 5 Apr 50, p. 1162, 19 Apr 50, pp. 1671-72; Intelligencer, 8 Feb, 22 Nov 47, 17 Apr 48, 10 Dec 49, 1, 5 Jun 55, 8 Jun 56; News, 3 Mar, 1 Mar, 13 Oct, 10 Nov 49, 25 May 50, 19 Jun, 13 Oct, 17 Nov 52, 9 Apr 53, 22 Apr 54, 3 May 56, 3 Oct 57; Star, 29 Mar 50, 23 Feb, 25 Mar 59, 28 Feb 60. The newspapers citations given here and in the four notes following are merely a few samples chosen from a large number of articles.
presented for the memorial shaft. The next year Know Nothings acting under
a thin cloak of legality seized all the property of Washington Monument
Society, thereby killing its chances of raising money for the work. Political
feuding took more serious form two years later. In a fight at the polls
near the Northern Liberties market, partisans abetted by "Plug Uglies" from
Baltimore brought up a loaded cannon; when President Pierce at Mayor
Magruder's request called out the marines, city officials closed the polls
because it was "inconsistent with the principles of free government to ask
citizens to exercise the right of suffrage under the guns and bayonets of
the regulars"; the regulars nevertheless in trying to disperse the crowd
fired into it and killed or wounded a score of spectators. Political war-
fare, only slightly less vicious in succeeding elections, created golden
opportunities for criminals and petty malactors. Calling Washington's
police "both feeble and inefficient," the Senate District Committee declared
in 1858, "Riot and bloodshed are of daily occurrence. Innocent and unoffen-
ding persons are shot, stabbed and otherwise shamefully maltreated and not
unfrequently the offender is not even arrested." Grown men avoided traversing
the streets alone at night.\(^\text{18}\)

Nor was crime confined to the lower ranks of society. Members of
Congress addicted to gambling, duelling and other vices set a sorry example.
A congressman shot a waiter in a Washington hotel and went scott free. On
the floor of the Senate an assailant threatened Thomas Benton of Missouri

\(^{18}\) History of the Washington National Monument, 8 Dec 22\(\text{d}\), 57\(\text{c}\), 25,
6 Feb 1903, pp. 52-64; Ser 41\(\text{b}\), 36; Intelligencer, 29, 30 May 55, 1, 15, 23,
30 Jun 57; stns, H3\(\text{a}\)-\(\text{b}\), 7, 3 Mar 56, H35\(\text{f}\)-\(\text{h}\), n.d.; News, 28, 28 Feb,
3 Mar 55, 26 Apr 56, 23 May, 6 Jun, 23 Jul 57; Star, 1\(\text{a}\) Oct 58; S Rpt 149,
35\(\text{c}\), 15, 1 Apr 58, Ser 938; Cong Globe, 35\(\text{c}\), 18, 5 Apr 58, pp. 1160-65.
at the point of a pistol, several years later Preston Brooks of South Carolina subjected Charles Sumner to a savage caning, and fist fights more than once ended in duels. And on a Sunday afternoon in 1859 Congressman Daniel Sickles, after learning of his wife's infidelity, openly murdered her lover, Philip Barton Key, son of the author of the Star Spangled Banner. Sickles' acquittal and the cheers with which the court room audience greeted the verdict convinced many Americans of "the unparalleled depravity of Washington society."\(^9\)

Citizens discussed endlessly the problem of checking the spreading violence, particularly juvenile crime. Public opinion rejected the 17th and 18th century view that the law should make no allowances for youth, but the District legal system provided neither special machinery for handling juvenile offenders nor any place to keep them in custody except the county jail. To imprison adolescents and small children in cells with hardened criminals was to invite greater trouble. A "House of Refuge" or reform school like the ones in Boston and Baltimore might reform boys sent there but was unlikely to deter other delinquents. One school of thought believed better policing the best answer. Another group thought weakness in the law itself rather than inadequate enforcement lay at the root of the evil; revamping the court system and revising the laws would be the cure. Still others saw intemperance and the irresponsibility of parents toward their children as the chief cause of crime; do away with liquor and peace would

\(^9\) Ltr, Dr. Thomas Foster to Alexander Ramsey, 28 Sep 50 and John H. Stevens to Ramsey, 25 Feb 51, Ramsey Papers (Minn Hist Soc); Intelligencer, 19 Apr 50; Star, 28 Feb, 11 Mar, 26, 27 Apr 59; Ntl Erg, 17 Mar 59.
return to the community.\textsuperscript{50}

An improved police force was the most immediately feasible corrective.

New city ordinances aimed at bringing order into Washington's volunteer fire companies met with little success, but a salaried police department established in 1851 with seventeen day-time officers promised improvements. Although Georgetown kept order with nine constables, Washington's force was still too small to patrol so spread-out a city. When the corporation in 1858 added ten constables and put the men in uniform, disorder lessened, but partly, the mayor asserted, because the city employed an emergency night watch of forty men to supplement the thirty-man federal auxiliary guard.

Baltimore, in area considerably smaller than Washington, maintained a regular force of 100, about one patrolman to every 850 residents; the capital with valuable government property to protect had a permanent force of fifty-seven, a ratio of one officer for every 1050 inhabitants. The Senate District committee advocated a metropolitan police under federal control, but bitter disagreement in both houses over who should appoint the officers and who pay the bills shelved the proposal. The inefficient arrangement of a dual force endured—a day-time patrol paid by the city and a night guard paid by Congress and both units undermanned.\textsuperscript{51}


Congress and city, however, saw eye to eye about the need of a legal code and extensive judicial reform. Though the severity of court sentences such as a prison term of fifteen months for stealing "a blue cloak" was not a bone of contention, "the present old and infirm system of laws," as a senator dubbed it, occasioned maddening and expensive delays in litigation and sometimes inflicted injustice. To get a divorce in the District of Columbia required a special act of Congress; to get a judgment in a criminal case might take months of waiting in jail pending trial. Old and young, guilty and innocent, including people held merely as material witnesses, were thrown together in the evil-smelling building on Judiciary Square under conditions more prone to breed than discourage crime. Reform of prisoners was equally unlikely at the federal penitentiary where, inspectors noted, a shortage of uniforms forced convicts "to wear winter clothing for eight months of the year without change" even during a dysentery epidemic. In belief that the machinery of law enforcement might run smoother under better laws, Congress in 1855 appointed commissioners to revise and codify District law. The draft when submitted to a citizens' referendum in 1859 met with criticism from nearly everyone; only a small minority thought the proposed code better than none. The rejection meant that the District had to wait till 1863 for a reorganized judiciary and till 1901 for a codification of its laws.52

Poor Relief and Philanthropy

Like Americans elsewhere, Washingtonians recognized a connection between poverty and crime even while they were puzzled by the paradox of bitter want in a prospering city. Many concurred in Mayor Walter Lenox's statement of 1851 that "intemperance is the cause almost exclusively of all disturbances and pauperism which afflict our community," but as "anti-tipping" ordinances were ineffective and temperance and total abstinence societies gradually lost confidence in their ability to end drunkenness and poverty, the community sought other means of lightening, if not curing, distress.53 Federal appropriations for the care of "sick non-resident paupers in the Washington Infirmary," observed the Secretary of the Interior in 1856, "continues to relieve a great amount of human suffering." The institution at times had more applicants than it could admit and never took all local citizens free of charge, but the faculty of the National Medical College which supplied most of the funds and ran the hospital with the help of the Sisters of Charity who did the nursing performed a valuable public service.54 Washington's paupers, the infirm and the ill, were usually sent to the Asylum, located after 1848 on the Eastern Branch on the present site.
of Gallinger Hospital. There the city provided a hospital for small-pox cases and, before the government hospital opened, housed the insane. The almshouse had also to accommodate a good many "non-resident" paupers for whom Congress made no provision. Often nearly half the inmates of the almshouse were foreigners or citizens of other communities. The workhouse attached to the Asylum was an arrangement many people thought objectionable because it forced "the unfortunate poor" into close association with convicted vagrants, prostitutes and drunkards, but when the first building burned in 1857, the rebuilt Asylum again combined almshouse and workhouse.55 To needy families classed as "the outdoor poor," ward physicians and apothecaries furnished medicines and professional advice, and in severe winters the city supplied fire wood. While Congress, abandoning the course it had taken in the 1830's, refused appropriations for such emergencies, individual congressmen and senators gave generously. Yet need always outran the means to relieve it. Because suffering was always greatest in the poorest wards, in 1859 a city board of relief took over most of the functions of the ward overseers of the poor, but private contributions, not taxes, still provided the largest share of the money.56 Thus churches, charitable societies and neighbors were the city's almoners in all direct relief and the


private charitable societies undertook much of the institutional care as well. In Georgetown acute poverty was never widespread. The Benevolent Society and the churches supplemented public funds; John Barnes' legacy that built the poorhouse and later a gift of $10,000 from W. W. Corcoran enabled the city to handle poor relief without turning to Congress for help. The transient paupers that complicated Washington's problem rarely sought refuge in the smaller city.57

The forms of philanthropy varied in detail but not in essentials from those of earlier years. By 1850 the Washington Orphan Asylum had twenty-four little girls and twenty-three small boys in its charge. St. Vincents before the end of the decade was caring for four hundred children, a third of them living at the orphanage. Sponsored by Catholic laymen, St. Joseph's Orphanage for boys opened in 1855, and in 1860 the efforts of a Catholic sister made possible St. Ann's, a home for foundlings. Of the dozen other new charities some were short-lived, while others carried on the programs of older societies as they disintegrated. Thus the Guardian Society, founded in 1853, took over much of the work of the Female Union Benevolent and Employment Society, though not before the ladies of that useful and time-honored organization had vainly tried to introduce a surprisingly modern plan of fund-raising: regular yearly subscriptions "from each person and family in the city" who had contributed piecemeal in the past. The three hundred "Guardians of the Poor" undertook not only to find jobs for the unemployed but to open Sunday and weekday schools and establish a widows'...

57 Georgetown Ordinances, 9 Jan 47, 1 Jan, 1 Jul 48, 30 Dec 51, 28 Apr 55, 7 Feb 56.
and orphans' home which, with the cooperation of the courts, might serve as
a "House of Refuge" for destitute children charged with delinquency. 58

Only the Columbia Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind won federal
aid. Amos Kendall, Postmaster General under President Jackson and later
head of the telegraph company in Washington, launched the school and enlisted
the interest of Congress. In 1856 he had found a half dozen deaf and dumb
children living virtually enslaved by a man who claimed them as apprentices.
Kendall took them into his own house and began teaching them there while he
and his friends pressed Congress to charter a school and appropriate money
for its support. Congress moved quickly. The act of incorporation of Feb­
uary 1857 set up a board of trustees and provided for the payment from
Treasury funds of $150 yearly for the tuition and keep of "each deaf, dumb
or blind pupil properly belonging to the District of Columbia" whose parents
could not afford to pay fees. Kendall deeded to the Columbia Institution
his land and farmhouse at Kendall Green just north of Boundary street, the
city contributed a small sum of money, and individual donors gave more. The
trustees put Dr. Edward Gallaudet in charge, an experienced teacher and the
son of Thomas Gallaudet who had first introduced into America the method of
teaching deaf mutes by sign language. With his mother to serve as matron
and three other teachers, two of them instructors for the blind, Dr. Gallaudet

58 Intelligencer, 8 Feb, 12 Nov 17, 17 Jan 18, 16 Jan, 22, 26, 29 Oct,
7 Nov, 21 Dec 19; Seventy-six Years of the Washington Bible Society: News,
7 Nov 16, 27 Oct 19, 1, 2 Feb 51, 15 Jan, 17 Nov 52, 21 Nov 57; Cong Globe,
333, 28, 17, 10 Jan 55, pp. 169-228, 336, 13, 7, 11, 14 Feb 56, pp. 361, 378,
132, 2 Jun 56, App. p. 6, 356, 13, 19 Feb 56, p. 791; ptb, H36a-Gh.1, 2 Apr 60.
opened the school in August 1857 to fifteen children. Enrollment increased rapidly, partly because Congress amended the original act to include Army and Navy children among its beneficiaries and partly because the spreading fame of the school drew paying pupils from the District, Maryland and other states. By odd coincidence, in 1860 the trustees fell heir to the $1,000 which Dr. Gallaudet's grandfather and fellow members of the Howard Society had raised twenty-five years before to found a manual training and agricultural school for orphans. Annual training and work on the farm were from the beginning important features of the school at Kendall Green. Dr. Gallaudet's skillful if sentimental appeals in his annual reports elicited added appropriations from Congress, but the institution remained quasi-public, with private citizens directing its course and individual gifts supplementing federal and municipal monies.59

Streets and Public Health Problems

Washingtonians grateful for a government hospital to house the insane, for the federal assistance to the deaf, dumb and blind and for the public water supply in prospect, still felt irked at congressional do-nothing policies about maintaining the streets of the capital; the land was government-owned; the government should care for its property. Among all the

areas of confusion in the domain of public administration, nowhere was the line between federal and local responsibility so ill-defined as in the matter of Washington's streets. Yet the larger the population, the more pressing became the need for clean, well-lighted, well-drained public ways. City officials looking at the width of the thoroughfares concluded that paving was too expensive for any public body but Congress to undertake, and Congress confined its appropriations primarily to the "Avenue." Before mid-century the only paved stretch in all Washington was the cobblestoned mile of Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the White House; after 1853 the cobblestone surface extended west to Rock Creek. Ward commissioners, recurrent municipal economy campaigns notwithstanding, graded and gravelled a number of streets, though altercation attended every change until an official book listing grades authorized by Congress appeared in 1859. Five years after the organization of the Washington Gas Light Company in 1848, Congress had gas lamps installed on Pennsylvania Avenue and on the streets bordering the executive offices; the city put gas lights into the City Hall and along the principal streets though the lamps were lighted only on moonless nights. Street signs then went up on lamp posts and an ordinance required every building to display its number. About the same time the councils obtained permission from Congress to lay sewers to drain surface water into the canal or the river.

But repeated digging up the streets and excavating for new buildings created clouds of dust in dry weather and left the highways thick with mud after a rain. Representative Charles Billinghurst, fresh from Juneau, Wisconsin, described the winds in Washington, "lifting the sand and dust of
the streets and filling the whole atmosphere, sometimes for hours making the streets almost impossible. Men, in the streets, go with handkerchiefs or scarves before their faces. I've been caught...two or three times and nearly suffocated and blinded." Impossible as it was to keep gravelled surfaces clean, Pennsylvania Avenue was little better. In the summer of 1856 Congress was driven to spend nearly $2000 for watering the Avenue and in 1859 to order its repaving.60

The filth in the streets was a menace to health. Householders, as for years past, dumped garbage and slops into the alleys and roadways. The result, unpleasant when the city contained a few hundred families, was dangerous when that number tripled. Pigs still scavenged in many of the streets, dug hog wallows in the roads and besmirched buildings and fences.

Slaughter houses heightened the nauseous odors. Rats and cockroaches infested most dwellings; in summer, flies swarmed from the stables and the dung on the streets; mosquitoes bred by millions in the stagnant nonis scattered through the city. Faulty drainage about some of the public pumps exposed whole neighborhoods to dysentery and typhoid fever. In 1849 fear of a cholera epidemic like that of 1832 inspired the mayor to appoint ward "sanitary committees" to assist the board of health; lime was spread over

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60 Intelligencer, 15, 22 June 1846, 13 June 1848; News, 21 June, 21 Oct 1848, 15 Feb 1849, 16 Aug 1849, 23 Aug 1849, 17, 26 Sep, 8 Oct 1849, 11, 18 Aug 1849; Star, 21 Aug, 22 Nov 1849; 1br, Charles Billi nghurst to his wife, 25 Dec 1850, Billinghamurst MSS (Wisconsin Historical Society); ptns, H32A-05.5, 11 Dec 1851, 23 Jan 1852; H in loc. 11, 330, 18, 21 Jan 1854, Ser 741; H Rpts 354 and 355, 350, 13, 28 Apr 1856, Ser 966; S Rpts 155, 350, 13, 23 Mar 1856, Ser 1039; Cong Globe, 32 C, 18, 27 Aug 1856, pp. 2393, 34C, 18, 2 May 1856, pp. 1102-03; Washington Acts, 25 Apr 1858, 8 May 1859, 23 May 1859, 17 Mar, 18 May 1859, 4 Aug 1859 and, for acts voting money to grade and gravel the streets, entries scattered through the records of every council in turn.
the worst "public nuisances" and physicians cheerfully declared the cause of sudden deaths that summer "only dysentery." Though Washington largely escaped the "killer" cholera, the mortality rate that year ran close to 35 per thousand, of which nearly half was among children under one year of age. Some years saw a lower adult death rate, but infant mortality remained high. The board of health explained that "the larger proportion of these deaths are from among the children of negro, of foreign, and of destitute native parents, who usually reside in alleys or in the suburbs." Doctors had no remedy to offer. One mayor after another spoke of the urgent need of enforcing the ordinances against throwing refuse into the streets, but all agreed that "the difficulty of ascertaining the violators of the law, and procuring the testimony necessary to convict, has rendered it almost a nullity." The best solution the city councils could think of was to employ additional scavengers and wait till the finished aqueduct furnished abundant water to street hydrants. 61

While looking forward to the introduction of aqueduct water, officials made no plans for a city-wide system of sanitary sewers, although the experience of the federal government might have warned of the need for planning. The sewers from the Capitol emptied underground near the brow

of the Hill and from there drained harmlessly down toward the mall, but the sewage from the White House and the adjacent departmental offices detached in the low-lying ground between the Executive Mansion and the canal until what is today the Ellipse had become an unwholesome marsh. The extension of the pipes in 1850 to empty into the canal was only a minor improvement. The sewers from the Patent Office and Post Office fed into a branch of Tiber creek which cut between 9th and 10th streets and emptied into the canal. In that shallow waterway sewage carried out into the river at ebb tide washed back in at high. In time accumulating sediment nearly stopped the flow altogether and turned the canal into a stagnating open cess pool. The city fathers saw nothing amiss. After building several sewers for surface drainage, the corporation expressly forbade their use for sanitary purposes. Householders upon payment of a special tax might drain water from their cellars into a city main but the sewage from the hotels and the few private houses equipped with water closets fed into nearby streams and vacant lots.

The Public Schools

Among Washingtonians the public schools were the subject of only less controversy than were the streets. The plan adopted in 1844 had quickly proved self-defeating as distinctions between free and pay pupils caused friction, pay pupils withdrew, and loss of tuition fees threatened to reestablish the pauper school system. By 1848 attendance had dropped to about 1,200 pupils daily. Fortunately the new city charter provided for a poll tax which, earmarked for school support, brought in several thousand dollars.

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and enabled the trustees that autumn to dispense with tuition entirely. Enrollment both in the male and female schools increased immediately and within a year reached to more than thirteen hundred. Six years later thirty-seven teachers in twenty-four school rooms were teaching twenty-two hundred pupils. But in some districts the teacher-pupil ratio was seventy to one and, as under the Lancastrian system, advanced pupils had to teach younger. Moreover, half the white population of school age was getting no schooling at all. Hence the question arose of whether additional schools, regardless of quality, were more important than raising teachers' meagre salaries, adding to the staff, building schoolhouses to replace overcrowded, ill-ventilated, badly lighted rented rooms and otherwise improving the character of existing schools. While a few people believed a $2 poll tax, instead of $1, would finance expansion, others, wary of the spectre of higher taxes, hinted at the propriety of well-to-do parents' sending their children to private schools and thereby lightening the public burden. One councilman contended that teachers at annual salaries of $500 and $600 were overpaid, although since the lowest-ranking government clerks got $1200, he conceded that $200 might be rather little for a primary school teacher. 63

The obvious solution seemed to a good many people to be federal aid, preferably in the form of a land grant but, if not that, then by a yearly appropriation from Congress. Citizens refused to let the failure of earlier appeals discourage them. If they succeeded, Georgetown felt she should

63 Intelligencer, 7 Aug 58; Washington Jete, 7 Aug 58, pp. 139-42
share the benefits. She had adopted the combined tuition and free school system at the very time Washington dropped it and only reestablished fully tax-supported schools when the new Georgetown charter of 1856 enabled her to collect a poll tax. That year residents of the county where 1,000 people had only two "languishing" private schools petitioned Congress for an appropriation for public schools. Congress obliged to the extent of authorizing the county to tax itself for the purpose if a referendum of taxpayers endorsed the plan. The county overwhelmingly rejected it; the considerable area beyond the cities' limits was to remain practically schoolless for another nine years. The Senate received Washington's and Georgetown's pleas with scarcely more favor, for although some members of Congress believed the District entitled to the same kind of aid the states and territories obtained from the federal government, Washington's importuning irked a number of senators. A bill nevertheless passed the Senate in 1858 which, while ignoring Georgetown, granted Washington $200,000 a year for five years provided the city raise yearly an equal amount by special tax. John Hale of New Hampshire proposed that Negro taxes be set aside for colored public schools but, when Robert Toombs of Georgia objected, a compromise exempted all Negro property from the new tax. The House never so much as discussed the bill; it died on the vine.\footnote{Intelligencer, 11 May 1856; S Misc Doc 22, 33C, 28, 28 Feb 55, Ser 772; pt3, II 321-65.t, 28 May 52; H34A-G414, 12 Mar 56; Cong Globe, 34C, 18, 19 Jan, 5, 11 Aug 56, pp. 1426, 1920, App, pp. 12-15, 35C, 18, 15 May 58, Ap., pp. 370-79.}

Left to draw on her own resources, Washington increased the school budget slightly to allow a salary scale ranging from $300 for female assistant...
teachers to 900 for male principals. To meet the needs of boys who worked in printers' shops during the day, the city also authorized three night schools in 1858 and 1859. Still these measures failed to suffice. By 1860 only 22 percent of the white children of school age were enrolled in the public schools, in contrast to 78 percent in some northern cities. Illiteracy in the District was rising, reaching nearly 11 percent of the white population. The night classes never materialized, and the public school teachers, if conscientious, were rarely well-trained. In 1849 at the suggestion of Joseph Henry a group formed a Teachers' Institute that met for a time at the Smithsonian, but the meetings were thinly attended and the association appeared to have little professional utility. 65

Consensus that a public high school must wait till the want of primary schools was filled meant that private schools had to provide all education beyond the elementary. Some thirty-three hundred boys and girls attended private schools, either those for beginners, or one of the forty-two academies and young ladies' seminaries in Washington and Georgetown. Church parish schools had not yet appeared, but sisters taught at the Catholic orphanages and at the school of the Convent of the Visitation in Georgetown, where daughters of many well-to-do families, Protestant as well as Catholic, received their education. The Washington Seminary opened by Jesuits in 1848 prepared young men for admission to Georgetown University and after 1858, under the name of Gonzaga College, offered an enlarged curriculum.

But like Georgetown and Columbian Colleges, the academies touched the lives of relatively few District residents. 66

The Negro Community and Race Relations

Negro children still had to get such education as they could in private schools. In midcentury councilman Jesse E. Dow in campaigning for the office of mayor urged the city to establish colored public schools, but his defeat ended discussion of his plan. It had never won much attention in a community where Negro taxes brought the city very little, colored men could not vote and, after the Dred Scott decision in 1857, by Supreme Court decree people of African descent could not be American citizens. Colored schools, nevertheless, continued, some of them charging a small tuition fee, a few of them free to the penniless, some of them taught by whites, others by Negroes. Arabella Jones' school was one of the best known in the 1850's. A servant in John Quincy Adams' household when he was Secretary of State, the young Negress had later acquired an unusually fine education at St. Agnes' in Baltimore. In her school on the Island she held up to her pupils the ideal of serving their people at home as well as native tribesmen in Liberia. Of the schools taught by whites, the St. Vincent de Paul Free Catholic Colored School sponsored by the priest at St. Matthews was important if only because the color line drawn in many of the evangelical churches prevented the founding of Protestant day schools for Negroes.

Most famous and most influential of all the schools for Negroes was

66 Intelligencer, 10 Feb, 15 May, 6 Sep 47, 22, 25 Sep 48; News, 18 Oct 48, 21 Jul, 27 Oct 49, 20 Jul 50, 6 Feb 58; Sketch of Gonzaga College; Union, 26 Jul 47.
Myrtilla Miner's "high school." Miss Miner after a poverty-stricken childhood on her father's farm in New York State and a struggle to get her own education, came to Washington in 1851 to open a more advanced school for colored people than any then in operation. With the backing of the Society of Friends, the frail middle-aged woman started with a handful of colored children in rented rooms on New York avenue. The hostility of her neighbors twice forced her to move her charges, but through her voluminous correspondence with Northerners she raised money enough in 1853 to buy a house on the outskirts of the city on New Hampshire avenue between O and N streets. Among her supporters were Johns Hopkins of Baltimore, the Stowes of Uncle Tom's Cabin fame, and Henry Ward Beecher. The reputation of the school rested at once on the thoroughness of the teaching, the range of subjects, and the pervasive atmosphere of mutual affection and mannerliness between white staff and Negro pupils. Miss Miner's work made so wide an impression that in 1857 ex-Mayor Walter Lenox accused her of stirring up trouble by educating colored children beyond their station in life and giving them better schooling than white children in Washington could get. Her ill health and the outbreak of war closed the school in 1861.67

At the end of the fifties eleven hundred children were attending colored schools receiving no public funds. It was no longer, as in the early years of the century, "a common thing for colored and white children to associate in the same school," but whites approved of Negro schools supported by Negroes. Whether most Negro pupils had opportunity to learn much beyond

reading, simple ciphering and how to write a few words remains doubtful, but it is also uncertain whether many children in the white public schools got much wider training. Nearly 50 percent of colored adults, to be sure, were still illiterate, but the percentage had dropped 3 percent in a decade in spite of the trickle of Negroes into the District from Virginia and Maryland; white illiteracy in that interval had risen by 3 percent. Their proven capacity to maintain schools and churches and the growing number of educated Negroes heightened colored people’s faith in themselves and at the same time encouraged intelligent whites to believe Negroes need not always be the white man’s burden. 68

A second source of strength to the free Negro community was the District’s waning interest in slavery and the consequent easing of the rigidity of the racial caste system. When the Mexican War began, pro-slavery sentiment still predominated in Washington and Georgetown. A letter written by a young woman soon after coming from her native New York state revealed a common point of view:

No sane-minded man acquainted with the black population South could wish them liberated and allowed to remain in the States. If the black population could be expelled from the south the greatest advantage would accrue to the white population. Slave labor is the bane of all industry and enterprise, labour is looked upon as so degrading. I think that is the most despicable trait in the southern character... and that feeling is engendered by an inferior race of people performing all manual labour."

Mary Bowen in time changed part of her time as her husband became one of Washington’s leading Free-Soilers and a staunch friend and defender of

Washington's free Negroes. But even people who accepted the morality of
slavery were beginning to doubt the utility of the "peculiar institution"
in the District; men spoke of the worthlessness of slaves constantly
exposed to the corrupting influence of the city's free Negroes. The shift
in public opinion, while by no means universal, was unmistakable by 1848.
The very fact that an anti-slavery newspaper, the National Era, began
publication in Washington in late 1847 without encountering insuperable
hostility testified to the change. In December 1848 a conservative George­
town paper, remarking upon the eagerness of District residents to be rid
of the slave trade, concluded:

Or, if the public would make provision to purchase out the slaves
now held in the District, compensating the owners of them therefore,
we do not suppose that the slaveholders of the District would have
any serious objection thereto. . . . From the increasing insecurity,
and unsatisfactoriness of this kind of property, the necessary advan­
tage of slave owners would probably be promoted by such a course. 69

The excitement over the "Drayton affair" of a few months before lent point
to that comment. On a Sunday morning in April 1848 a number of Washing­
ton and Georgetown households had awakened to find no breakfast in preparation
and the family slaves absconded. Prompt pursuit of the schooner Pearl

i had sailed before dawn discovered the seventy-six slaves aboard bound
for the North under the protection of Captain Daniel Drayton. Their out­
ragged owners sold them at once and they were shipped South. Captain Drayton
and his mate were jailed, while an angry mob, sure that Dr. Gamaliel Bailey
of the National Era had abetted the abduction, gathered at his shop to demand

69 Ltr, Mary Barker Bowen to Harriet Barker Underhill, 14 Nov 46,
Bowe n Pss (in possession of Prof. C. A. Barker of Johns Hopkins University);
Natl Era, 19 Nov 48; Intelligencer, 29 Dec 48; Georgetown Advocate, 30 Dec 48.
that he leave the city. The courage of police captain Goddard and several private citizens prevented violence, the National Era continued publication, and public wrath subsided when Drayton and his associate after a fiercely fought trial received long prison sentences for kidnapping. Still indignation over the affair did not obscure from slave owners the probable economic advantages of dispensing with slavery altogether or from non-slaveholders the benefits of taking the District out of sectional conflict in Congress and thereby scotching renewed proposals to move the capital to the West. 70

Had Southern members of Congress not felt that on constitutional grounds they dare not give an inch lest it become an all, compensated emancipation in the District might well have become law in 1859 or 1850. Representative Abraham Lincoln of Illinois assured the House that a majority of the community would favor the measure. If certainty that Southern senators would never consent kept local slave-owners quiet, at least outspoken opposition in the District was extremely rare. A single petition of 1859 signed by about seventy men, two-thirds of them county farmers, merely requested Congress not to change the laws without first obtaining local approval by formal referendum. City residents meanwhile pressed for prohibition of the slave trade. The Washington councils pronounced it "like prejudicial to the interest of our city and offensive to public sentiment." As Northerners in Congress agreed with the city, the "omnibus" bill of 1850 designed to settle

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permanently the sectional controversy over slavery included a section outlawing the trade in the District. But Southerners believed with Senator Pierre Soulé of Louisiana that to forbid it would be merely a first step on a path that would end in emancipation. They fought the proposal for nine months, and then probably only Henry Clay's insistence that it was an essential part of the great compromise persuaded them to yield. When the compromise acts became law in September 1850 Washingtonians subscribed to Clay's view that the prohibition of the traffic in the District "should give peace and security to the maintenance of slavery within this District until it exhausts itself by the process of time, as it would seem to be most rapidly doing." Faith in that ultimate outcome comforted citizens who had hoped for abolition.71

White citizens' readiness to end slavery in the District of Columbia, it is true, was far from synonymous with acquiescence in having thousands of free Negroes as neighbors. Inasmuch as most white people disliked close association with black in any but a master-servant relation, whites might have been expected to cling to a system that ensured the master's control.

Yet year by year as the dual pressures of economics and humanitarianism reduced the number of slaves in Washington and Georgetown, free Negroes, for all the hostility shown them, gained in status. Whites no longer feared them as potential inciters of slave insurrection; if they were lazy and boisterous or deprived, strict enforcement of the black codes could still keep them

had fewer grounds for complaint since the competition of black men in check. White laborers looking for jobs for themselves was less acute than that of slaves whose masters arranged for their hire. Colored laundresses and nurses, Negro carpenters and draymen were in some demand.

Dozens of Negroes accumulated enough to buy horses and carriages and set up as hackmen, and in the other occupations which custom reserved for colored people, scores acquired enviable skills. The cooks were the most notable example: slave boys, for years past sent by their owners to serve apprenticeships under the experienced French chefs in the households of foreign diplomats, learned the secrets of the art, and those like James Wormley who then bought their freedom held the key to economic security; Wormley became a caterer and later the proprietor of a fashionable hotel patronized by the Southern gentry. As long as free colored people behaved with circumspection, and as long as they did not multiply alarmingly, they could count on remaining peacefully in the District. Numbers constituted the one serious threat to their future.

No city, North or South, wanted a large Negro population. Whites in the capital both before and after the Compromise talked uneasily of the rapid expansion of Washington's colored community. During the 1840's the number of free Negroes in the city had increased by 69 percent and the immigration of freedmen forced out of Maryland and Virginia threatened to continue. The new fugitive slave act somewhat lessened anxieties lest the District cities become the permanent sanctuary of Virginia and Maryland runaways; unapprehended, they would be absorbed into the free black population.

and increase it further. (See Table 2). Since Congress refused the District municipalities authority to bar the ingress of free Negroes and limited the cities' powers to regulating their conduct once arrived, any measure calculated to restrict their numbers was welcome to whites; the discomfort of reading newspaper advertisements for fugitive slaves and watching federal marshals reclaim them seemed a small price to pay for keeping the colored population to no more than the 26 percent of the whole it then was. Baltimore, protected by Maryland laws, was 20 percent colored, St. Louis in slave-owning Missouri 5.1 percent, and Cincinnati 2.8 percent. Better enforced black codes might enable Washington and Georgetown to achieve comparable ratios. Free blacks themselves realized that the fewer their relative numbers the better off they individually would be.

In the autumn of 1850 Washington City reexamined her problem. The Colonization Society was still functioning; but too ineffectually to hold out hopes of persuading Negroes to emigrate in a body. The severe black code of 1836 had never been strictly enforced; part of it was patently unenforceable. The councils consequently chose to try modifications. The amendments reduced the bond required of every free Negro over twelve years of age from $1000 to $50 and demanded the surety of one white freeholder instead of five, but every colored person applying for residence must report within five days of his arrival or pay the penalty of a fine or a term in the workhouse. As before, the mayor must give express permission for any public gathering of Negroes, and secret meetings were forbidden. The

73 Newb. 2, 16, 23, 30 Nov, 7 Dec 50, 31 May, 6 Dec 51, 6 May 52, 20 Apr 53; Sixth U.S. Census, 1840; Seventh U.S. Census, 1850, pt. 221, 235-36, 662, 830; St. Leon 84.
results satisfied the authorities. In 1851 only 8 of the 633 persons sent
to the workhouse were committed for being "out after set hours" and only
two for being "resident without bonds."74

The probabilities are that the new code was no more enforceable than
the old but seemed successful because white people ceased to think it
important. Surveillance relaxed as white fears of a black inundation waned,
for, contrary to alarmists' predictions, the 1850's saw an increase of only
1,050 free negroes in Washington and a decline in the slave population.

Bond and free together numbered 10,270 in 1850 and 10,920 in 1860, an increase of only
6.93 compared to a 68.93 percent rise in the percentage of black to white
thus dropped from 25.7 to 17.96 in ten years' time. In Georgetown the decline
was from 27 to 22 percent; the city had about four hundred fewer free Negroes
and slaves than before. Under these circumstances whites no longer worried
and Negroes benefited.75 (See Table II).

During the anxious days following John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry
in October 1859, Washingtonians were chiefly apprehensive lest "hostile
demonstrations from outside the city" develop. The mayor countermanded the
permits he had granted colored people "to hold balls and festivals," crowds
waiting for news gathered about the telegraph offices and hotels, and
rumored threats of an attack on the National Era sounded, but when nothing

51, 28 Feb, 28 Apr, 3 Jun, 15 Dec 53, 20 Jan, 3 Apr 54, 11 Nov 56, 1 Mar
57; News, 5 Jun 57, 19 Jan, 20 Apr, 19 Oct, 21 Dec 53, 22 Apr 54, 23 Jan
55; Star, 22 Aug 59, 5 Apr 60.

75 Seventh U.S. Census, 1860, Population, pp. 616-23, and Eighth U.S. Census,
### Table 2

**Population of Washington**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total White</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Foreign-born</th>
<th>Foreign-born of Total Pop.</th>
<th>% Foreign-born of Whit Pop.</th>
<th>% Increase in White Pop. in Ten Years</th>
<th>% Increase in Colored Pop. in Ten Years</th>
<th>% Increase in Free Negro Pop. in Ten Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>2,164</td>
<td>24,017*</td>
<td>1,313</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>16.19</td>
<td>139.65</td>
<td>50.81</td>
<td>60.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>5,904</td>
<td>5,913*</td>
<td>3,282</td>
<td>28.07</td>
<td>21.49</td>
<td>58.81</td>
<td>47.03</td>
<td>107.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>9,376</td>
<td>1,945</td>
<td>2,330</td>
<td>25.68</td>
<td>17.61</td>
<td>51.09</td>
<td>37.27</td>
<td>74.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>14,167</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>1,713</td>
<td>27.92</td>
<td>20.39</td>
<td>18.89</td>
<td>73.50</td>
<td>54.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>16,613</td>
<td>1,213</td>
<td>1,774</td>
<td>25.68</td>
<td>17.61</td>
<td>18.89</td>
<td>76.14</td>
<td>54.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>29,730</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>1,209</td>
<td>17.97</td>
<td>15.06</td>
<td>60.87</td>
<td>57.51</td>
<td>69.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures for entire district, but since the growth of the white population between 1810 and 1850 was only 2,515 in Georgetown and 925 in the county, the assumption seems reasonable that the bulk of European immigration was into Washington.
happened the city quickly returned to an outwardly normal routine. Least of all American citizens could District residents, unrepresented in national councils, forestall a national disaster growing out of the slavery question. Their one contribution must lie in the concealment of inner fears and the preservation of an air of calm.

In the decade preceding the Civil War Washington's reputation probably suffered in the North from the reprinting in 1855 of William Goodell's *Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, for the volume written in the 1830's and unamended in later editions described conditions that no longer held true in the District. Readers might readily believe that District citizens were still pledged to strengthening the peculiar institution in the community, that kidnapping of free Negroes to sell into slavery was a common occurrence and that the slave still operated on an enormous scale in the national capital.

In the 1850's deep-seated prejudices still marked race relations in Washington, but attitudes nevertheless represented a long advance from those of the thirties and, because men now perceived the dimensions of the problem, progress beyond those of the early years of the century. Free Negroes, though bound by restrictive laws, could ordinarily expect justice under those laws. Honest, hard-working families with residence permits, while hating the indignity of the black code, were not invariably oppressed by it. In proportion to the size of the colored population, Negro arrests were more frequent than white, but whites no longer cited the police records as proving Negroes' innate depravity. Now and again a magistrate meted out an

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*Star, 15, 19, 20 Oct 57, 29 Mar 60.*
excessively harsh sentence. More often the courts exhibited scrupulous fairness or tempered justice with mercy. Law still sanctioned the sale of slaves owned in the District, and newspapers still carried advertisements for fugitives; but the occasional selling of local slaves could be viewed as part of the process of ridding the District of slavery rather than proof of interest in perpetuating the traffic; the kidnapping of free Negroes was now almost unheard of; and the advertisements for runaways were usually for Virginia and Maryland slaves. Washingtonians, if only from their determination not to antagonize Northern congressmen, were at pain to check abuses. Fights still occurred between Negroes and white rowdies, but the public was quick to recognize and deplore unprovoked attacks upon Negroes. Indeed among educated whites indignation burned far hotter at the bullies who harried colored people than at lazy Negroes who pilfered or diced and drank. Only the lowest ranks of white laborers really resented blacks. 77

So detached an observer as Dr. Gamaliel Bailey of the National Enquirer believed Washington's record better than that of many northern cities. At the time of the Drayton affair Washington preserved order in a fashion that cities like Cincinnati might well emulate. Whites in the capital were too often blind to the virtues of their Negro neighbors, to the "thrift and

industry of the great mass of them" and to the "dignity, decorum and good
taste they display." But Dr. Bailey declared that speech was as free in
Washington as in the North and toleration here rather greater, and, as the
erator who first published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he had reason to know. The
new Free-Soil Republican party was steadily gaining local adherents. In a
city where race questions were ever present, "a young clergyman has stood
up in his place in Washington pulpit, and preached on Slavery to his congre-
gation, in a way that would have split many a conservative church at the
North. But he has neither lost caste nor position--the majority of his
church while dissenting from his views, recognize the independence of the
pulpit." Unhappily the young minister was later dismissed; over half the
Unitarian congregation considered his sermons inflammatory and in the late
fifties conservative Washingtonians, however deeply convinced of the evils
of slavery, thought advocacy of political action too dangerous to the Union.78

The Churches

Individual members of the white churches in Washington and George-
town may have secretly helped the Washington station of the underground
railway smuggle slaves north to free soil, but, in spite of divided opinion
in nearly every congregation, none of the churches officially endorsed
abolitionist tactics. Even in Washington's new Congregational Church
organized by New Englanders in 1851 the trustees objected to the label
"anti-slavery church." Conservatism about political action predominated
among Quakers as well as among Unitarians, the most radical group in matters

78 *News*, 30 Apr 53, 10 May 56; *Ntl Exg*, 2 Dec 52, 9 Nov 51, 1 Feb,
23 Aug 55, 27 Mar, 11 Dec 56, 27 Jan 57, 30 Jun 59; *Star*, 19 May 50, 22
Jun 59.
of Christian doctrine. On the other hand only St. Pauls Methodist Episcopal Church affiliated with the Southern wing when the national church split. The laity of McKendree and Wesley chapels protested against the strong anti-slavery pronouncement of the General Conference of Northern Methodists in 1860, but except for St. Pauls all the local Methodist churches refused to separate from the Northern body. Similarly, the eight white Presbyterian congregations remained with the Northern church, and outward unity prevailed in Washington's six Episcopal, four white Baptist and three Lutheran churches. Segregation nevertheless generally obtained in Protestant congregations, whether by choice or by accident, for Negroes preferred to support their own churches. The colored churches accordingly grew.

During a wave of revivals in 1858, eighty people were baptized at the Colored Presbyterian church on a single Sunday. Whether Negroes in any numbers were communicants of Washington's six Catholic churches is uncertain, although the non-discriminatory policies of the hierarchy and the school for colored children conducted at St. Matthews doubtless drew some colored people. "Racial antagonisms touched Washington's Jews rather lightly, probably because the Hebrew Congregation formed in 1856 was small and unobtrusive and, except when Jewish pedlars hawked ready-made clothing through Washington's streets, few people realized that a new minority had appeared in their midst."79

"Such bigotry and bitterness of feeling exist in our town toward us Catholic," wrote a young Washington businessman in 1849. "Our Episcopalians are either nearly Methodists or nearly Presbyterians." Perhaps the Protestantism of Benedict Semmes' fiancee sharpened his sensitivities; certainly before midcentury open cleavages between the Catholic and the evangelical churches rarely or never occurred. Catholic and Protestant Sunday schools celebrated the 4th of July together, and the social prestige of many a distinguished old Washington and Georgetown family gave the Roman church a standing here it lacked in much of the United States. Such religious hostility as developed in the 1850's appears to have sprung chiefly from anti-foreign feeling as the tide of Catholic Irish and German immigration swelled.

The nativism which swept the country in the early fifties and produced the Native American or Know Nothing party expressed itself in Washington in the "Pope stone" episode but usually vented itself in the derogation of the Irish immigrants. Their rapidly growing numbers, their illiteracy, their quarrelsomeness which not infrequently landed them in court for disorderly conduct or worse offenses, and their poverty which made them a burden to the city overseers of the poor explain Washington's antagonisms better than can Protestant fanaticism. In 1850 the entire District had fewer than 5000 foreign-born; ten years later Washington City alone had 10,765, of whom nearly 6300 were Irish Catholics. (See Table II).

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Washington and Georgetown thought of themselves as cities in which religion loomed large. And they were, insofar as building churches and centering in them much philanthropic and social activity, establish religion in a community. Scarcely a year passed without seeing at least one new church go up and congregations "vying with each other in imparting to their respective places of public worship such external and internal adornments as are appropriate to Christian temples." From time to time the Washington Bible Society canvassed the city and distributed Bibles, and, inspired by this example, in 1852 ninety-two young men formed the Washington WCA, the sixth to be organized in the United States. Their primary aim was the strengthening of evangelical religion in the city, but the Association also performed a practical service in maintaining at its headquarters a library and reading room, an employment bureau and a directory of respectable boarding houses. Washington shared in the "religious awakening" that stirred American Protestants in 1858 but the revival here caused little of "the feverish excitement that has characterized its manifestations in some other parts of the country." Anxiety about preservation of the Union was more noticeable than concern for the salvation of individual souls.

Social Life

The dirty streets, the municipal feuding and the lawlessness caused by the explosiveness of the political atmosphere in the capital might well seem to have made Washington in the years before the Civil War one of the

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least agreeable communities in all America. Yet the city had a compelling, if subtle, charm. Visitors might not feel it immediately even when they were impressed at the grandeur of the public buildings; foreign travellers frequently were disdainful about all aspects of the city. But people who stayed any length of time almost invariably found the community congenial.

Newcomers in Congress still wrote homesick letters to their wives and friends telling of the abominable climate or the dreariness of boarding-house rooms furnished characteristically with "sofa, easy chair, marble mantle and centre table, chandelier with gaslights, what me not stand covered with jimcracks, nine copies in plaster of sculpture etc etc." The farther a congressman was from home the less likely he was to enjoy his sojourn on the Potomac, for home state affairs were of major importance to him, the city full of strangers from unfamiliar places was confusing and if, as was the case for a number of men in the forties and fifties, the journey to Washington took a week or ten days or more by stage coach, steamboat and the steam cars, his sense of isolation from his own people chilled him. Like Sylvanus N. Lowry of Minnesota, he might prefer "pork and cabbage and St. Cloud" to Washington's "green peas, asparagus, sweet potatoes and spring chicken." The uninitiate were appalled at the cost of everything and even Mrs. John Campbell, wife of the Postmaster General whose salary was $8000, observed: "This is a grand place for spending all your money. I can tell you, it is as much as a cabinet officer can do to make ends meet... extortion is the order of the day." But in time the shyest and most socially

62 Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley, Travels in the United States during 1819 and 1850, pp. 82-84; Edward Dicey, Six Months in the United States, II, 92; Mrs. Judge David Hooper to Alexander Ramsey, 3 Dec 50, 13 Jan 71, Ramsey MSS (Minn Hist Soc).
inept men discovered Washington's attractions. Those sometimes lay in hotel bars and "gambling hells" but quite as often in the parlors of hospitable families. For congressmen who brought their wives with them the city became gay and interesting. Several senators thought society in the capital pleasant enough to warrant building or buying "magnificent residences" in which to entertain; they might thus escape the night Mrs. Campbell described to her father: "Notre maison contient trois cent, mais nous avons six cents cartes d'invitations en ville." And where in America except Washington might a man from a small western town dine with "a live lord," albeit "the most seedy-looking personage present?"83

The excitement of the political battles on the Hill also held fascination. Here, Representative Billinghurst noted, "is a grand arena for talent to display itself. Every word... is reported and spread abroad over the land. The audience is the entire nation." Washington, furthermore, was the natural center of preliminary planning for national party conventions. Though leaders in New York City, Cincinnati or Chicago now had a larger share in picking party candidates than in the days of the congressional caucus, in pre-election years the capital was still the scene of the dinners and meetings that would strongly influence the final choice.

83 Ltrs, Charles Billinghurst to his wife, 18, 25 Dec 55, 10 Dec 58, 25 Feb 59, and to his son, 17 Jan 58, Billinghurst Lss (WisHS); ltr, Emilie Chapron Campbell to John Chapron, 25 Dec 53, John Chapron Lss (McF, SHC); ltrs, Sylvanus D. Lowry to his wife, 7, 15 Apr 59, Lowry Lss (MinnHS); ltr, John Sibley to Gov Alexander Ramsey, 26 Jul, 25 Aug, John H. Stevens to Ramsey, 16 Feb 51, and W. B. White to Ramsey, 1 Jul 52, Ramsey Lss (MinnHS); ltrs, Sayles J. Bowen to Julia Barker, 23 July 57, and Harry Barker Bowen to Julia Barker, 6 Dec 57, Bowen Lss; News, 12 Apr 51; "Home Letters of George W. Julian, 1850-1851," Indiana Magazine of History, XXIX, No 2 (Jun, 1933), 131-63.
When the conventions and the elections were over and the President-elect arrived in the capital, jubilant friends and office-seekers poured into the city. In 1849 a hundred marshals to take charge of President Taylor's inaugural parade and three inaugural balls were necessary to accommodate the crowds. In spite of the difficulties of travel, in 1853 a record 20,000 guests arrived before Franklin Pierce's inauguration, and in spite of "a raw northeasterly wind, wafting a pretty continuous though fast-melting snow," 70,000 to 80,000 people watched the parade. The death of Pierce's son a few weeks before cancelled plans for a ball. Four years later the rift in the Democratic party over slavery threatened to make Buchanan's inaugural a cheerless affair. When Congress convened in December 1856, the refusal of anti-slavery households in Washington to illuminate their windows to acclaim the triumph of the party's pro-slavery wing launched a controversy over who should run the parade on March 4th. A public mass meeting settled the immediate quarrel by electing a committee representing all factions, and the day after all went well. To prevent any chance of fresh division, a single inaugural ball was held in a large wooden building erected on Judiciary Square especially for the occasion. There Democrats, for the moment again united, celebrated gaily.

These short-lived four-yearly festivities, like the perpetual stream of visitors who came to view their capital, had little lasting effect upon

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84 Ltr, R. J. Semmes to J. Jordan, 10 Jun 1849, Semmes MSS (SMG); Intelligencer, 18 Oct 1849, 5 Mar 1850, 9 Jan 1851; Ltrs, J. C. Richards to John N. Williams, 23 Jun 1852, 3 Mar 1853, Williams MSS (SMG); N. Fore, 320, 185, 1 Mar 1853, App., p. 215; Ltrs, Charles Billinghurst to his wife, 6 Dec 1856, 2 Feb 1859, Billinghurst MSS (SMG); NTL Era, 1 Dec 1856; Star, 7, 16 Jan, 1 Mar 1857.
Washington's social life. Then as now sightseers might call upon their
congressmen, tour the Capitol and the Smithsonian, walk through the Botanical
Gardens and the White House grounds and, satisfied that they then knew all
about the city, depart without ever conversing with a Washingtonian. Their
comments were sometimes intelligent, sometimes silly. If they were Northerners
they might observe with discomfort the servility and incompetence of the
hotels' black servants while Southerners might remark on the "niggers' impudence." Otherwise, tourists were often unaware of local people. A
young woman from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, though admitting that the national
museum contained "a great great many curiosities, all kinds of birds, fish,
animals and many beautiful pictures," thought only one thing in Washington
worthy of note: "One glass case ... it was an orangoutang that resembled
Miss May Ready very much indeed. The mouth was gaped open just like she
keeps hers when she talks." The native Washingtonian accustomed as he was
to glib uninformed judgments on his city was nevertheless touchy about criti-
cism, insomuch as visitors' disparagements might hurt and their enthusiasm
might help the community's relations with Congress. But piqued or pleased,
citizens were hospitable to the stranger. They were particularly gracious
to the annual crop of young women who came to visit relatives or acquaint-
tances for a month in the season, and came for the very good reason that
the supply of bachelors promised a round of pleasures unobtainable at home.
The young, if conscious of little but themselves, at least called Washington
delightful.85

85 Ltr, Charles Ready to his wife, 11 Dec 56, John Hunt Morgan Mss
(SHC); Olmsted, Seaboard Slave States, I, 3-6; Intelligencer, 27 Oct 47;
Star, 12 Jan 59; Kate S. Carney Diary, 27 Aug 59 (SHC); Fanny Page Hume
diary, Feb-Mar 60 (SHC); ltr, A. C. Richards to John H. Williams 6 Dec 51,
Williams Mss (KimHS).
Not all Washington's delights were unique. Other cities held fairs and halls and brilliant parades. Though Richard Forrest, Edwin Booth and other famous actors occasionally played the capital, New York and Philadelphia theatres offered wider repertories and plays better staged. Circuses and menageries toured throughout America and steamboat excursions were a standard form of outing in every river city. Men and boys were playing baseball in a dozen towns before the Potomac Club appeared in Washington in 1859. Yet in and out of season Washington had the unequalled advantage of the presence of the President, his cabinet and the diplomatic corps. If the President summored at the Soldiers Home he was still within the District. Nowhere else in the United States could one expect to see a wedding staged in baronial style. When the Count Poldisco arranged his young sister-in-law's wedding in Georgetown on a scale only less grand than his own, "one hundred and seventy carriages" conveyed guests "to the elegant and hospital mansion of the popular representative of the Emperor Nicholas." Nor were semi-official social affairs limited to the high ranking. Anyone might join the "jamb" of the New Year's day reception at the White House, although the custom of keeping stores open on that day left retail clerks behind shop counters. In 1852 a guest of a minor government employee remarked with asperity: "The aristocracy is complaining bitterly because there is so many
common people that attend the President's lovees," but the young woman's
had grammar did not prevent her going more than once. More frequently than
people in other American cities, rich and poor in Washington could see, if
only from afar, foreigners as interesting as Louis Kossuth, the great
Hungarian patriot, the Prince of Wales travelling incognito or the imperial
prince of Japan and his exotic silk-kimonoed entourage.

Washington's new ambition to be known for her "cultivation of the
mind," moreover, bore some fruit. Efforts to induce the Washington Library
Association to convert itself into a free public library failed, but the
YMCA and the Columbia Library Company of Capitol Hill provided some books
for people unable to buy them, and readers could freely use the Smith-
sonian Library and the Library of Congress as it was restored after the
fire of 1851. Before 1860 several literary and debating societies had come
into being. Public lectures were frequent. The succession of European
portrait painters who once had set up studios in Washington had ceased before
midcentury, but interest in American artists was growing. In 1857 the
new Washington Art Association held its first exhibit and the "pictures and
statuary, all by native artists of the U.S.,... have excited the admiration
of visitors from all quarters of the Union, as well as foreigners resident
in Washington." The collection of pictures in the national museum made the
Smithsonian a logical meeting place for conventions of artists in 1858 and

87 Jessie Benton Fremont, Souvenirs of My Time, p. 42; Intelligencer, 31 Dec 49; News, 3 Feb 49, 5 Jan 50, 3 Jan 51; itra, Phoebe Barker
to Julie Barker, 11 Jan, 7 Mar 52, Bowen Ms; Ntl Era, 15 Jan 52; Star,
17, 19, 16 May 50; itra, Andrew Turpin Harllee to John W. Harllee, 17 May
60, William Curry Harllee Ms (SHC).
1859, Washington proudly listed four and Georgetown two American painters as residents. The Smithsonian also played host to scientific societies and to several "national musical conventions." Now and again the city enjoyed excellent music. In December 1850 Jenny Lind sang at the National Theatre. If the Swedish nightingale evoked less rapture in the capital than in other cities, one Washingtonian declared it was only because, "we are too dignified, we are supposed to be too well acquainted with Talent and Genius, to exhibit any very great wonder. . . . But as for me I was perfectly entranced." She added that to hear Jenny "cost us thirty dollars, fourteen dollars for two tickets, four for hack hire," and twelve for the clothes the occasion demanded. Chamber music was a rarity, a full orchestral concert unknown; but occasionally grand opera companies included the capital in their tours. Washington usually "managed to get along reasonably well with Ethiopian minstrels, peripatetic Italian vocalists, a brace of musical conventions to say nothing of the slow and softly-subdued home productions of our own Marine Band." Inasmuch as the Marines gave their concerts in the open air on the Capitol or the White House grounds, lack of money for clothes and tickets excluded nobody.

In 1868 Benedict Semmes, intent on portraying his city faithfully to


89 News, 11 Sep 47, 9 Nov, 11 Dec 50, 17 Dec 53, 12 Jan 56; 1tr, Mary Bowen to Harriet Underhill, 12 Dec 50, Bowen Pass; Intelligencer, 15 Oct, 11, 17 Dec 49; 1tr, B. Semmes to J. Jordan, 10 Jun 48, Semmes Pass (SHC); Star, 25, 26, 30 Apr, 2 May 60.
his bride-to-be, told her: "Picnics and duels are the rage. Of the former we have two or three a week—and of the latter we have had three in less than a month—three gentlemen were shot—none dangerously I regret to say."

But as duelling died out in the 1850's, the city preserved the attractive qualities Semmes described. Of June in Washington he wrote:

Our city has finally put on its white drillings and taken off winter pantaloons: "Panama hats" are common and beaver scarce and quaint. Strangers are leaving...old residents are again renewing their acquaintance with old friends and organizing into the summer social cliques. Ladies are gabbing about in cob-web dresses "shopping"—i.e. bleeding their unfortunate husbands, papas and brothers..."Sherry cobblers" and mint juleps are in extensive demand, although very successful efforts have been made to out them down.

Probably no old resident knew all the seventeen hundred federal officeholders of 1860 as he had the three hundred of John Quincy Adams' day, but enough casual social intercourse remained, especially in summer and the "half season" of early fall when the hurly burly of politics subsided in Congress's absence, to envelop the community with simplicity and warmth.

Strawberry festivals and dancing parties united Washington and Georgetown in summer gaieties unspoiled by business rivalry. Only civil authority, taxes, and Rock creek separated the cities. During July and August shopkeepers closed their stores at 7 o'clock in the evening in order to permit employees an unfamiliar leisure. Inexpensive entertainment was the rule.

Class distinctions, though clearly recognized, rested more on manners than money. On Sunday, workingmen and their families, "clean in their persons and decent in their dress," promenaded on the terrace of the Capitol with "the beauty and fashion of the Nation." Winter, the return of strangers, and the renewal of the official round of entertainment, obscured, without
obliterating, the unpretentiousness of Washington's permanent society.

Later generations, assuming that dirty, ill-lighted streets, quarreling parsimonious councils and ineffectual police represented a backward and graceless city, would deny distinction to antebellum Washington. That superficial judgment left out of account the significance of community participation in national affairs. Congress at times sniped at the municipality; mayors and councils felt grievances at Congress; but city and nation were partners. Citizens' organizations took a leading part in momentous events like the laying of the cornerstone of public buildings, presidential inaugurations and the entertainment of famous visitors. The mayor, whatever his individual weaknesses, was a personage not to be ignored. Federal officials and members of the diplomatic corps felt themselves very much one with the city. Though politics was the bread and butter of official Washington, President and cabinet as a matter of course relied upon the city for other nourishment. In spite of Washingtonians' declining initiative, as residents of the capital they accepted responsibility as hosts. Their carefully concealed fears for the safety of the Union betokened their identification with the United States. Behind the untidy outer shell lay a community spirit that the grander city of later years would never recapture.

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90 Register of U.S. Officers and Agents, 1859; ltrs, B. J. Semmes to J. Jordan, 12 Jun, 5 Jul 43; Semmes to J. N. Williams, 16 May 51, John Williams (Hirn's); News, 5 Jul 56; One Hundred Years of the Washington Gas Light Company.
Sixty years of growth had brought dramatic changes to most American cities. New York, with some 800,000 inhabitants spread from the Battery nearly to 42nd Street, had become one of the great commercial cities of the world; her banks and offices, wharves and warehouses, restaurants, theaters, hotels with running water, lighted streets threaded by the tracks of horse-cars and paved with cobblestone or interlocking iron plates impressed her visitors just as the poverty of parts of Gotham appalled them. Baltimore, expanding north, south and west from the Patapsco river front, contained solid lines of shops, warehouses and dwellings for a quarter of a million people. Cincinnati had grown from a frontier settlement of 800 souls and a hundred-odd log houses to a manufacturing center supporting 160,000 people and a river port where tens of steamboats docked daily; Chicago, from an empty stretch of prairie on Lake Michigan's shore, had turned into a sprawling city of 75,000 fed by a network of railroads. In comparison, the physical changes in Washington were minor. The "city of magnificent distances" was still more nearly a collection of villages than an imposing metropolis. "To make a Washington street," wrote an English visitor, "take one marble temple or public office, a dozen houses of brick and a dozen of wood and fill in with sheds and fields." The "umbrous forest trees" Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith had admired in 1800 had long since been felled for building materials and firewood. Vacant lots rank with weeds or strewn with rubbish, the sweep of every street and avenue; alley-ways destined shortly to become teeming slums inhabited by freedmen were dotted with rubbish.

with "groggeries," houses of ill fame and shacks. But federal building since
1814, private enterprise and municipal efforts had year by year reduced the
number of unsightly spots, and neighborhoods like those about Lafayette
square and the residential area west of the White House before the land
dropped off into Fogy Bottom had acquired an air of dignity and substance.

Georgetown, in 1800 a pleasant, compactly built small river port, had changed
far less than her neighbor. Except for gas lights on some of her streets,
the addition of several score dwellings and a few shops, a poorhouse and
Oak Hill cemetery in Parrots Woods on her outskirts, Georgetown looked very
much as she had at the turn of the century. The county was still largely
farm and woodland. Somewhat better roads and to the northeast the tracks
of the B & O railroad made parts of the area more accessible than formerly;
market gardens had replaced some of the tobacco and corn fields near the
cities' limits. On the hillside beyond the Eastern Branch rose the Govern­
ment Hospital for the Insane, and on the river's edge opposite the Navy
Yard where real estate was inexpensive a cluster of workingmen's houses
formed the nucleus of a new village, Uniontown. West and north of Washington
a few city-dwellers had bought summer places as far out as the Soldiers' 
Home, while about Columbian College on Meridian Hill and the school for the
defaf and dumb at Kendall Green, signs of suburbs were appearing. But most
of the fifty-odd square miles that comprised Washington County had out-
wardly changed very little in the six decades.

The character of the population, on the contrary, had changed con­
siderably. The city had had three whites to every colored person at the
turn of the century had five whites to every Negro in 1860. The rise in
the number of colored people which had alarmed whites in 1840 and 1850 had mysteriously halted; slaves were no longer a sizeable block of the population. While Georgetown acquired few Europeans after 1827, in Washington foreign immigration had stepped up in the 1850's, fed chiefly by the influx of Irish laborers come to work on the new Capitol and to dig the aqueduct. The Irish indeed made up over a tenth, and all foreign-born over a sixth, of Washington's population. Furthermore, whereas the Europeans who had thrown in their lot with the new capital in the early years had been primarily professional men, the new-comers of mid-century were preponderantly unskilled workmen. Yet a cross-section of Washington's population at the end of the ante-bellum period showed her more nearly native American than were larger cities: for example, the foreign-born in New York constituted over 40 percent, in Baltimore 28 percent and in New Orleans nearly 45 percent of the white population.

Economic patterns in neither Washington nor Georgetown had followed the expected lines. Washington's independent business interests had scarcely widened at all and Georgetown's had not advanced since the early 1830's. The location at the fall line of the Potomac had proved of little advantage. In rather curious fashion the bitter commercial jealousies of the three District cities had subsided after the retrocession of the southern third of the ten-mile square. In spite of the rise in Alexandria's trade upon the completion of the C & O canal, the slow development of the resources of the upper Potomac valley in the later years of the decade lessened the significance of the canal traffic for Alexandria, as for Washington and Georgetown; in 1858 a canal boatman remarked on the grass in Alexandria's streets.
and her general atmosphere of decay. And in spite of Virginia's zeal in promoting railroad construction between her Potomac river port and the hinterland of the state, Alexandria in 1860 no longer seemed a dangerous competitor to her former rivals. Although the broad Potomac thwarted Washington's belated attempts to build a tributary railroad empire to the south, the river at the same time kept Alexandria from extending her trade to the north.

Little by little over the years the river played a decreasing part in the District's economic life. In the 18th century not only Washington and Jefferson but other American leaders had looked upon the waterway as a vital link between the seaboard and the new West, at once a source of national unity and of commercial power; trade following the flag would make the capital on the mighty Potomac the business center of the United States. The idea had died slowly. Although in the 1830's the burden of the C & O debt had shaken faith that river and canal held the key to a golden future, fifteen years later the money poured into the Washington canal and other schemes aimed at profiting from the completion of the Great National Project testified to the persisting power of the dream. Only gradually, observing that rising real estate values did not depend upon busy wharves at 17th street and on the Eastern Branch, Washingtonians turned their eyes from the river to look to the Hill and the red sandstone castle on the Hill. Confidence in the permanence of the capital on the Potomac gave local business a stability that withstood the shock of national depressions, and land brokers came to occupy a coveted inside place in the race for control of western lands. Georgetown shifted her focus less sharply, but in the mid-fifties, as the older city
reluctantly realized that she must play second fiddle to the capital. Businessmen dropped most of their competitive tactics in order to share in the benefits of the federal government’s patronage. Georgetown would not disappear as a separate entity for another thirty-five years, but by 1860 her identity of interest with Washington had become abundantly clear.

Antebellum Washington had not yet attained a distinctive position in the American world of arts and letters. The influence of the Smithsonian Institution had given her a certain preeminence in science, the Library of Congress held attractions for scholars, and two colleges in the District suggested an important future role in higher education, but the capital of 1860 could not compete with larger cities as a center of the creative arts. Except for newspaper correspondents, the city had few writers and none of note. Musicians congregated in New York, Boston and Philadelphia, in Cincinnati, New Orleans and St. Louis; Washington was but a way-station.

Portrait painters before midcentury were finding wider patronage in the wealthy cities of the North and South than in the District of Columbia, and although W. W. Corcoran was building up his private art collection, artists rarely settled on the Potomac unless they hoped to sell their works to the government. Hiram Powers whose marble “Greek Slave” was purchased by Corcoran, returned from a sojourn in Europe, found no openings for their talents in Washington. Although the American Institute of Architects came into being in 1857 and the federal building program was bountiful, the leaders of the new profession established themselves elsewhere. The modest means of most Washington families militated against their becoming great patrons of the arts even while the non-commercial, non-industrial atmosphere of the community
J06 was already exercising the charm that thirty years later would irresistibly draw men repelled by the gross materialism of other American cities. Yet the physical discomforts of living in the Washington of midcentury probably interfered with her becoming the fountainhead of American culture.

Why should anyone who could find what he wanted in comfortable surroundings subject himself to the dirt and mud of Washington's streets, to the foul odors and "miasmic fevers" of summer, to the chance of robbery and assault, and to the cost of private schooling for his children if they were to get more than the most elementary education? Those drawbacks were partly the result of Washington's geographical location but more largely the consequence of inept city government. Her officials, like those of other American municipalities of the period, were honest enough. Wholesale corruption had not yet taken over American city administration, though the potential profits of letting contracts for public works and the uses of local political patronage were already evident, and when civil war distracted public attention, the Tweed ring and its lesser equivalents in other big cities would move into action. But small-mindedness in Washington's city Hall had let her lag behind larger cities in providing the services needed for wholesome living. Georgetown, in spite, or perhaps because, of the insignificant increase in her population, offered more than most slow-growing American towns where a public water supply and gas street lights were still future refinements. Had national concerns not brought a constant flow of strangers to the capital, Washington's shortcomings might have passed unnoticed until such time as the public demanded improvements. As it was, many of the weaknesses of municipal administration derived from the
inconsistencies and uncertainties of relations between the city and the federal government.

The failure of Congress to define the relationship before 1800 had allowed confusions to arise which then became increasingly difficult to sort out. Later hasty or half-hearted attempts never wholly clarified it. Every Congress in turn had to learn, if it would, wherein and why Washington’s problems differed from those of cities in the states. As the custom became fixed of assigning new members to the least desirable committee, namely the House or Senate District committee, lack of continuity in policy became virtually inescapable. Congressmen impatient at having to give time to matters that would contribute little or nothing to their prestige at home tended to slight District business. Without weighing the justice of a local appeal, they inclined to dismiss summarily questions as important as federal aid to the cities’ schools. Congress, while declaring that the federal government owned the land occupied by Washington’s streets, expected local taxpayers to bear the costs of improving and maintaining them; in the early years citizens with more good will than discretion had paid for opening some streets without waiting for Congress to act. Still what one Congress endorsed as reasonable, whether a contribution to poor relief or an appropriation for the City Hall, a later Congress might label unconstitutional. Such inconsistencies left the municipality without any basis for planning and, since a particular Congress might resound, encouraged the city to beg.

In 1835 Senator Southard’s arguments for a declared policy of federal financial responsibility won over some members of Congress but the principles he wanted to formalize were never proclaimed as official doctrine. Later
congresses lost sight of or misunderstood them. And as Washington real estate soared in value, the city's seemingly indestructible prosperity undercut justifications for federal sharing of costs.

Washington's growing prosperity contributed to, if it did not cause, her indifference to any plan for a territorial government with an elected delegate in Congress. In the first three decades of the century the recurrent proposal had met with some favor, particularly whenever Congress appeared to be giving serious thought to removal of the capital to another locality. But as Washington taxpayers concluded that talk of removal was merely a cry of Wolf Wolf, they lost interest or opposed a territory lest they have to shoulder the burdens of the District's poorer areas in Georgetown, Alexandria and the counties. Moreover, after 1846 the political changes a territory would entail apparently destroyed for Washington's widened electorate any virtues the scheme might once have seemed to have.

City officials saw no use in a non-voting delegate seated in the House of Representatives; they envisioned merely a diminution of their own authority. Georgetowners who as late as 1856 believed their best chance of self-respecting autonomy lay in reunion with Maryland killed the proposition in the District west of Rock Creek. The bulk of District residents thus acquiesced in the perpetuation of a tangle of jurisdictions divided among Congress, two city governments, the Levy Court and Presidential judicial appointees the limits of whose powers were never clear cut.

Periodic complaints about the lack of a legal code for the District and the resulting handicaps of living under a jumble of 18th century Maryland statutes, common law, acts of Congress and city ordinances produced no remedy
simultaneously acceptable to both federal government and local community. In the ordinary course of events, judges, lawyers and police officials were more aware than private citizens of the hazards this confusion created, but now and again they were evident to everyone. Granted that the Constitution was the supreme law of the land and congressional acts the next highest authority in the District of Columbia few people were sure whether either precluded city ordinances taxing slave property at a confiscatory rate. When Richard Bland Lee, a citizen of Washington in the 1820’s, vainly endeavored to sue in the District courts to recover damages from a citizen of Virginia, Washingtonians glimpsed the legal morass that could entangle them, but, perhaps fortunately, the legal complexities of their situation emerged relatively rarely. A century later citizens would learn with astonishment that a municipal ordinance of 1869 forbidding racial discrimination still had legal validity.²

In 1857 the Supreme Court decision denying American citizenship to Dred Scott and all other persons of African descent determined the legal status of free Negroes in the District. The decision incidentally upheld the legality of the municipal black codes. Yet with the possible exception of New Orleans, no other American city in which the proportion of colored people was high offered them wider opportunities than they had in Washington and Georgetown. In sixty years slavery had lost ground as a locally acceptable institution; it endured, but largely on sufferance, and the tacit

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assumption was that in time slave-holding would disappear. Whites and Negroes long resident in Washington and Georgetown could look back upon dark periods in the cities' race relations but could observe a steady lessening of tensions after the mid-thirties.

Probably no one was satisfied with things as they were in 1860. Intelligent, educated Negroes certainly hoped for the day when no municipal restrictions would bar them from occupations and professions for which their individual talents qualified them. Some whites unquestionably still believed any move dangerous that might encourage Negroes to reach beyond the lowly position to which the Creator speaking through Holy Writ had assigned them.

Whites of that persuasion probably disapproved of allowing colored schools, but the very spread of education among Negroes proved its foes a minority.

Even the most temperate whites would doubtless have gladly rid the District and the entire United States of all colored people had any humane way of arranging it seemed possible. But since neither the colonization in Liberia nor any other scheme appeared workable, the majority of upper class whites were adjusting themselves to the idea of having colored people of growing self-sufficiency living alongside. While lower class whites who needed to feel superior to someone clung to their racial antagonisms, upper class attitudes weakened their belligerence. Whether more than a handful of citizens could contemplate a society in which Negroes had political and legal equality is highly doubtful, but Washington and Georgetown as a whole had nevertheless evolved over the years a scheme of racial coexistence far less biased than that of most of the South.
Feelings in Washington as 1861 dawned were mixed. Contrary to popular belief in much of the North, the city was not wholly dedicated to the South or to the Democratic party position. The city election of June 1860 in unprecedently heavy voting had brought an independent candidate within 24 ballots of defeating his Democratic opponent and had put several avowed Republicans into the city councils. The following December when South Carolina announced her secession from the Union, Washington business houses had made a show of flying Union flags to underscore their disapproval. Manifestly men unwilling to countenance disunion or reluctant to see an extension of the slave power were numerous in the District. Among them were probably a considerable proportion of the German and Irish-born householders whose families constituted the bulk of the 12,500 foreign-born residents. Certainly, Germans in other American cities were generally Unionists. Irish immigrants, though hostile to remnants of the anti-Catholic, anti-foreign remnants of know-nothingism in the Republican party and though prone to despise Negroes, had little reason to support the cause of Southern planters. A large part of the native American population, on the other hand, had close family ties with the South. Of the 75,000 inhabitants of 1860, 14% were

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1 Evening Star, 5 June, 22 December, 1860.

Maryland-born, 10% Virginia-born, and unquestionably more than half
the 47% born in the District were members of families Southern in
origin. Those figures, it is true, included 11,100 free Negroes, but
because of their precarious social position, together with their lack
of political status, their opinions did not count. While it is also
ture that statistics of nativity are no sure guide of sentiment, in 1861
when passion was sweeping reason to one side, men's early associations
swayed their thinking. Here influential citizens, however anxious to
have the Union endure, shrank from the mere idea of using coercion
against the South, and a few men flatly announced that they would not
tolerate such measures.4

Nevertheless, during those months of uncertainty between November
1860 and March 1861, more than sentiment affected men's behavior. Fear
for the country's business rode high in the big Northern cities but also
inspired effort to avert catastrophe. Boston cotton brokers and mill
owners could assure each other that North and South would inevitably
reach some compromise rather than permit civil war with its evil con­
sequences for Southern cotton growers and Northern spinners alike.
New York bankers might prepare to exercise their power over the country's
money market to prevent war, just as worried merchants and shippers in
Cincinnati and St. Louis might plan to bring to bear all the pressure of
the mid-West's commercial interests. Men in the District, lacking
industrial and commercial strength, had no comparable weapon at their


command. The Democratic defeat had undermined the position of W.W. Corcoran and other Washington brokers, leaving them without influence in national councils.

For Washington dissolution of the Union would spell worse than economic reverses; it would mean virtual annihilation. Were the Union to split peacefully, Washington, on the northern border of a Southern Confederacy could not expect to be its capital nor, in the seemingly unlikely event of Maryland's aligning herself with the non-slave holding states, could the city hope to be the capital of a Northern Union. If no longer a capital, must she not sink into the insignificance of a minor Potomac river port? Yet if the incoming Republican administration refused either to make concessions to the South or to "let the erring sisters go in peace," war must come and in all probability Washington would become a beleaguered city and the entire District a battleground.

Local business had already slumped badly. The price of slaves, a matter of concern to the District's 1,000 slave-owning households, had been dropping for months. A week after the November election the real estate market had collapsed, and a few days later Washington banks had suspended specie payments. In the eyes of permanent residents only a political compromise could save the Union. Without it, Washington was doomed. Faced with such alternatives, thoughtful Washingtonians clung to faith.


7 Evening Star, 15 Jan, 1861.
that Congress would steer a way out of the dilemma, preferably by accepting Senator Crittenden's proposal to extend the line of the Missouri Compromise to the California border and to leave slavery untouched in the District of Columbia as long as it existed in Virginia and Maryland. Former Congresses had solved the problem in 1820 and again in 1850. Surely the 36th and the 37th Congress could act as wisely. 8

Still doubts persisted. Washington families bred in distrust of Northerners were persuaded that all "Black Republicans" were fanatical Abolitionists who would stop at nothing. Attacks on private property and individual liberties might be in store for the city as soon as Lincoln arrived to inaugurate "the reign of terror". 9 The very vagueness of the imagined threat made it the more sinister.

Apprehensions mounted, moreover, when in mid-January General Winfield Scott, the aged hero of the Mexican War and the commanding general of the army, ordered 550 soldiers to Washington. 10 Was President Buchanan about to proclaim martial law? Intelligent well-informed people in the capital alternated between determined cheerfulness and deep anxiety about what lay ahead.

Patently the President was seeking to protect federal property. The thirty members of the Capitol police included Southern political appointees, the city police force was small, the local militia ill-organized.

8 National Intelligencer, 17 Jan, 28 Feb, 1861.
10 National Intelligencer, 6 Mar, 1861.
Any small incident could precipitate a crisis. For several weeks rumors had filled the street-corners and bar rooms that a "Southern conspiracy" was afoot to seize the city for the Southern states, "string up the Black Republicans" and prevent Lincoln's inauguration. The stories had a certain underlying logic: with the capital in accessionists' hands, foreign governments might recognize a new Southern nation, since possession of the American state papers, the Treasury, the arsenal and the Washington navy yard would strengthen the South immeasurably. In fact, without naming his source of information, General Scott asserted: "The leaders say secession is dead without Washington city; and it is still their intention to get possession of Washington by the fourth of March next, if possible." If residents collaborated the deed might be done quickly. Most substantial householders refused to take stock in the tale of an organized Fifth Column composed of responsible Washingtonians; property-owners, regardless of their political affiliations, had too much at stake to risk an invitation to violence. And yet, remembering the local gangs and the Baltimore "Plug-uglies" who had terrorized voters at the city election less than three years before, solid citizens were frightened.

To protect private property, in November some 260 highly respected men had formed a Washington unit of the National Volunteers, an organization that had sprung up in Baltimore and other cities where Democrats

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12 Ibid., p. 74.
13 Evening Star, 2, 5, 10, 11, 15 Jan 1861.
professed to anticipate trouble from bands of Republican "Wide Awakes". In the tense atmosphere of the capital as the Buchanan administration neared its end, Northern Congressmen began to look with suspicion upon the National volunteers. That group might be the nucleus in Washington of the much-talked of Southern conspiracy. In late January a committee of the House undertook to investigate.

General Scott's testimony before the committee was not reassuring. While refusing to name his correspondents, he read to the committee three of the eighty-odd warning letters he had received. One described the impending seizure of Ft. Sumter, and two gave detailed accounts of the plan to take possession of Washington. Men with arms hidden in their baggage would drift into the city by twos and threes, house themselves unobtrusively with friends, and at 3:30 in the morning of Sunday, March 3rd, quietly sally forth to take the principal government buildings; when the city awoke she would find herself in secessionists' hands.

Less than half the local militia, General Scott declared, could be counted loyal. Other witnesses subpoenaed by the committee had little specific to offer. Most of them expressed belief that the rumors were groundless.

John Blake, the federal Commissioner of Public Buildings and Grounds, explained: "There are a great many idle people here about Washington, who have no particular pursuit, and who hunt up all manner of stories and circulate them, give them to the gentlemen of the press who are here, and they are not over particular in inquiring into the facts, but use them as they receive them."14 The mayor denied that anyone would attempt

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to interfere with Lincoln’s inauguration but committee members, knowing him to be an ardent Democrat and displeased at his easy-going assumption that the militia could handle any local disturbance, were less cordial to him. Seven months later Mayor Barrett would be under arrest as a secessionist. The investigation ended without establishing evidence of a plot within the city. It revealed, however, the temper of ardent Southerners in and about Washington.

A resident of Montgomery County, Maryland, who had been organizing a company of militia there, announced his purpose to be the protection of slave-holders. His own slaves, he said, were worth $10,000 less than they had been a year before. Montgomery County men intended to safeguard their property. Their neighbors to the east in Prince Georges County, where a number of individuals had each a half million dollars invested in slaves, were equally determined. Enoch Lowe, a former Governor of Maryland, though labelling the stories of a conspiracy to seize the capital “a premeditated and scandalous libel”, declared: “I suppose the State of Maryland, in the event of her secession, as a matter of course, would claim the reversion of the District, which was granted the United States for specific purposes, which purposes would then have failed.” More dramatic was the angry testimony of the head of the National Volunteers, Dr. Cornelius Boyle, an eminent physician of Washington. He, in turn, repudiated as nonsense the tale of a “conspiracy”, but he read to the committee the resolutions he had drafted for the National Volunteers. Its members would not take a position.

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16 Ibid., p. 98.
of hostility to Southern interests. They would oppose the reign of terror about to be inaugurated and aid each other and "all good citizens" against insults and attacks on private property. If Virginia and Maryland seceded, the National Volunteers would protect themselves and those states "from the evils of a foreign and hostile government within and near their borders." The organization would put down any mob from the North or the South. "We are property-holders.... Under all circumstances we cast our lot with Maryland. We are Marylanders; and when the case arises, then we will decide." Four-fifths of Washington, Dr. Boyle concluded, would go with Maryland.16

Later events proved Dr. Boyle's estimate correct, if not in the way he apparently anticipated: more than four-fifths of the District's population would take Maryland's course and remain at least outwardly loyal to the Union. Whether an equal number would have sworn allegiance to the Confederacy had Maryland chosen to secede is doubtful. Dr. Boyle admittedly spoke for people of his own social stratum, tacitly dismissing as unimportant the thousands of residents who owned no local property or who had Northern antecedents. But his summary of attitudes among old established families was probably sound. Most of them, however reluctantly, would accept Maryland's decision when the break came. Few leaders of ante-bellum Washington would move South bag and baggage as did Boyle himself, and only forty-four property-owners in the entire District would face formal court charges of aiding and abetting the rebellion.17

16 Ibid., pp. 105-6.

17 District Court Docket, No 1, 21 Apr 1863, cited in Bryan, History of the National Capital, Ill, 516.
Yet within the closely-knit circle of families socially prominent in the fifties, sympathy with the South would remain to harrow hearts during the war and to affect the city's destiny later.

Meanwhile, in January 1861 men observing the dreadful indecisiveness of Buchanan and his cabinet and shocked at the idea of armed action against the government were preparing to forestall trouble in Washington. Charles P. Stone, appointed Inspector-General of Volunteers on New Year's Day, sent out letters to "some forty well-known and esteemed gentlemen of the District" proposing that each organize a military company of volunteers. Stone, representative of that large group in Washington who had opposed Lincoln's election but believed in upholding the Constitution at all costs, had assured General Scott that "two-thirds of the fighting stock of the District are ready to protect the Government." Although he received some refusals, the general response to his appeal, was enthusiastic. Led by prominent citizens, members of hose companies, carpenters, stone cutters, and German turners enrolled at once. Within a few weeks thirty-three companies of infantry and two troops of cavalry were organized and drilling regularly. On Washington's birthday the parade of more than a thousand of these men, uniformed and under arms, was a comforting sight to people who feared mob violence in the city. Years later, General Stone declared that these volunteers, the first sworn into federal service, saved the capital and the Union with it.¹⁸

Before the end of February, the air in Washington had cleared slightly. Not only did the parade on the 22nd indicate that the city

was not utterly defenseless, but the resignation and departure of officials unwilling longer to serve the federal government had lessened the tensions of earlier weeks when Southern senators were making farewell speeches and representatives from the cotton states were hurrying home to share in the forming of the Confederacy. Furthermore, Lincoln upon his arrival brought the city unexpected reassurance. Here was no fire-eater. The newspapers remarked with gratification upon his friendly greeting to the Mayors and Councils of Washington and Georgetown when they called upon him at his lodgings. Men dared believe that so mild-spoken a man would after all act with moderation. Perhaps everything would blow over, and the seceded states, after sulking a while, would return to the Union without demanding more than the North would yield. At least the rump of the 36th Congress was still debating compromise measures, and until February 27th the "Conference Convention" remained in session at the Willard Hotel where delegates from twenty-one Northern and border states led by Virginia struggled to devise a workable formula for peace and reunion. 19 At the same time, preparations for the inauguration and the building of a large frame ball-room adjoining the City Hall in which to hold the inaugural ball created some diversion. The hotels and boarding-houses were filling with new arrivals even as defeated Congressmen were making ready to depart. The theatres were crowded nightly. If to old Washingtonians the mounting throng of Republican office-seekers seemed crude and unmannerly, everyone knew

that their money was as good as that of polished Southerners who stayed at home. And Washington's "first families", if disdaining the thought of attending the inaugural ball, realized that visitors of any political stripe were good for business. Life had to go on.

The newcomers for their part, when not too absorbed in the political future to look about them, saw little to recommend the city. The public buildings were impressive - the President's house set in wide lawns, the "unpretending" State Department building on one side, the War Department on the other, the colonnaded Treasury, on F Street the white marble Post Office and the replica of the Parthenon which housed the Patent Office, and, across the Washington canal and Mall, the Columbian Armory and the greatly admired red sandstone turrets of the Smithsonian Institution. On Judiciary Square the large beautifully proportioned City Hall commanded attention. Still more imposing was the Capitol on the Hill although on close view the effect was marred by the cluttering of the grounds and streets nearby with the huge blocks of marble and stone cutters' equipment needed to complete the eastern porticoes and the massive new dome. The old "Brick Capitol", used as a public school, also looked dignified, unspoiled as yet by bars at the windows, twelve-foot palings about the yard and the grimness that would envelop the place when it became a military prison. In the Navy Yard on the Eastern Branch and in the Arsenal grounds on Greenleaf's Point stood spacious well-designed houses built for officers' quarters.


21 Ibid., pp. 32-34; S. Ex Doc, No. 1, 37th C, 1st S., Rpt of the Comr. of Public Bldgs and Grounds, 7 Nov 1861, p. 354, Ser 1117.
Moreover, several sections of the city occupied by private residences were attractive. Northwest of the Capitol handsome houses lined the streets in four or five separate neighborhoods scattered from Judicary Square and "Senator's Row" on Lower C Street to the area west of the White House graced by the Octagon House and other examples of federal architecture. Jackson Place, marked by St. John's Church, the Decatur and Madison houses and the park between, had much the air of an old square in London. Otherwise most of the city was unprepossessing.

Nothing looked finished. Vacant lots rank with weeds or supporting a few ramshackle sheds injected untidiness into the very heart of the city. The streets, apart from a few blocks paved with cobblestones, were as muddy as in 1840. Hacks and stages that ran from Georgetown to the Capitol or on to the Navy Yard provided the only form of public transportation. At night gas lights illuminated a small down-town area; the rest of the city lay in darkness, an encouragement to brawling, thievery and violent crime. Alley-ways destined shortly to become teeming slums inhabited by freedmen were already dotted with "groggeries", and dirty huts. Along Pennsylvania Avenue where today the National Archives proclaims "The Past is Prologue", stood the stalls of the Centre Market with the Fish Market at its rear. Between the markets and the Mall reaching west to the site of the Washington Monument and the Potomac lay the Washington canal. Half-filled with sewerage and refuse, nearly stagnant except after heavy rains when the water overflowed the banks and seeped into streets and cellars, the canal was a menace to store

owners and occupants of the boarding houses and hotels on the lower "Avenue". The Mall itself was unsightly. Railroad tracks cut across it at the foot of Capitol Hill, lumber and coal yards trespassed upon its entire length, and at its western end the stub of the Washington Monument surrounded by debris added to the unkempt appearance of what L'Enfant had planned as a magnificent park.23

The perimeter of the city was scarcely less bedraggled. Cows and goats roamed at will. Here and there clusters of pleasant houses and gardens redeemed small areas, but vacant lots intervened to create a patchy, haphazard effect. Between C and Boundary Streets on the north only an occasional cottage broke the emptiness. To the east dwellings and stores struggled along Maryland Avenue, East Capitol Street, and the roads leading to the Almshouses and the Navy Yard, but neither trim houses and lawns nor the warehouses and wharves along the Eastern Branch saved the eastern half of the city from looking neglected. South of the Mall, lay the "Island", cut off by the sparsely bridged canals and the river. Here railroad tracks, brick yards and workmen's shanties combined to create an ugliness that the substantial houses built in early decades could not offset.24 Worse, from the Long Bridge to the foot of 17th Street below the White House and on to Eastby's Point, the tidal marshes of the Potomac stretched out in a wide arc of swamp grass, pools of water and evil-smelling mud. The shore that John Quincy Adams had

23 Ibid., H Ex Doc 5, 36th C, 2nd S, 7 Dec 64, Serial 1222.
used as a bathing beach thirty years before had disappeared. Like the canal that fed it, this swamplike expanse endangered health and, as it broadened year by year, narrowed the navigable channel of the river and encroached upon property between the Monument grounds and the National Observatory at the end of 23rd Street.

Look where he might, the stranger in Washington beheld disorder intruding upon splendor. No American city of the era was spotless. Every city, whatever its pretensions, contained eyesores and unsavory areas. Yet Americans expecting to take pride in the national capital may well have felt dismayed.

Georgetown was somewhat more presentable. Her thoroughfares, like Washington’s, were muddy, street lights were few and the waterfront was untidy, but the rapid rise of the terrain from the river spared the city some of Washington’s troubles. The compactness of Georgetown further simplified municipal problems even while light taxation and a short roll of taxpayers limited municipal expenditures. Dwellings and stores, churches and schools, craftsmen’s shops, warehouses near the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, wharves and flour mills along the river, all were contained within a mile and a half square. Elegant Federal houses surrounded by lawns and gardens stood adjacent to humble frame houses occupied by workmen’s families. On a high bluff above the river, Georgetown Seminary founded by Bishop Carroll in 1789 looked out over the Potomac valley. Public buildings here could not vie with Washington’s, but the more settled atmosphere of the older community gave it a charm.

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The county was still largely farm and woodland difficult of access because of bad roads. Newcomers to the District might find their way across Boundary Street to Kalorama, formerly Joel Barlow's famous estate on Rock Creek, to Columbian College, Kendall Green, or the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, but they rarely ventured as far north as the Soldiers' Home or across the Eastern Branch into the village of Anacostia and the grounds of the Government Hospital for the Insane. Most of the county saw few visitors.

Critics of Washington's appearance were an old story to permanent residents, but experience had taught them that most visitors enjoyed the city, despite her drawbacks, and people who stayed any length of time found life here peculiarly agreeable. In the face of some obstacles, Washingtonians for more than two generations had cultivated the art of making existence pleasant both for newcomers and for themselves, and now that an unwelcome administration was about to take over, they must endeavor to carry on the tradition. Once the inauguration was an accomplished fact, they hoped to settle down to the task.

The inauguration took place without disturbing incident. People watching the presidential carriage roll along Pennsylvania Avenue on that chilly March day may have been struck at the close formation of the cavalry escort riding on either side; they could not have failed to note the absence of the civic groups and political clubs that were

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customarily part of inaugural parades.\textsuperscript{27} Nothing looked truly gay. March 4, 1861 in Washington was not a festive day. But at least the waiting was over. Lincoln's inaugural speech had caused no furor; it contained no alarming pronouncements, even while it outlined no positive course of action.\textsuperscript{28} With some relief, the city now prepared to go about her business.

That business, as for sixty years past, revolved about the federal government. It hinged upon service to Congress and its petitioners, to officials of the executive departments, to claimants under the federal land acts and to people seeking political plums. Much of this service was direct and personal; local agents representing distant clients performed the rest. Lodging, food and drink, household furnishings, clothes, medical care, legal counsel, action based upon knowledgeableness about shortcuts through government red tape and, above all, the amenities that smoothed social intercourse were Washington's stock in trade. Government payrolls were important not only to government officers and clerks but also to the men who supplied them with what their money would buy. Formerly, private banking and brokerage houses, notably Corcoran and Riggs, had had a special function in marketing government bonds or arranging purchases of tracts of public land, and in the fifties W. W. Corcoran individually had supplied capital to party leaders and public officials for private speculation


in western lands. But the political disruptions of early 1861 demolished the prospects of further profitable transactions of that sort. 29

and indeed they had never provided the bread and butter of most District households.

In Washington and Georgetown, like every place else, people without financial backing made up the largest part of the population. Their livelihood depended upon employment by others, the federal government, the city corporations or individuals and companies who had capital to command. At the bottom of the social scale were the 3,100 slaves owned by District families, a number of whom obtained their main support from hiring out their slaves. 30 Next came the 11,100 free Negroes. Regarded with tolerance by the well-to-do whites but despised by the Irish and German immigrants in Washington and Georgetown, these Negroes worked as day laborers, waiters, bartenders, barbers, carters and peddlers, or if women, as laundresses, cooks and nurses. 31 A few who had received an education or a nest egg in cash when their masters manumitted them or their forbears had become teachers and preachers or acquired businesses of their own. This group had greater economic security than the poorest of the white day laborers, but all Negroes in this Southern community had to tread warily. Irish laborers who had come to

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30 H Ex Doc 42, 38th Cong, 1st S, 11 Jan 1863, p. 3, Serial 1189.

lay the tracks of the railroad or to dig the foundations of new government buildings and then found work on the Washington aqueduct and at other jobs requiring more brawn than skill occupied a position above the Negroes' but generally below that of other workingmen of the community. Germans, English, Scots and native Americans also made up part of the group who, while living from hand to mouth, believed that their children would fare better than they. These were the clerks in retail stores, the craftsmen who manned the tailor bootmakers' shops, the carpenters' and plumbers' assistants, the bakers, the petty officials employed by the city corporations, and men who held minor jobs such as guards at the penitentiary or the Insane Asylum. Artisans at the Navy Yard and at the government arsenal, like the printers and foundrymen in private employ, stood a notch higher because of their special skills.

The nearly 1400 departmental clerks, with salaries of about $1200 a year, ranked still higher. Although some of them did not consider Washington home, others had lived here for years and had voted in local elections after the property qualification for suffrage was dropped. But none of these people, whether voters, aliens, or unenfranchised Negroes, could affect the course of the District's future in the spring of 1861.

Nor, as it happened could people of established position and means. During the brief lull following Lincoln's inauguration no one had time to lay careful plans. Yet responsible citizens considering the plight of the District may well have given thought to the problem of releasing Washington and Georgetown from economic dependence upon the federal government. Even were a miracle of statesmanship to restore
the Union and revive local real estate values, as long as the District cities relied for prosperity upon federal patronage they must remain "wards of the nation". Commerce and manufacturing had developed rapidly in other American cities. Might not vigorous action encourage equal growth here?

For more than two decades Washington's commerce had counted for little outside the District itself. Georgetown had done better because the C & O Canal brought Cumberland coal and upcountry grain direct to her wharves, and a minimum of cartage then permitted ocean-going vessels to tranship the coal and the flour ground in Georgetown mills. Thanks to the aqueduct crossing the Potomac and the extension of the canal to Alexandria, the Virginia port also benefited. Washington City, on the other hand, had had no share in this traffic. Had she been able to finance the original plan whereby canal boats lowered through locks from Georgetown to a basin at the foot of 17th Street could unload there, at any point on the Washington canal or at the wharves on the Eastern Branch, her commerce might have grown.32 As it was, the promise once offered by flourishing mercantile firms, like Peabody and Corcoran, had shrunk over the years as shrewd merchants transferred their business to Baltimore, New York or the West. Trade in the capital had become largely local. Washington retailers still imported French wines, Parisian millinery, and fine English woolens, generally via New York, and offered their customers Maryland rye,

Kentucky bourbon and cheap cotton goods made in New England, but lack of outgoing shipments or transshipments of goods created commercial imbalance and shrivelled the city's trade. District bankers implicitly blamed Congress, since its refusal to permit them under their charters to issue bank notes reduced local currency to Treasury notes, state bank notes of $50 or higher denomination and the coin in which the government paid its employees.\footnote{33} If that form of currency restriction made the machinery for obtaining credit cumbersome, it had doubtless contributed to keeping Washington's commerce small.

Other causes, however, were clearly more basic. Both Washington and Georgetown, the canal notwithstanding, suffered from lack of adequate transport and want of an extensive, rich hinterland. The Potomac was not Chesapeake Bay, Baltimore was the focus of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, and the turnpikes and highways through the District were few and badly maintained. Farms in the immediate neighborhood supplied local consumers with perishables – fruit, vegetables, milk, butter, pork and some beef – but there was scant surplus for shipment abroad and no means of preserving that little in transit. Baltimore was the metropolis of most of Maryland, the principal market for planters' slaves, western coal and the produce of farms not adjacent to the canal. Alexandria similarly served northern Virginia. The District cities lay squeezed between. Their most valuable commodity, political news, was not readily salable except through the pages of the \textit{Congressional Globe}, and that money-making publication was still the monopoly of its proprietor and

\footnote{33} S Rpt 29, 35th C, lst S, 28 Jan 1858, Serial 938; P.L.
editor, John C. Rives. Commerce languished because Washington and Georgetown had little to sell.

Manufacturing, which might have fed commerce, had made headway during the fifties but was still small-scale and aimed primarily at the local market. Flour milling was the sole exception. Mills in Georgetown and the County where "surplus" water drawn from the canal provided cheap power and achieved some volume; the two largest in 1860 each reported an annual grind valued at more than a quarter million dollars. 34 Eight establishments in the District, including the 2560-spindle cotton factory in Georgetown, were using water power; forty-one, thirty-four of them in Washington City, were using steam. Nevertheless, craftsmen turning out articles by hand accounted for most local production, and manufacturing, in the perverse sense of fabricating by power-driven machinery had not kept pace with progress elsewhere. Other than John Rives' publishing house, the two biggest flour mills, the Baldwin Sash Factory and the Washington Brewery, no plant produced as much as $75,000 worth of goods a year. Washington, in population the fourteenth city of the United States, ranked forty-ninth in value of manufactures, whereas the newer, smaller city of San Francisco stood ninth and the somewhat larger Louisville twelfth. 35 Boston with less than triple the population of the capital, had six times as many mechanized shops. Manufacturers here, moreover, made little effort to reach

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34 Unless otherwise noted all the data in the paragraphs dealing with industry derive from the original Enumerators' Returns, Schedule 5, of the Eighth Census, assembled in June 1860 and covering the District, Boston and Baltimore.

35 H Ex Doc 29, 39th C, lst S, Serial 1255.
customers outside the District, and local newspapers, bricks, cabinet
work, sash and blinds, beer and ale, special brass castings and sheet
iron for furnaces were ill-adapted to shipping to distant markets.
Like the custom-made suits, the boots and shoes, the carriages and the
were
bakery goods made by hand in craftsmen's shops. In 20th century
phrasing, they were consumer, not production, goods and thus created
no new wealth.

Measured by other standards also, industrial development in the
District lagged. Boston, with no greater power resources than Washing­
ton, had several shops that used over 100 horsepower. To a generation
that takes for granted at least 120 horsepower in the family automobile,
the power consumption of the largest factories of the U.S. in 1860 must
seem incredibly small. The country over, just as in the District of
Columbia, five or six horse power was average, but almost every city
with industrial ambitions had some larger plants. In Washington,
Charles Coltman ran his flour mill with a 60-horsepower engine; apart
from the mills on the canal, only two other District firms used as
much as 20 horsepower. Yet coal was as cheap in Washington as in
Boston and the water power available to Georgetown and the County
greatly exceeded that of most New England towns. Figures on capital
investment and numbers of employees tell the same story of small-scale
enterprise. Only seven firms, of which the Washington and the Georgetown
Gas Companies were two, were capitalized at as much as $50,000 capital.
Only the Georgetown cotton mill, William Ellis' furnace shop and
Richardson's brick yard employed as many as 50 hands, and all District
industry together employed scarcely 650. Strangely enough, wage rates were on the whole higher than in northern cities; printers might earn $50 a month, foundrymen $40, and pay for other jobs ran from $20 to $35 a month for men, from $3 to $10 a month for women. Nevertheless, for a community of 75,000 souls skilled industrial workmen were few.

The dearth of skilled labor and inadequacies of transport partly accounted for this meagerness of industrial growth, but attitudes of mind were a more important factor. Preoccupation with the opportunities men believed theirs through their contacts with federal officials had induced a kind of myopia. Congress had displayed no interest in industrial development in the District. Why should its residents? They had not made their homes here for any purpose like that. Southerners, traditionally unsympathetic to manufacturing, had had little experience in organizing and launching industrial ventures. Other forms of investment seemed more profitable. William Corcoran, for example, had poured money into District real estate, as well as into western lands, but not into manufacturing enterprises. Without capital, industry could not progress. Washington would need better rail connections to bring her raw materials and coal. To exploit for industrial use in the District the power potential of the Potomac at the Great Falls would require a large sum of money, elaborate agreements with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, and discreet negotiations with the federal government in order to avoid controversy over the water rights of the Washington

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36 Corcoran Mss. Letter Press Book, No 19, August 1860 to March 1861, shows income from the Maynard Arms Company, but none of the papers reveal any other connection with industrial enterprise.
yet Corcoran, Riggs and other District capitalists had shown financial acumen in the past; since the game of western land speculation appeared played out, they might alter their views on investment in local industry. Time would tell.

If citizens were ruminating over these problems in March 1861, they betrayed no eagerness to act at once. Things could take their course. During the grateful calm that settled upon Washington after March 4th, few people let themselves think that time for peaceful adjustments was short. The threatened crisis of the inauguration had passed without revolution. Perhaps an economic revolution need never occur: as passions cooled and the new President wielded the power of federal patronage, Washington little by little might regain her importance to the South as to the North. 37 Mr. Lincoln appeared ready to let the South come gradually to its senses, and the Union party in Virginia seemed to be safely in control of the convention in Richmond.

Governor Hicks of Maryland was teetering back and forth, but his refusal to summon the legislature for a vote on secession gave hope to Union supporters in the District. 38 When Mrs. Lincoln resumed the customary Saturday afternoon receptions at the White House, citizens dared feel

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that life in the capital was returning to normal. Although reports from Montgomery and Charleston revealed mounting ardor for the Confederacy throughout the South, Washington papers cautiously suggested that no warlike move was imminent. In Washington and Georgetown the companies of volunteers were insuring order and, when on April 9th most of them were quietly sworn into the federal service and began unobtrusively to stand guard at night about the White House and the public buildings, residents of the city read no ominous meaning into the act. 40

News of the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12th hit like a thunderbolt, despite every forewarning. Sarcely had Washington digested that fact than Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers proved all earlier estimates of the President's passivity wrong. Then on April 17th Governor Letcher of Virginia, long known for his pro-Union sentiment, informed the administration in Washington that the Old Dominion had passed a Secession Ordinance. High-ranking Army and Navy officers loyal to their native Virginia immediately resigned their commissions, and while the War and Navy Department sought suitable replacements, fears lest troops assembling across the Potomac were preparing to march into Washington added to the general alarm. Even Southern sympathizers, perhaps envisaging street fighting in the city, showed no elation. 41

The swift movement of events in the days that followed left people in the Capital dazed. New recruits swelled the ranks of the District volunteers till they numbered nearly 3500, but the transfer of Army regulars downstream to Fort Washington meant that only unseasoned

39 Evening Star, 9 March, 8 April 1861.


41 Evening Star, 15-20 Apr 1861.
men remained to defend the city. On April 19th when a Baltimore mob attacked a Massachusetts regiment en route to Washington, Maryland officials, ostensibly to avoid further hostile demonstrations, sanctioned the burning of the railroad bridges linking Baltimore and the North. The Massachusetts troops, their wounded on stretchers, reached Washington that night. Thereafter for five days the District lay isolated. Agreement between the President and the Governor of Maryland that volunteers from the northern states should land at Annapolis and move thence by rail brought scant consolation to householders in Washington hourly expecting a Confederate army to seize the capital. Some of them attempted to flee, setting out for the country in carriages, carts, or by shanks mare. Colonel Stone's foresight prevented a shortage of bread in the city, for the War Department, acting upon his warning that supplies were low, commandeered the flour stored in Georgetown mills and aboard ships docked at her wharves and about to sail and carted it off to the basement of the Capitol and Treasury.\footnote{See n. 40; Elizabeth Lindsay Lomax, Leaves from an Old Washington Diary, 1854-1863, pp. 149-151; Radcliffe, "Governor Thomas H. Hicks of Maryland and the Civil War", Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Series XIX, Nos 11-12, pp. ; Evening Star, 15-20 Apr 15.}

At the end of April as northern regiments transported via Annapolis began to arrive, panic subsided but confusion increased. Companies of high-spirited young men in strangely varied "uniforms" were soon overrunning the city. Quartered in the Capitol, the Treasury, and the Patent Office or in tents on Franklin Square and Meridian Hill, volunteers who had come to save the Union were shortly seeking to save themselves.
from the boredom of inaction by swaggering about the streets, frequenting the barrooms, quarreling, gambling and indulging in horseplay at citizens' expense. To supply bread to the troops, the government hastily opened a bakery in the basement of the Capitol, but the Army commissariat all but broke down; the officer in charge had held the post since 1818 and was now a helpless invalid. Distribution of equipment was equally inefficient; a Virginian, Joseph E. Johnston had resigned, and the Secretary of War had not as yet appointed a successor. Northerners hungry for contracts were beginning to swarm about the government offices, while local businessmen did their best to meet the demand for supplies or hesitated over sharing in preparations for war. Contributing to fratricide would be a high price to pay for improving trade.

It was at this point that hundreds of District citizens felt they must choose between deeply conflicting loyalties. Some had already made up their minds; others would wait till loyalty oaths forced a choice; a few would silently evade the issue altogether. Maryland's decision to stay with the Union made the choice easier but every day saw irreconcilables, government clerks among them, depart for the South. Parents, themselves wavering, faced the shock of finding that romantic fourteen- and fifteen-year-old sons were running away to join the Confederate army. Most families felt helpless and fervently prayed that even now the nation might avoid bloodshed. And then one morning late in May, as

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43 Menefee, The War Department, 1861, pp. 111-12, 117-18, 149-53.
44 Evening Star, Oct 1861.
companies of volunteers marched over the bridges to seize the Arlington heights above the Potomac. Colonel Elmer Ellsworth and his New York Zouaves, gay in their red caps and baggy "Turkish" trousers, landed in Alexandria to occupy the rebel city. Confederate troops had withdrawn days before, but the Zouaves determined to tear down the Confederate flag that flew from the Marshall House. Hours later grieving angry soldiers bore Colonel Ellsworth's body back to the Washington Navy Yard. Shot by an indignant hotel proprietor, Ellsworth was the first man to die in action for the Union. For the District the Civil War had begun.
The four years of the Civil War altered virtually every phase of life in the District of Columbia. The social organization of its cities, relations between whites and blacks, the character of civic needs, concepts of civic responsibility, political attitudes and business aspirations and interests all assumed new form. Beyond doubt some of these changes would have come about gradually without the pressures of war, but the war forced the pace and in the process created problems which nothing in Washington's and Georgetown's experience prepared them to meet. The "Second American Revolution" affected every hamlet in the country but no locality outside the Confederacy so drastically and so quickly as the District of Columbia.

In the early summer of 1861 people in the capital talked of a short war. While the War Department struggled to organize itself and the President and General Scott dealt with Northern governors and their emissaries demanding immediate annihilation of the rebel army, District companies did guard duty, teamsters hauled army supplies from the wharves and the railroad freight yards, and hotels, restaurants, and barrooms carried on a rushing business. The houses vacated by Southern families stood empty, real estate transactions had ceased, and the price of foodstuffs, which had soared in April, remained high: flour formerly sold at $7.50 a barrel now cost $12. But belief that a single pitched

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1 Alexander Meeneley, The War Department, 1861, pp. 182-183.
2 Star, 22, 23 April 61.
battle would settle once and for all the quarrel between North and South inspired Washingtonians to patience. Troops assembled here would soon disband, Congress called into session on the 4th of July would dispose of its business and adjourn, and peace and order would return to the District.

In the meantime citizens long accustomed to the leisurely life of the summer-time capital could find distractions in the excitement about them. Soldiers were everywhere. Reviews of troops by President Lincoln and General Scott were a novelty, and the Marine band concerts conducted by John Sousa twice weekly at the Capitol and in the White House grounds were festive occasions, perhaps momentarily nursing illusions that war consisted of martial music and parading uniformed men. At one of the theatres ordinarily closed in summer, a stock company staged a week's run of plays to welcome Congress back into session. And Washingtonians who had known young Mrs. Meda Blancheard before she had left her native Washington to study singing abroad rejoiced when she accepted the invitation to make her American debut here.3

Nevertheless beneath the shiny surface of confidence, many people were troubled. Ordinary business, which had quickened at first, declined as May turned into June. Military preparations overshadowed all other activities. Although by late June, according to newspaper estimates, over 50,000 volunteers were stationed in and about Washington, neither Washington nor Georgetown profited greatly from this friendly invasion.

The new Commissary and Quartermaster Generals placed their orders for

3 Ibid., 1h May, 2 July 61.
army supplies with big houses in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and, except for Georgetown and county flour mills, local firms, lacking established contacts with large-scale purveyors, shared in none of this first war boom. Work on the Capitol extension had ceased when the War Department quartered troops in the building, and in July, after their removal to encampments outside the city, Congress convened to hold its sessions in halls daily filled with alcoholic fumes of the bread baking in the ovens below stairs. On the first of July when masons laid the last bricks and stones in the great arch of the Cabin John bridge, work on the aqueduct also stopped. Day laborers found employment at unskilled jobs repairing railroad tracks to the wharves or erecting army warehouses and corrals for mules and horses, and any man who could drive a team could get work as an army wagoneer. But other men, unless political connections opened to them federal clerkships, faced hard times. Because the War Department, still ill-organized, had not yet systematized its financial procedures, District volunteers had received no pay since they were sworn into federal service in April. By mid-June their wives and children were in real, if temporary, distress, and only the contributions of groups of private citizens, led by Germans in the community, and the funds voted by the city councils saved a number of families from want.

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8 Ibid., 17 May, 26 Jun 61; Report of Commissary General, p. 72, in Rpt Sec/War, 61, Ser 1118.

5 Report of Comm Pub Bldgs in Rpt Sec/Int, 61, p. 819, Ser 1117; Star, 3 Jul 61.

6 Intelligencer, 13, 19 Jun 61; Star, 25 Jun 61.
situation was paradoxical: her population for the moment nearly doubled, great doings afoot, and yet material hardship bestriding many parts of the city.

Still more disturbing was the mounting distrust of District citizens which government officials displayed. Lincoln’s suspension of the writ of habeas corpus for soldiers, surveillance and arrests of reputable civilians on the mere suspicion of disloyal activity, and the growing feeling that malicious tale-bearing was enough to make trouble for innocent people combined to cast heavy shadows upon the capital’s residents. Householders Southern in origin but long settled in Washington and devoted to the Union cause were under particular pressure. Individuals who continued to write letters to friends in the South risked unfriendly investigation, although, the Intelligencer observed, the government need not halt that correspondence, since the newspapers told all that enemy agents needed to know. Nevertheless, reasons for surveillance did exist; spies swarmed about Washington as they did about Richmond. North and South, every town and city contained dissidents to their governments’ course. This was indeed civil war. Without a complete censorship of all mail leaving Washington, officials charged with the security of the capital had to act upon vague hints and gossip. More than one indiscreet lady of Southern antecedents did herself and her friends harm by idle chatter critical of government procedures. In this uncomfortable atmosphere everyone looked

7 Intelligencer, 7 Jun 61; Sunday Morning Chronicle, 23, 30 Jun 61; (hereafter cited as Sun. Chronicle); Eugenia Phillips, “A Southern Woman’s Story of Her Imprisonment, 1861-62,” (Ms, L.C.); Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 31 Aug 1861; John K. Jones, A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary, 1, 30-40; Ben Ames Williams, ed., Mary Boykin Chestnut, A Diary from Dixie, pp. 60 ff.
forward impatiently to a battle that would put an end to the war.

With astonishing light-heartedness on July 16, 1861, troops stationed in the District set off toward Manassas and the creek called Bull Run. If soldiers of the Thirteenth Brooklyn regiment no longer looped their muskets with ropes with which to drag back Confederate prisoners, the omission was a mere gesture to discipline. Some of the men stopped to pick blackberries along the line of march. In Washington suspense filled the next few days. During the heat of Saturday and Sunday, the 20th and 21st, anxious listeners could hear the faint boom of the cannon thirty miles distant, until toward evening of the 21st wagons and carriages began to clatter over the Long Bridge bringing back panicky teamsters and frightened Congressmen and their ladies who had driven out to picnic while they watched the Union triumph. At daylight the day following, exhausted soldiers singly and in half-formed companies began straggling back into the city, while rough carts filled with wounded men jolted through the streets.8

"The men appear," wrote Walt Whitman, "at first sparsely and shame-faced enough, then thicker,... They come along in disorderly mobs, some in squads, stragglers, companies. Occasionally, a rare regiment, in perfect order, with its officers (some gaps, dead, the true braves,) marching in silence, with lowering faces, stern, weary to sinking, all black and dirty, but every man with his musket, and stepping alive; but these are the exceptions. Sidewalks... crowded, jamm'd with citizens, darkies, clerks, everybody, lookers-on; swarms of dirt-cover'd return'd

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soldiers there (will they never end?) move by; but nothing said, no comments;
(half our lookers-on secesh of the most venomous kind -- they say nothing;
but the devil snickers in their faces.) During the forenoon Washington gets
all over motley with these defeated soldiers -- queer-looking objects,
strange eyes and faces, drench'd (the steady rain drizzles on all day) and
fearfully worn, hungry, haggard, blister'd in the feet. Good people (but
not over-many of them either,) hurry up something for their grub. They put
wash-kettles on the fire, for soup, for coffee. They set tables on the
side-walks -- wagon-loads of bread are purchas'd, swiftly cut in stout
chunks. Here are two aged ladies, beautiful, the first in the city for
culture and charm, they stand with store of eating and drinking at an
improvis'd table of rough plank, and give food, and have the store rep-
lenish'd from their house every half-hour all that day; and there in the rain
they stand, active, silent, white-hair'd, and give food, though the tears
stream down their cheeks, almost without intermission, the whole time.
Amid the deep excitement, crowds and motion, and desperate eagerness, it
seems strange to see many, very many, of the soldiers sleeping -- in the
midst of all, sleeping sound. They drop down anywhere, on the steps of
houses, up close by the basements or fences, on the sidewalk, aside on some
vacant lot, and deeply sleep. A poor seventeen or eighteen year old boy
lies there, on the stoop of a grand house; he sleeps so calmly, so pro-
foundly. Some clutch their muskets even in sleep. Some in squads; comrades,
brothers close together -- and on them as they lay, sulkily drips the rain.
"As afternoon pass'd, and evening came, the streets, the bar-rooms,
knots everywhere, listeners, questioners, terrible yarns,.... stories and
story-tellers, windy, bragging, vain centres of street-crowds.......

"Meantime, in Washington, among the great persons and their entourage, a mixture of awful consternation, uncertainty, rage, shame, helplessness, and stupefying disappointment."  

The humane did not linger to mourn or to gloat. The wounded needed help. While the newly organized Sanitary Commission rushed supplies to the hospitals and women volunteered as nurses, the army surgeons began their operations — largely a succession of grisly amputations. Householders of Washington and Georgetown turned their houses into nursing homes, and when even that added space did not suffice, the government commandeered buildings at the Georgetown Seminary and Columbian College, a schoolhouse, and the former residence of the British minister near Washington Circle. Later battles were to fill churches and half the federal office buildings with wounded.

Throughout the North, as the meaning of the defeat reached home, grim determination replaced the easy optimism of spring and early summer. In Washington, while the War and Navy Departments revised and expanded their plans, Congress, having legalized measures officials had already taken and having appropriated money to carry on the war, turned to consideration of new bills designed better to safeguard the nation and the federal capital. Two laws passed on August 6th had immediate sharp consequences for the District, the act requiring a loyalty oath from every federal employee and the act creating a Metropolitan Police force.

In April, the government had required civil service employees and men enlisting in military service to take, or to take again, the oath of

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10 Ibid., p. 42; Star, 31 Jul, 6, 11 Aug, 10 Sep 61; Heneeley, War Department, pp. 133-34.
allegiance to the Constitution, an oath established by law in 1789 and administered to federal officials thereafter. By August Congress felt that oath not enough. Lincoln himself later said that Southern sympathizers "pervaded all departments of the government and nearly all communities of people." Secret hearings before a House committee on subversion among federal employees produced enough evidence to bring about the imposition of a new oath. It demanded a solemn affirmation from every person in government service to uphold the Constitution and the government of the United States both then and thereafter. Vacancies in government offices began to appear at once. Some men refused the oath because they were at best lukewarm towards the Union, others because they were unwilling to pledge future support to an administration becoming increasingly partisan and increasingly high-handed. And several departmental heads, armed with secret and perhaps dubious testimony, dismissed employees who had unhesitatingly taken the oath. Between August and the end of 1861 at least a hundred men left government service in Washington, and more departed as the war went on. In view of the number who resigned in the first spring of the war to be replaced by supposedly sound Republican appointees, the total at length reached a distressingly high figure.

While the turnover in government offices was itself disrupting to

the life of the city, for the local community the poison of constantly recurring suspicion was more deadly. Nothing indicates with certainty how many whose heads rolled in Washington considered themselves citizens of the District, but because they were resident here at the time of their resignation or dismissal, uncritical Unionists could dub them all Washingtonians. This would have been unimportant except that in labelling the capital a "hotbed of secession," as it indeed was, intemperate Congressmen and their constituents in distant places apparently let themselves hold local citizens responsible. Yet who was a local citizen? In addition to householders who, come to Washington temporarily, had lived here for years, thought of the city as home, but kept formal citizenship in Pennsylvania, or Ohio or Illinois or Massachusetts where they paid taxes on their property and voted in state and national elections, the District of the Civil War era had an indeterminate number of residents without strong local ties. The 1848 extension of the franchise in municipal elections to any white man who had lived in a ward of Washington or Georgetown for a year, and then the 1853 amendment reducing the requirement for residence in any one ward from twelve months to three, heightened the confusions. A District citizen might be anybody who had drifted into the area for evil purposes or good and who would make himself scarce when trouble arose. Boastful statements of Southern newspapers early in the war that Confederate sympathizers lined the far bank of the Potomac worsened matters for the District. Declarations of devotion to the Union sounded in prejudiced ears like lip service, and numberless patriotic deeds were so quickly

Eg., Cong. Globe, 38C, 3S, v.69, pp. 91-93, 21 Dec 64.
forgotten that even the partisan *National Republican* protested the
belittling of the service the District volunteers had rendered their
country.\textsuperscript{15} To Northern communities, people in Washington tended to become
synonymous with the people of Washington. Thus in the minds of thousands
of Americans every act of sedition in the capital, regardless of the per­
petrator, came to be associated with the "traitorous" citizens of Washington
or Georgetown. From the rumor of the "Southern conspiracy" of January 1861
to the assassination of Lincoln in April 1865, the District cities bore the
brunt of the anger of a nation that felt itself betrayed from within.

The episode that touched off an explosion soon after the first
battle of Bull Run occurred in the course of organizing the new Metrop­
olitan Police Board for the District. By the terms of the second fateful
act of August 6th, the mayors of Washington and Georgetown were to be ex
officio members of the Board.\textsuperscript{16} The others, appointed by the President of
the United States, naturally fell into the category of federal employees and
therefore were subject to the loyalty oath. At the formal swearing in of
these new government officials, Mayor Addison of Georgetown took the oath
with the others, but Mayor Berret of Washington refused. Critics and
political rivals promptly called him a traitor or, at best, a pompous
self-important person unduly impressed with the dignity of his office.
Berret, a Democrat and a conservative, a true Union supporter and an
honorable man, defended his course with sound theoretical arguments formally

\textsuperscript{15} Star, 8 Aug 61, quoting Richmond correspondent to the Memphis
*Argus*; *National Republican*, 31 Jul 62 (hereafter cited as Republican);
Petition, 33IA-H7, 26 Mar 62.

\textsuperscript{16} *Cong. Globe*, Appendix, 37C, 18, v. 58, p. 43-44.
put forward by the city attorney. Uneasy at the signs of federal encroach-
ment upon the city's corporate rights and doubtless fearful for individuals'
liberties in a community lacking representation in Congress, Berret contended
that a mayor legally elected by popular vote and only thereby called to
serve with federal appointees was exempt from the operation of the new
loyalty act. His reasoning, however valid, sounded specious, and though
he offered to take the old oath of allegiance, members of the Board wanted
none of him. In harried Washington still smarting from the recent Union
defeat few people voiced approval of the position he took, and the United
States Provost Marshal considered it cause for action against him. Before
dawn of a mid-August morning armed guards hurried him off to Fort Lafayette
in New York harbor where he remained imprisoned for a month until he resigned
the mayoralty, took the loyalty oath and thus obtained his release.17

Although Berret did the city disservice by supplying ammunition to
the assailants of her loyalty, the immediate furor died down rather quickly.
The Board of Aldermen, without waiting for Berret's resignation, pronounced
the mayor's office vacant and elected Richard Wallach to fill the post.18
Wallach, who had come close to defeating Berret in June 1860, was more
nearly in accord with the spirit of the times. If not an outright Repub-
lican, he could accept with fewer obvious misgivings than could older
Washingtonians the series of strictures war imposed upon the city. He had
the enormous advantage of the full support of the Evening Star, Washington's

17 Star, 16, 20, 24 Aug, 13 Sep, 15 Oct 61; Republican, 21 Aug 61;
Intelligencer, 22, 26 Aug 61.

18 Republican, 27 Aug 61.
most widely read newspaper, which his brother, W.D. Wallach, owned and edited. Elected by popular vote in June 1862 and twice reelected, Richard Wallach guided the corporation through the war years and the first stages of Reconstruction. He represented faithfully the views dominant within his community, protesting Congressional measures he thought detrimental to Washington, yielding when he must. Together with the liberal Mayor Henry Addison of Georgetown he served the District well.

The formation of the Metropolitan Police Board, apart from the unhappy aftermath of Berret's intransigence, proved to be a constructive step. For by August 1861 more effective measures to keep order in the District had become a necessity. The city police could exercise authority only within the municipal boundaries, and the county constabulary consisted of men serving part-time. The seven policemen of Georgetown and the forty-six of Washington, whom senators in 1858 had called "feeble and inefficient," were far too few to police the war-time cities with their expanding, shifting populations. The Provost Marshal and his guards were fully occupied with searching out spies, and most of the troops encamped in and about Washington were still undisciplined. Discharge of the "90-day" volunteers in late July added troubles. Although passage of an act forbidding the sale of "intoxicating drinks" to anyone in the District wearing the United States uniform reduced drunkenness, utmost zeal could not rigidly enforce the law, and it did not touch the hundreds of civilians drawn to the capital in hopes of picking up easy money.19 "Confidence men," gamblers,

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19 S Rpt 119, 356, 13, 1 Apr 58, Ser 938; Star, 15, 18, 27 Jul, 2, 7, Aug 61; Cong Globe, 373, 13, v. 58, p. 311, 29 Jul 61; Rpt of Metropolitan Police Board, in Rpt Sec/Int, 61, pp. 911-13, Ser 11117.
prostitutes and thieves found Washington a gold mine. When citizens petitioned Congress to pass the Metropolitan Police bill, "so we can have some protection for life and Property," James A. Wise, soon to be appointed Warden of the jail, noted, "There is ten Thousand sinners for that bill."\(^{20}\) The act as passed in August provided the District with a single police force under the supervision of a seven-man Board authorized to employ 150 patrolmen, 10 sergeants and a superintendent. Both the unified direction and the increased size of the force ensured greater efficiency than the old system permitted.\(^{21}\)

However anxious to see order maintained in the District and however gratified at the $92,000 annual Congressional appropriation for the purpose, citizens soon discovered they had won less than they had hoped. By 1864 Congress had doubled patrolmen's salaries and ordered the cities and county to pay the increase. Thus the federal government left local taxpayers to foot a yearly bill of more than $72,000 for the police force but gave them no say in its composition or management.\(^{22}\) Distrustful of the District's loyalty, Congress placed in the hands of the President appointments to the Board, save for the two ex officio members, and in the hands of the Commissioners all appointments under them. Later Washingtonians, believing that extension of the city's police powers would have accomplished every legitimate purpose, declared the creation of the Metropolitan Police Board.

\(^{20}\) Petition, S37A-H7, Aug 61.

\(^{21}\) See n. 16.

\(^{22}\) H Ex Doc 1, 37C, 25, p. 61, Ser 1127; H Ex Doc 2, 38C, 15, p. 49, Ser 1136; Rpt Met Pol Bd, p. 763, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1864, Ser 1220.
a needless limitation upon chartered rights of citizens, the opening wedge in a long drive to strip them of all self-government. Lincoln appointed competent men to the Board. They displayed no partisanship, they were conscientious and honest, but, like the city police before them, they failed to check crime in the District. Small wonder that property-owners, whose taxes rose 33 percent in 1861 and then doubled before 1864, came to feel they had paid a high price for a meagre return.

Criticisms of the police were nevertheless ill-founded, despite the steady rise of crime, for, as the Commissioners pointed out, their task was close to impossible. The most disorderly residents of other cities had gathered in the capital and they had 230 miles of streets and 77 miles of alleys in which to evade the law. With Washington's civilian population doubled since 1861, the 88 policemen the commissioners could assign to patrol Washington meant by the fall of 1863 one patrolman to 1300 inhabitants, instead of one to every 500. And the small pay, $1.31 a day at a time when "mechanics" were getting $3 and $3.50, lowered the morale of the force. As the cost of living rose higher and higher, the policeman's privilege of wearing a regulation army hat, "navy blue frock coat, single breasted, blue vest and pantaloons with white cord on either seam" did not offset the low salaries. Even the ninety-odd watchmen at government buildings, a group independent of the Metropolitan Police received half.


again as much pay. Without the several thousand soldiers on guard duty in Washington, the Superintendent of the Metropolitan police reported in 1863, "this District would have been simply uninhabitable during the last two years." 25

Carefully kept crime statistics, rarely recorded systematically in American cities of antebellum days, told a story horrifying to District residents living through the violence. Rape, murder, garroting, prostitution, burglary and thieving became the daily fare served up to readers of the local newspapers. The 22,207 arrests of 1862 grew to nearly 24,000 in 1863 and to over 26,000 in 1865, a record, the Chronicle noted in 1863, three and a half times as large as Brooklyn's with more than double the population of the District. 26 A good many offenders doubtless escaped detection in both places. In Washington drunkenness and prostitution were among the most frequent charges. Although the Provost Marshal for a time ruled that restaurants and hotels must close their bars at 9:30 in the evening, and although temperance groups campaigned vigorously against alcohol, neither was effective. About prostitution, the Star abandoned Victorian reticence to deny a statement that 15,000 women were plying their ancient trade in Washington. Estimating the number before the war at 350, the paper calculated, ward by ward, a maximum of 5,000 in 1863, more probably about 2,300 white and 1,600 colored women, seven eighths of them "colonized" since the war. The problem in fact became so acute that the city councils seriously considered licensing "bawdy houses" in order

25 Rpt Met Pol Brd, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1862, p. 612; Ser 1155, and idem, 1863, pp. 719-24, Ser 1182; Star, 11 Nov 63.

26 Daily Chronicle, 28 Sep 63.
better to control the vicious traffic. 27 In attempting to clear the city of thieves, the authorities at one point resorted to drama. They hung red placards labelled "Pickpocket and Thief" upon culprits about to be shipped north and paraded them through the streets. "A file of soldiers and a corps of drummers and fifers preceded them playing the Rogues March." 28 Yet the source of deepest concern was less the rising number of felonies and the recurrence of petty crime than the age of many of the law breakers.

Juvenile delinquency in Civil-War Washington rose steadily. Although a "youthful culprit" might be sentenced to six months in jail for the theft of two hundred and fifty pennies, 29 severity was useless. "Perhaps in no city of equal size in the United States," declared the District Committee of the House in 1864, "are there so many juvenile offenders as in the city of Washington." 30 The police explained, "The army has following it an immense number of boys, attracted most of them by the species of fascination that the life of the soldier has for such young minds. These boys…find their way, after a brief experience of the hardships of camp life, or perhaps by reason of some severe order from headquarters, into our city, and are soon denizens of our streets. In a very little while they become petty criminals, requiring the attentions of the police, and the question becomes a very important one. What is to

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27 Ibid., 11 Nov 62, 11 Apr 63; Star, 6 Feb 29 Jul 62, 7 Apr, 27 Oct, 12 Nov 63.

28 Star, 3 Apr 63; Daily Chronicle, 25 Mar 63.

29 Star, 24 Jan 62.

30 H Rpt 41, 38c, 18, 2 Apr 64, Ser 1206.
be done with them?" The long-felt need of a reform school became acute. The House District Committee submitted a vigorous plea for Congressional appropriations, observing that "from the severity and imperfections of the criminal code of the District, these children, if convicted of crime, must either be sent to Albany or to the county jail, to mingle with old offenders, or again turned loose upon society." To the objection that the government should not spend money for buildings when so hard-pressed by the war, the Committee answered that $250,000 would suffice, less than one-twelfth the federal expenditures for a single day. In proposing that the United States provide $150,000 and District taxpayers the remaining $100,000 for a reform school, the Committee underscored federal obligations. Since Congress exercised exclusive power of legislation over the District, "it is for violating laws passed by Congress, administered by judges not chosen by the people, that these penitentiaries, jails and house of correction become necessary." The bill failed to pass.

The "imperfections of the criminal code," like the conditions in the local prisons, were appalling. Early in 1863, in spite of local protests, Congress created a new Supreme Court for the District with jurisdiction over all cases formerly heard by the circuit, district and criminal courts. But although the three judges Lincoln appointed were capable men - all of them, however, newcomers in the District - the new

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31 Rpt Met Pol Brd, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1863, p. 731, Ser 1182.
32 See n. 30.
33 Cong Globe, Appendix, 37th, 38th, v. 61, pp. 214-220, 3 Mar 63; Petitions, 337A-H7, 19, 20 Feb 63; Daily Chronicle 24 Feb 63; Star, 23 Feb 63.
court, in the absence of an adequate legal code and a police court to handle minor misdemeanors summarily, was badly handicapped. The law reorganizing the court system did, to be sure, provide for a Commissioner to revise and codify District law, but when he completed his codification, Congress took no action upon it. The hodge-podge of antiquated Maryland laws with special Congressional acts superimposed continued to run in the District. For example, a Maryland marriage statute of 1777 imposing a heavy fine upon a minister for marrying minors was still in force. Laws of utmost severity, long since discarded in Maryland, obliged District jurors and judges to choose between dismissing offenders or subjecting them to barbarous penalties.\(^{34}\) Imprisonment in the county jail was itself a terrible punishment.

Pleas for a new jail to replace the old one on Judiciary Square opposite the City Hall had poured in upon Congress yearly since the mid-fifties. Only Congress could authorize new construction. Long before September 1862 when the Ordnance Department took over the federal penitentiary to use for storing munitions, the jail was overcrowded. In the first summer of the war, the Provost Marshal commandeered the Old Brick Capitol for a military prison for spies and political suspects and thus slightly lessened the congestion at the jail, but within a year the jail, built in 1839 to accommodate eighty to one hundred prisoners, contained 240 criminals, fugitive slaves, and people awaiting trial. One witness

averred that ten men occupied a single cell eight feet by ten. The filthy yard half-filled with stagnant water and the lack of water closets within the building combined with overcrowding to turn the place into what the Secretary of the Interior described as "little better than the black hole of Calcutta." Here children arrested and convicted of relatively trivial offenses were cooped up with hardened criminals, and boys emerged showing "a degree of precocious villany hard to conceive of." 

As long as it existed, conditions in the federal penitentiary, if better than in the county jail, were also bad. In September 1862 a hundred court-martialed soldiers and some 230 convicts, white, black, men and women, were packed into the old building on the Arsenal grounds. When the building became an Ordnance store-house, the government arranged to send the convicts to the New York state penitentiary in Albany and court-martialed soldiers to buildings in charge of the Provost Marshal. Other than the jail, the Washington workhouse at the far end of East Capitol Street then became the only place for non-political offenders, and the inmates of the Almshouse adjoining objected to finding themselves close neighbors to, and hence "indistinguishable from," the 1500-odd criminal occupants of


36 See n. 30.


38 S Ex Doc 55, 37C, 23, 2 Jun 62, Ser 1152; Rpt Warden Penitentiary, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1861, p. 856, Ser 1117, and, 1862, p. 661, Ser 1157.
the workhouse. Add to the convicts and petty criminals the mounting number of people arrested by the Provost Guard for seditious language or acts, or perhaps merely suspected of collaborating with the enemy, and the pronouncement of the Metropolitan Police rang true that in the entire United States no community was "so inadequately supplied with prison accommodations, and none in which ample provisions are more needed." 39

Nor after the summer of 1862 did the duties of the Metropolitan Police end with maintaining order. An amendment to the law also charged them with safeguarding health through sanitary inspections and abatement of nuisances. The city Board of Health had been ineffectual since its creation in 1858, but, with the growth of the District's population during the war, the Sanitary Corps that largely supplanted the city Board of Health was able to mitigate only the worst of the evils. Streets and alleys heaped with garbage and offal, foul and leaking privies, hog pens, manure piles, and refuse about slaughter houses and the government corrals turned Washington into "one vast stink." Sanitary laws, like criminal, were inadequate, and ten inspectors for Washington and Georgetown were manifestly too few. 40 Small pox struck in the winter of 1861-1862 and, although the mayor of Washington ordered "the vaccine physician" to visit the public schools, and the following year the city Councils considered free vaccination of the poor, the inroads of "that most loathsome of all diseases" continued. Scarcely a neighborhood was wholly free of it in 1863, and the

Police Commissioners pointed to the difficulty of halting it unless the government provided a hospital at which victims, "strangers, discharged soldiers, contrabands and followers of the Army," could receive prompt care.

That spring the hospital established at Kalorama was set aside for smallpox cases and other "eruptive" diseases, and eventually the Surgeon General of the Army contracted with the Sisters of Mercy at the Roman Catholic Providence Hospital to provide sixty beds for transient paupers. In 1864 the city made vaccination of every child compulsory, but as the ruling was enforceable only for children enrolling in the public schools, smallpox remained a threat throughout the war.41

Lack of sewerage system accounted for much of the city's health problems, for although sewers drained part of the northwest section into the Washington canal, the canal, its flow insufficient in the 1850's, became early in the war almost completely stagnant, an open cesspool. The War Department might have been little concerned had Washington not been a major supply depot for the Army of the Potomac and the Chief center of Army hospitals in the East. None of the fifteen to nineteen military hospitals were immediately adjacent to the canal, but a military commission appointed to investigate sanitation in May 1863 found "large deposits of night soil in the vicinity of various hospitals in open or shallow pits or scattered on the ground." Half-buried carcasses of horses and mules close to the government corrals near a pond at the foot of 19th street added another menace to health. The War Department, acting upon the

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officers' recommendations, assigned "contrabands" to the task of removing night soil and dead animals to fields beyond the city limits, an order that forced the Levy Court of the county to withdraw its prohibition of any dumping of city refuse within the county and so resulted in merely transferring to the suburbs the "hideous malaria of artificial swamps."\footnote{22} City garbage carts began making regular rounds in the summer of 1863 and helped reduce the odors in streets and alleys, but sewerage disposal continued to be a source of anxiety to the government, the cities and the county as well. Dredging the canal and installation of tide gates that might permit flushing the sewerage out into the river proved futile, apparently because the dredging was not deep enough and the gates at 12th street were not strong enough to hold. The "miasmatic swamp near the Presidential mansion" and "the shallow open sewer, of about one hundred and fifty feet in width, (sometimes called a canal)" remained.\footnote{43}

In a community doubled in population in two years' time and on the very borders of enemy territory, problems of every kind inevitably multiplied. But perhaps none of the sudden changes forced upon the District caused such wide-spread consternation as the troubles the "contrabands" brought in their wake. In larger numbers than for years past, fugitive slaves from Maryland and Virginia had found their way into Washington some time before the first Union soldiers marched into the Old Dominion,

\footnote{42 Star, 16, 28 May 63; Daily Chronicle, 3 Jun 64.}

\footnote{43 Star, 28 May, 21 Aug 63; Daily Chronicle, 26 Apr 64; S Mis Doc 84, 386, 15, 23 Mar 64, Ser 1177; Rpts Chief Engr, Washington Aqueduct, in Rpts Sec/Int, 1863, p. 687-88, Ser 1182, and, 1864, pp. 686-87, Ser 1220; Journal 6lst Council, 7 Sep 1863, p. 134.}
and slaves escaping from masters in Prince George's or Montgomery County continued to come, some of them only to be arrested, until the repeal of the Fugitive Slave law and the abolition of slavery in Maryland in 1864 enabled them to move about as free people. But the slaves who crossed the Long Bridge into Washington as federal troops advanced into Virginia were another matter. The most legalistically-minded magistrate could see at once the impropriety of returning the property of rebels and the practical difficulties of sending the fugitives back into Virginia. General Ben Butler, in command at Fortress Monroe, produced the formula for justifying the army's custody of runaways by pronouncing them "contraband." Amused at first and relieved at so simple a legal solution, the entire North adopted the term. But "contrabands" soon ceased to be a source of amusement to Washington. As the stream of Negroes, men, women and children, trickled into the District day after day and month after month, the government and private citizens faced a series of new troubles. Slaves, accustomed to constant supervision, were rarely ready to fend for themselves, and someone had to attempt to find them employment, house feed and clothe them until they could support themselves, watch over their health lest they suffer needlessly or spread epidemics, and prevent them from turning lawless in their unwonted half-freedom. For before April 1862, or in strictest legality before the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect in January 1863, they were "the property of the United States," as such safe from arrest as fugitive slaves but still not free.

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44 Misc Doc 2, 37C, 29, 9 Dec 61, Ser 1124; Star, 7 Apr, 19 May 62.

45 Intelligencer, 1 Jun 1861.

46 Star, 5 Dec 61, quoting ltr, Sec/State Seward to General McClellan, 7 Dec 61.
The measure that freed the contrabands in fact, if not in law, was the Congressional act passed in April 1862 emancipating the 3100 slaves owned by District citizens and held to service here. Owners loyal to the Union and able to establish their claims were to receive not more than $300 for each of their slaves. The act included a provision for colonizing freedmen outside the United States.47 Other than the Negroes themselves and the people, rare in any community, who were more dedicated to principle than to self interest, most District householders feared the immediate consequences, of only because of the timing, and fought the bill with petitions and memorials to Congress, published letters and newspaper editorials. Nobody put faith in the colonization plan.48 The mayor and the majority on the city councils of Washington besought Congress to delay legislation that at this "critical juncture in our national affairs" would convert the city, "located as it is between two slaveholding states, into an asylum for free negroes, a population undesirable in every American community, and which it has been deemed necessary to exclude altogether from some even of the non-slaveholding states."49

The newspapers were more judicious. While the relatively new, strongly pro-administration National Republican endorsed emancipation on the grounds that Washington would benefit from "the free principles and free industry which have built up the great cities of the North," the more representative Star and Intelligencer protested. Both papers favored

48 Ltrs to Star, 19, 21 Mar 62; Republican, 20 Aug, 24 Sep 62.
gradual emancipation in the District but in conjunction with the border states, and both deplored the burden to be put upon local taxpayers to care for infirm and helpless ex-slaves. The editor of the Star considered the compensation offered slave-owners wholly inadequate and urged them to safeguard their property rights by shipping their slaves out of the District before the bill became law. Probably the Intelligencer summed up fairly the general attitude of Washington and Georgetown citizens of the District in declaring that no one would regret the end of slavery in the District were the bill not plainly a first move toward Congressional "regulation of society of the slave states."51

Negroes were profoundly grateful, even those who, like their white neighbors, envisaged the influx of contrabands into the city and the difficulties that must ensue; here was the first break in sixty years in the protective wall about slavery.52

Yet the Cassandras who foresaw trouble for the District were not immediately proved right. Household slaves who had long lived in Washington and Georgetown where they daily saw free Negroes about them had doubtless learned that freedom brought responsibilities along with independence; as soon as they were free, many of them went North or took service with army officers and thus provided for themselves; others may have stayed on as free servants in the families who had formerly owned them. The contrabands, more often field hands than household servants were loath

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50 Republican, 15 Feb 62; Star 8, 17, 29 Mar, 4 Apr 62; Intelligencer, 1, 12, 17 Apr 62.
51 Intelligencer, 12 Apr 62.
52 Star, 17 Apr 63.
to leave the District, at first because only here could they feel sure of
government protection and later because the North seemed alien. But as
charges of the federal government, specifically of the Governor of the
Military District of Washington, General James Wadsworth, they were not at
first a heavy burden upon the community. During the first year of the war
about 400 lived in Duff Green's Row on East Capitol street where eighty
years later the Folger Shakespeare Library would stand; as the early
comers moved out to live with families in Washington or found quarters
of their own, new arrivals moved into the Row. Ignorant, penniless,
ragged, dirty and hungry on arrival, some of them never adjusted to the
new mode of life. But until the number of contrabands mounted to thousands,
most of them, aided by the government and private philanthropy, got on
extraordinarily well.

The hazards contrabands faced in the District first came to wide
public attention in the course of a conflict between senators and the
warden of the jail which flared up in the first winter of the war over
treatment of Negroes in the jail. The issue was primarily the detention
and abuse of free Negroes, but contrabands, despite being government
proteges - "government pets" a southern sympathizer called them - also
occasionally landed in the county jail, were harshly treated there and,
in some cases, eventually sold as fugitive slaves. Maryland slaves, the

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53 Rpt Commissioners for Emancipation, 14 Jan 1863, p. 8, H Ex
 Doc 12, 37C, 38, Ser 1189; Republican, 31 Oct 62.

54 Star, 30 May 1862.

55 H Rpt 11, 37C, 25, 17 Jan 62, Ser 1144; S Rpt 60, 37C, 25, 21
Jun 62, pp. 1-5, Ser 1125; Star 16 Jan, 13 Feb, 22 May 62; Diary of William
Owner, 5 Apr 62; Republican, 11 Aug 62; Daily Chronicle, 15 Apr, 31 Jul,
1 Aug, 2 Sep 63; Cong Globe, 38C, 1S, v. 69, p. 3360, 28 Jun 64.
property of men aligned with the Union, were not contrabands and were therefore subject to the workings of the Fugitive Slave law. The inevitable confusions about who was a contraband, who a fugitive slave, created a series of celebrated cases in which, together with tales of kidnapings of free Negroes, hastened the repeal of the Fugitive Slave act in July 1864. But meanwhile, in March 1862, humane people in Washington and throughout the North organized first a local, and then a National Freedmen's Relief Association, to furnish contrabands "clothing, temporary homes, and employment, and, as far as possible, to teach them to read and write, and bring them under moral influences." The government, moreover, saw that it must undertake a systematic program for handling the multiplying throng of contrabands in the District.

In June 1862, General Wadsworth appointed the Reverend D.B. Nichols, formerly head of the Chicago Reform School, superintendent of a "contraband department" with headquarters at the barracks of the McClellan dragoons on the outskirts of the city at Twelfth street near O. Here contrabands registered and received passes to ensure them military protection. The government furnished them rations and employed the able-bodied men at 40 cents a day at the army corrals, in repairing the avenues used for army transport, or in helping in and about the military hospitals. The Freedmen's Relief Association provided clothing and supplied food for the ill. When the military converted Duff Green's Row into a prison, the "contraband department" moved its charges to tents at "Camp Barker adjacent

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56 Republican, 21, 26 Feb 62; Star 17, 22, 23 May 62; Daily Chronicle, 15 Apr, 13 May 63.

57 First Anrl Rpt Ntl Freedmen's Relief Association, 1863; Star, 22 Mar, 10 Apr 62.
to its own headquarters. Till the end of 1862 these arrangements sufficed, although the number of refugees grew steadily, from about 400 in April to 600 in June and with daily additions thereafter. In October, Nichols, defending the work of his department, declared that 3600 contrabands had passed through his hands since the preceding June but that all except a very few old and infirm had found work. Employers in the northern and western states were eager to hire these Negroes, but "not one in a hundred can in anywise be persuaded to go North." Two months later Nichols added that the contrabands rarely saved their earnings, a few enjoyed idleness, and drunkenness was increasing, but they were generally "a docile people." Realization that most of these refugees had come to stay caused District citizens mounting anxiety. By the spring of 1863, besides 3000 contrabands in Alexandria, 10,000 had gathered in Washington. And they continued to pour in. Washingtonians were generous in giving them help, and, despite federal assistance, many of them desperately needed charity. The free colored people, however clearly they saw the threat to Negro status in the District, were exceptionally kind to the newcomers, "contributing largely to their comfort from their own slender stores." In May 1863 the government opened a contraband village across the river in the bottomlands of Arlington, west of the Alexandria canal, where a thousand Negroes raised hay and vegetables for the army. A year later


59 "Reports and Addresses," Documents Relating to Freedmen, 16 Dec 1862, pp. 9-11.
about three thousand more moved there from the northern sections of Washington. But the freedmen in the District continued to occasion uneasiness.

In the first place, government protection could not guarantee black people toleration from some elements of the city. Hoodlums attacked Negroes on the least provocation or none, and the newly formed Washington and Georgetown Street Railroad Company refused to permit them to ride inside its cars until Congress insisted. In the second place, some used their new freedom to turn to thieving and worse, although the crime rate among Negroes was proportionately no higher than among whites. Overcrowding in the quarters the government provided or which contrabands found for themselves, added to their ignorance of elementary hygiene, converted the areas where they dwelt into a series of breeding spots for smallpox and other disease. Living conditions among them deteriorated steadily. "I have visited the freedmen in their cabins," one man wrote in the last year of the war, "their sufferings are most heart rendering. The weather is cold; they have little or no wood. Snow covers the ground; and they have a scanty supply of rags called clothes. The hospital is crowded with the sick... Government gives them a very, very small allowance of soup. Ninety gallons was given yesterday; but what is that to feed

60 First An Rpt, Ntl Freedmen's Relief Assoc, 1863, pp. 1-6; S Ex Dec 53, 38C, 1S, 30 Jun 64, Ser 1176; Daily Chronicle, 14 Aug 63, 31 May 64; Star, 22 May, 14 Dec 63, 14 Jul 64.

61 Daily Chronicle, 6, 7 Nov, 5, 9, 15 Dec 62, 7 Jan, 19 Feb, 9 Apr 63, 2 Mar 65; Republican 3 Jul 62; S Rpt 17, 38C, 1S, 24 Feb 64, Ser 1178; Rot Met Pol Brd, in Rot Sec/Int, 1863, p. 726, Ser 1182; First Anl Rpt Ntl Freedmen's Relief Assoc, 1863, p. 5.
thousands of families... The feeling against them, among many in this place, is bitter malignant, devilish... Many will die."62 Many did die, exactly how many no record told.

Unhappily "the feeling against them" extended to more than contrabands. White attitudes toward all Negroes became progressively more hostile from mid-1862 onward as apprehensions grew about what Congress would next force upon the unrepresented District and as its cities saw the proportion of colored in the population rising constantly. The commissioners appointed to carry out the terms of the emancipation act had encountered little obstructionism, partly because they were conscientious and tactful, partly because Congress had after all provided compensation for slave owners, but probably chiefly because citizens had recognized the ultimate, if not the immediate, rightness of the law. But emancipation, many people feared, was only a beginning. Indeed repeal of the District black code had followed almost at once. In July 1862, a committee of the House reported that as the legal barriers established by slavery disappeared, "the prejudice of caste becomes stronger and public opinion more intolerant to the negro."63 White supremacy had been a basic social premise in the District too long to be discarded painlessly. The measures that crystallized white resentment were the colored school laws and the army's enlisting of colored troops.

The act of May 1862 requiring the cities and the county to open

62 The National Freedman, I, No. 2, 1 March 1865, p. 60.

63 Star, 22 May 62; Rpt of Select Committee on Emancipation, H Rpt 1148, 370, 25, 16 Jul 62, Ser 1145.
public schools for colored children shocked the community initially, but then went down rather easily. The 30% illiteracy among free colored adults before the war, then only 7 percent higher than among whites, had climbed to no one what figure after the freeing of slaves and the coming of contrabands, until white people could see the wisdom of helping Negro education, if only because an ignorant colored population, no longer restrained by the black code, would be an intolerable danger to society.64

The law provided for financing colored schools by setting aside for that purpose ten percent of the taxes paid by Negroes, an arrangement that saved white people's pockets. The city councils could be counted on to prevent the admission of Negroes to white public schools, a separate Board of Trustees of the Colored Schools, appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, relieved the white School Board of further administrative responsibilities.65 In the eyes of local conservatives, so far so good. Congress had apparently believed that Negroes owned $650,000 of real estate in the District, ten percent of the taxes on which would amount to nearly $3600 yearly, enough to start a primary school system. But neither Washington nor Georgetown kept separate records of white and colored taxes, and city officials merely allotted what they thought just to the Trustees of the Colored Schools - Washington $265 in 1862 and $410 in 1863, Georgetown nothing in 1862, $70 the next year. These sums were too small to answer.66

64 Eighth Census, 1860, Population, p. 508.
The American Tract Society of New York had started a free school for contrabands in the spring of 1862. Soon afterward the National Freedmen's Relief Association had opened two evening schools and eighteen months later a day school on the Island. By March 1864 the Association had five Negro schools in operation, taught largely by volunteers holding their classes in church basements and halls. That March the Trustees of the Colored Schools, having accumulated money enough to engage a teacher at $400 a year, opened the first colored public school in the Ebenezer Church southeast of the Capitol. A hundred colored adults and children immediately tried to enroll, but one teacher and an inexperienced assistant could not handle so many and had to turn some away. The Freedmen's Relief Association and other groups of philanthropists then redoubled their efforts. Government employees offered to teach evening classes, and in the course of a few weeks nearly eight hundred adults and children were learning to read. By summer the newly formed Association of Volunteer Teachers of Colored Schools reported twelve classes taught by thirty-two persons. Privately sponsored schools, however, did not build the tax-supported system Congress had instructed the city corporations and the Levy Court of the county to establish.

The second colored school law sought to put teeth into the first: each city was to pay over to the Trustees of the Colored Schools the same proportion of the total school funds as the number of Negro children.

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between the ages of six and seventeen bore to the number of white children in those age brackets; to ease the financial strain, the United States courts of the District were to pay into the school fund all money accruing from fines and forfeitures, a quarter of it to go to the colored schools of the county, a quarter to colored schools of Washington and Georgetown.68 Certainly a more effective law than that of 1862 was needed to prod the corporations into action. But if some enlightened residents admitted that necessity, many more indignantly dubbed this particular act unwarranted coercion of loyal Union supporters, an interference foreshadowing other forms of arbitrary social regulation. Where would Congressional demands upon the unrepresented citizens of the District end?

Their anger was not entirely unjustified. The Trustees of the Colored Schools themselves observed that the propertyless new freedmen increased educational needs without increasing the city's revenues,69 Colored people's taxes in Washington according to official records, amounted to 2% of white's, the colored school population to perhaps 50% of white. Washington spent yearly a fifth of her revenues for public education, and still the thirty-six classrooms of 1862 could accommodate only a fraction of the city's children. Among those who attended, moreover, were children of federal employees who paid no local taxes. From the Ordinance of 1787 onward, the government had given every territory and state huge tracts of federal lands to support public schools but had never contributed a penny to schools in the District of Columbia. The sums now

69 H Misc Doc 18, 38C, 1S, 11 Mar 64, Ser 1200.
obtainable from fines promised to be a drop in the bucket that Washington and Georgetown taxpayers must fill. Citizens felt, and with reason, that senators and representatives were enacting legislation for the District which they would not dare propose for their home states and leaving the local community to pay the costs of educating black people who were properly a federal charge. 

The city councils consequently continued to delay the payments due the colored schools; in March 1865 only $628 out of a total school fund of nearly $25,000 went to Negro schools. At the end of the war colored schools in the county still existed only on paper. Everywhere in the District resentment flared at Congress, at newcomers who, without stake in the community, criticized local attitudes, and at the intended beneficiaries of the Congressional acts; property-owners told themselves that but for the invasion of blacks the District would have escaped many problems that peace would not solve.

The decision in the spring of 1863 to recruit Negro troops was a second, though shorter-lived, irritant in race relations. The plan grew out of the District's difficulties in meeting its quota for the army in 1862 when President Lincoln had called for 300,000 volunteers. The councils of Washington had voted $50,000 for bounties, $50 for each man

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72 Star, 25 Jan, 22, 27, 28 May, 3 Jun 62; Special Rpt Comm Education 1871, pp. 264-69.
enlisting, but bounty-jumping and "a stampede among the foreign element," had increased the costs to $100,000; the price of substitutes that November reportedly had run as high as $1000 a man. Therefore, as the 1863 draft became imminent, official disapproval of enlisting Negroes yielded to expediency. Whites who were not themselves responsible for raising the draft were horrified, fearful apparently lest colored troops inspire "uppityness" in all colored people.73 Although recruiting agents encountered "serious and sometimes violent opposition,"74 before mid-1863 two companies of colored troops were mustered in and encamped on Analostan Island, once the home of James Mason, formerly slave-owning United States Senator from Virginia and later Confederate emissary to Great Britain. The island location safeguarded the recruits from white hostility but demonstrations against colored civilians occurred more than once. Hatred of colored people, the Star observed that summer, was growing. Only the lag in recruitment of the District's draft quota, 3863 men to be drawn from its 19,327 males between the ages of twenty and forty-five, wore away the objections of prejudiced whites. By 1864 "substitute brokers" offering a bounty first of $30 and later of $150 a man were advertising for colored recruits and, with or without official connivance, were taking Negro prisoners from the county jail to fill the quotas.75 All told, in

73 Star, 29 Jul, 7, 9 Aug 62, 22 May 63; Journal 63rd Council, p. 189; Daily Chronicle, 5 Nov 62, 8, 16 May 63; Baltimore Sun, 16 May 63.

74 H Rpt 80, 38C, 1S, 13 May 64, Ser 1206.

the course of the war the District furnished to the Union forces 3,269 colored and 13,265 white men.76

The aristocracy among the colored people, families who had been free before the war and who had some education or property, behaved with dignity throughout. But they paid the price for the freeing of slaves by finding themselves lumped with ignorant, incompetent blacks as "niggers."

When Negro leaders from northern cities met in Washington to celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of the founding of the Grand United Order of Colored Odd Fellows, a guard of the second District Regiment had to accompany the parade to "quell any outbreak."77 Partly because of the endless humiliations they faced, 2,500 Negroes petitioned Congress in the spring of 1864 to enfranchise them. They quoted the Declaration of Independence and stated that "a large portion of the colored citizens of the District are property holders," unfortunately a gross exaggeration as the tax books showed. "The experience of the Past," continued the petition, "teaches that all reforms have their opponents; but ... apprehensions of evils arising from reforms founded, in justice are scarcely, if ever realized."78 Although again exaggerating the figures, probably the signers' most telling argument was the number of Negro troops who served from the District. Congress tabled the petition.

76 Rpt Sec/War, 1863, pp. 55, 134-36, Ser 1181; Rpt Board of Colored Troops, H Ex Doc 1, 39C, 1S, p. 58, Ser 1249; Dyer's Compendium, p. 11; Final Rpt Provost Marshal Gen, H Ex Doc 1, 39C, 1S, pp. 69, 76, Ser 1251.

77 Star, 5 Jun 62, 9 Oct 63; Daily Chronicle 6 Jun 64.

The shift in white attitudes from acceptance of Negroes as servants to dislike and undefined fear of them as future fellow citizens had evil consequences for the entire community, for mutual distrust contributed to the worsening of relations with Congress. Among leaders of the Republican Party conviction was growing that suppression of the rebellion, because it meant eradication of the slave power, also meant new status for Negroes. Hence, little by little the idea gained ground that anyone devoted to the Union cause must endorse a program of rights for colored people.

From this premise radicals reached the conclusion that anyone prepared to uphold the doctrine of white supremacy was probably anti-Union. No one, it is true, put the case so baldly; to have done so would have alienated moderates throughout the North and enraged the border states. And the war was not yet won. But the line of reasoning, whether voiced or not, was clear when it came to the District. Nothing except honest belief or partisan pretense that local antagonism toward Negroes were an expression of secret secessionist sympathy can explain the mounting hostility in Congress toward the people of Washington and Georgetown. In the Senate dissidents to the view prevailing in the last year of the war pointed in vain to the loyal behavior of citizens here; an overwhelming majority of senators voiced doubts by voting for an inquiry into the desirability of forcing every resident to take the "iron clad" loyalty oath.79

Citizens for their part were distrustful of Congress. They were primarily anxious about what men like Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, "Ben" Wade of Ohio and Lot Morrill of Maine would decree for the District

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79 Cong. Globe, 38th, 2d, v. 69, pp. 91-93, 21 Dec 64.
once the war was over. The colored school laws were an omen. Incensed at extremists in Congress and out who appeared to equate anti-Negro with anti-Union sentiment, old residents nevertheless strove to ignore their detractors as long as the war continued. Mayor Wallach contented himself with statements that, despite allegations to the contrary, "our city is true to the great principles which made the capital of the greatest nation on earth." But the Intelligencer, as a Democratic paper, refused to be silent. Withholding comment on the city council's ruling that all public school teachers must take the loyalty oath, in 1862 the editor objected strongly to a Congressional act requiring voters challenged at the polls in local elections to take the oath or lose their votes. That restrictive law, he argued, singled out local citizens unfairly, since they had abundantly proven their loyalty and, in proportion to their numbers, had supplied more soldiers to the Union army than had many of the states. The Star, having estimated that about 600 men from the District were serving in the Confederate army, was at first readier to admit the propriety of special acts to protect the capital from "secessionist sympathizers and agents," but by 1863 the Star also was taking offense at the impugning of the loyalty of the city as a whole. By then most southern sympathizers

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80 Star, 22 May 62, 1 Apr 63; Intelligencer, 2 Apr 63.
82 Star, 31 May, 3 Jun, 2 Aug 62. Whereas local papers during the first two years of the war carried countless notices of arrests for seditious talk or deeds, by August 1863 the number had dropped sharply. Throughout the war, a very small percentage of the people arrested had ever been listed in local directories as residents of the District.
were in jail or had departed to more congenial communities, leaving the District to Unionists, to professional spies from the South, to a few elderly householders clinging to the past, and to a handful of unscrupulous contraband runners unable to resist the money to be made in trade with the enemy. The Star quoted General McClellan: "I have never thought that sufficient justice has been done to the citizens of Washington in regard to your loyalty but history will do you justice as your own consciences do now." The editor rebuked the Chronicle, that self-appointed champion of the administration, for persuading newcomers to believe all Washingtonians outwardly pro Union for the sake of feathering their nests. The Baltimore Sun in turn scored the Chronicle for contending that opponents of its chosen candidates for city office were all "secesh." Washington voters, the Sun pointed out, preferred to elect men long known in the city; new arrivals were too prone to be "pro-colored" to find favor with the electorate.

The Chronicle, on the other hand, sniped constantly: Washington's political leaders had been "jobbing, shiftless, inefficient;" she was a city virtually captured from her rebel inhabitants and thus properly subject to the punitive measures the Union army employed in the South; instead of sanctioning the Attorney General's refusal to accept newspapers as "witnesses and public rumor proof" of collaboration with the enemy, the government should waive legalities and immediately confiscate the "vast amount" of rebel property in Washington. Such opinions might not have

83 Ibid., 16 May 63.
84 Ibid., 11 May, 2 Jun 63; Baltimore Sun, 2 May 63.
troubled citizens but for the circumstance that the owner of the Chronicle, John Forney, was secretary of the United States Senate, had obtained for his papers the official advertising of government departments and might be speaking for the majority in Congress. Forney, moreover, published the only Sunday newspaper in Washington. When Confederate troops under General Early swept up to Washington's outer defenses in the summer of 1864, the Chronicle declared the raid showed "a very considerable proportion of the population here and in Georgetown ... cognizant of, longing for, and many of them facilitating, the coming of the rebels." The accusation was disturbing, for if Forney truly reflected official views, Congress might seek a terrible revenge.

Meanwhile, more immediate than worries about the post-war fate of the District were the problems of keeping the cities functioning during the disruptions of war. Policing and supervising health were no longer city responsibilities, save for paying a share of the costs, but other tasks remained, - maintaining and lighting the streets, fighting fires, collecting water fees and extending the mains, cleaning the canal and laying sewers, supervising the collection of ofal and garbage, expanding the school system, providing help for the needy in the mushrooming population and, finally, raising taxes to meet the increasing burden. If neither city displayed great efficiency in handling these demands, neither had had forewarning of what the war would bring, and neither had had experience with problems of such magnitude. And Councilman Alexander Shepherd pointed out, Washington's charter granted her too limited powers to effect the "imperatively necessary" improvements.

86 Daily Chronicle, 18 Jul 64.
87 Journal 61st Council, 29 Jun 63, p. 25.
Probably no other one discomfort was so annoying to both residents and visitors in war-time Washington as the condition of the streets. The city, discouraged by the eighty-foot width of the narrowest public way, had paved only short stretches, and the federal government felt it had done its duty in cobbling Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to 6th street and a small section about the Capitol. Slush, mud and dust had always marked the seasons on Washington's thoroughfares, but in ante-bellum days traffic had been light and people managed without extreme inconvenience. Now as Washington turned into a huge army supply depot, heavily laden wagon trains lumbering through the city cut the streets into ribbons, making "fearful canals of mud" in wet weather and raising suffocating clouds of dust in summer. The hooves of thousands of horses, mules and cattle thudding by toward the army corrals and slaughter houses completed the work of destruction. To avoid the muck in the roads, teamsters and cavalrymen rode on the sidewalks and thus demolished the footways too. To clean streets in such condition was all but hopeless. The filth accumulating on the main avenues and in every alley bred swarms of flies and vermin. The White House itself was overrun with rats.88

Taxpayers believed that the government, because responsible for the damage, should pay for repairs. The city experimented briefly with laying rubble pavements and spent sizable sums on grading and gravelling, but half-measures were useless, and Congress gave no help. Despairing property-

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88 See above Ch. 5, op. ; Rpts Comr Pub Bldgs in Rpts Sec/Int, 1862, p. , Ser 1157, 1863, p. 661, Ser 1162, and 1864, Ser 1220; Star, 1 Oct, 28 Nov 62; Daily Chronicle, 26 Jan 63, 3 Mar 65; Petition, S37A-H7, 6 Jun 62.
owners along Pennsylvania Avenue subscribed to funds for hiring sprinkling
carts to lay the dust and talked of engaging an engineer at their own
expense to supervise paving, draining, cleaning and watering the Avenue.

When the inventor of a new street sweeper demonstrated his machine on
the Avenue and, with the help of fifteen carts and a hundred contrabands,
removed "several thousand loads of dirt to the United States public
grounds," the city hoped that Congress would continue the work. But
Congress, although it voted in 1864 to share the cost of improving streets
adjacent to federal property, made no appropriation for the purpose, and
an amendment to Washington's charter authorizing the corporation to assess
the costs of improvements on owners of abutting property did not pay their
bills. The only aid the government gave was the assignment of contrabands
to repairing New York avenue and an appropriation in 1863 for lighting
the streets most essential to government transport.89

Everyone welcomed gas lights about the Capitol and the White House
grounds, along Pennsylvania Avenue near the government offices, on the
three main streets crossing the Mall, along Maryland avenue and 6th street
on the Island, in Georgetown on Bridge and High streets, and all at
government expense. But city officials, while recognizing the need of many
more street lights to protect "persons and property against violence and
crime," were troubled over the cost of gas. The councils proposed forming

89 Star, 21 Jan, 15 Apr, 4, 28 Nov 62, 10 Feb, 6 Mar, 27 Apr 63;
Baltimore Sun, 21 May 63; Daily Chronicle, 26 Jan, 4 May, 14 Jul, 10 Aug,
13 Dec 63; 11 Jun 64; Petitions, 538A-H6, 28 Nov 63, 28 Mar, 30 Apr 64,
3 Feb 65; Rpt Comr Pub Bldgs, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1864, pp. 685-86, Ser 1220;
Journal 63rd Council, p. 171; Ltr, Mayor Wallach to Sec/Int, Nov 65, in
Rpt Sec/Int, 1865, pp. 856-82, Ser 1243.
a new company to compete with the Washington Gas Light Company, petitioned Congress to forbid the established company to raise its prices and, in 1864, pled for permission to organize and run municipal gas works.

Balked in these endeavors, the city abandoned attempts to light the city properly until the war ended. The one noticeable change was the replacement of the finger board street markers with signs on the glass of lamps already standing.\(^{90}\)

On fire protection the city did better, after disasters in 1861 had awakened the community and the War Department to the cost of inadequate service and equipment. Two severe fires occurred at the end of August 1861, when members of most of the volunteer Hose and Ladder companies were on military service, leaving only the Franklin Hose Company to answer the call.

In November the Washington Infirmary on Judiciary Square, which had become a military hospital, burned to the ground, and seven weeks later another terrible fire occurred at the Army corrals between 21st and 22nd streets near the river. The pine boarding of wagon sheds, stables and fences blazed fiercely, and frightened, stampeding horses bolted into the streets and scattered through the city. Obviously volunteers and hand pumps no longer sufficed. The Quartermaster General purchased the first steam engine to operate in Washington in April 1862 and the next year another to protect the army repair shops six blocks beyond the White House and a third for the railroad "park" and warehouses in Swampoodle. The city moved more slowly, first persuading the eight separate Hose and Hook

and Ladder companies to act under the direction of a single chief, in
1864 establishing a salaried department, and then buying fire engines.91

But new equipment and better organization of fire fighting failed to save the
Smithsonian Institute from an irreparable loss in February, 1865. Fire
destroyed two collections of Indian paintings, the first a series of portraits
by Charles Bird King made of a period of years when tribal chieftains were
visiting the capital, the other canvasses painted in the west by John Stanley
whose portrayals of Indian life were on loan to the Government.91a

point dangerous alike to health and to property. The war delayed work on
laying the nine miles of conduit from the Great Falls to the receiving
reservoir, partly because the river, bordering upon enemy country, lay
open to raids, and partly because Congress transferred the task in 1862
from the experienced Army Engineer Corps to the Department of the Interior.

But at last, on December 3, 1863, the civilian engineer in charge announced
the conduit finished and turned the Potomac water into the reservoir. Two
days later federal and local officials celebrated the great occasion with
an expedition to the Great Falls followed by an "evening dinner" and
speeches at the Willard Hotel. Unfortunately, within ten days leaks in
the conduit necessitated shutting off the water and, before repairs were
finished, appropriations gave out. June 1864 found Washington and George-
town with thousands of sick and wounded in the military hospitals, an
acute water shortage, and what little water there was of "indifferent"
purity. Congress hastily passed a new appropriation, and the conduit was
reopened late in July. While the Chief Engineer urged the building of a

91 Star, 31 Aug, 4 Nov 61, 15 Apr, 9 Jun, 20 Sep, 15 Nov, 9, 31
Dec 62, 24 Jul 63, 11 Feb 64; Petition, S37A-H7, 27 Feb 63; Journal 61st
Council, 26 Oct 63, pp. 212-14, 28 Dec 63, p. 310, 4 Apr 64, p. 118;

permanent dam to replace the makeshift at the Great Falls, city consumers rejoiced at having daily some ten million gallons of water on tap in the midst of a three-month drought. Some sections of Washington still lacked "Potomac" water, but a number of householders who formerly had to pump water by hand from their own cisterns could now pipe Potomac water into their kitchens and wash rooms. And adequate pressure at street hydrants made fire fighting easier.92

Now that the water supply appeared ample, the question immediately arose of whether extension of sewerage lines to localities still dependent upon privies and scavengers would overload the capacity of the Washington canal. Seven lines already emptied into the canal, and from 12th street to the debouchment at 17th street the drop in level was only six inches. The councils debated the problem, the federal Commissioner of Public Buildings exhorted, citizens signed petitions, and, letters to the newspapers offered advice, but, beyond discussion and a request to Congress to dredge clean the canal, the city fathers did nothing. Scavengers continued to make the rounds.93

A comprehensive program of physical improvements was impossible to undertake during the war, but the war itself forced Washington to expand...
her white school system. In 1860, before Northerners had flooded into Washington, perhaps 10,000 of the District's white children over six years of age had never attended a school; some 4000 were enrolled in private schools and academies, 2300 in the public schools of Washington, a few hundred in Georgetown and none in the county. Consequently when the colored school law of 1862 passed, it contained a clause requiring three months' schooling yearly for every child in the District between the ages of six and fourteen, whether black, white or mixed. Ignoring the law, Georgetown and the county for the time being did nothing; expensive innovations could wait. Washington, on the other hand, while grumbling over lack of federal aid for so much as a high school, made an effort. The school fund rose from $41,000 in 1862 to $64,000 in 1864 before the city obtained any money from federal court fines. The dollar capitation tax, because paid only by men who actually voted at the polls, brought in less than $7500 a year.94 Newcomers in Washington, particularly those who paid only the poll tax, criticized the city councils for spending money for a superintendent of schools instead of building a high school. Yet unified supervision of the schools was itself a need. The school trustees continued to conduct the annual examinations of pupils and to select the teachers, but the able Superintendent, James Ormond Wilson, made his influence count. Probably it was his argument rather than the dictates of economy that persuaded the trustees to restore the Christmas

94 Eighth Census, 1860, Mortality and Miscellaneous Statistics, pp. 351, 506, and Population, p. 586; Star, 9 Jun 1862; Song Globe, 38C, 28, 10 Jan 61, p. 322; Spec Rpt Comm Educ, 1871, pp. 53-56; Daily Chronicle, 7 Jun 64, p. 2; Anl Rpt of the Register, Patriot, 22 Nov 70.
week holiday after they had limited school vacations to Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, Washington's birthday, Good Friday, the 4th of July, and the six weeks from the 15th of July to the first Monday in September. But neither superintendent nor school board could meet the new demands. To provide badly needed schoolrooms, the city councils imposed a new tax earmarked for building and, using the $10,000 yearly income, erected four new school houses between 1863 and 1865. Limiting enrollment to children of "bona fide" residents of Washington eased the pressure further, but space was still lacking for three-quarters of the population of school age. The dearth of teachers was an even greater obstacle to expansion. Sixty-odd men and women could not teach ten thousand children, and, as living costs rose in Washington, the salary scale of $300 to $500 prevented recruitment of staff. Ditch diggers earned almost as much. Under these circumstances, the compulsory school attendance clause of the federal law remained a dead letter for whites as for blacks.95

The care of the poor and infirm might have been more difficult than providing schools had the United States government not continued to shoulder part of the load. Federal funds, at first spent at the Washington infirmary and later paid over to the sisters of the Providence Hospital, still met the costs of nursing ailing "transient paupers." The Government Hospital for the Insane relieved the District of responsibility for the mentally ill, and the Columbia Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, which government

and individual gifts largely financed, further lightened municipal obligations. In 1862 Congress incorporated the Guardian Society to care for homeless children who had come under the wing of the Orphans Court.

Federal money contributed to the support of contrabands too old or too ill to work, and the intervention of the Secretary of War, jogged by people like Elizabeth Peabody of Boston, enabled the National Freedmen's Relief Association to open a contraband orphan asylum, located, ironically enough, in the residence of Richard Cox, ardent Southerner and secessionist, a former mayor of Georgetown, whose property the government confiscated when he joined the Confederate army. However much old residents disliked the inundation of freedmen, humanity forbade letting them starve, and, but for federal aid, the District cities knew they would have had to feed them. Private philanthropy also helped, some, like the contributions to the Freedmen's Relief, aimed at emergency war-time needs, some of it, like the funds for the St. Vincent's and Washington orphan asylums, directed to perennial wants. In addition to church groups and societies such as the Newsboys Aid and the Colored Benevolent Association, individual charity sought to lighten the widespread misery.96

The Washington Asylum and the Georgetown Poorhouse, which before the war had fed, housed, clothed and provided medical attention for about 1500 "paupers" every year, in turn carried a larger burden as the war

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96 See Rpts Supt Govt Hospital for the Insane and Pres and Bd of Trustees Columbia Institution for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, in Rpts Sec/Int, 1861-65, Sers. 1117, 1157, 1182, 1220 and 1246; Cong Globe, 37th, 2n, 21 Jun 62, pp. 26-28; Spec Rpt Comr Education, 1861, pp. 225-37; Star, 9 Dec 61, 21 Dec 63; Intelligencer, 12 Jun 61, 1 Apr 63; Petitions, S38A-H3, S38A-H6.
went on. Besides supplying institutional care, every winter the Washington
councils voted money to be spent at the discretion of the mayor and the
Superintendent of the Poor in furnishing fuel to needy citizens. Periodically the city allotted sums for other forms of direct relief. By later
standards, both Washington's and Georgetown's welfare undertakings were
haphazard and ineffectual, but neither had New York, Philadelphia, Boston
or smaller American cities as yet evolved any sound public welfare system,
and charity organization societies were still unknown.97

As municipal wants multiplied, so also did the cost of supplying
them. Extreme economy in the first year of the war had cut the city's
floating debt in half, to $89,000, and the councils, reluctant to sacri-
fice that gain, tried for a time to eke out income by collecting from
the Washington & Alexandria Railroad the interest due on its bonds, an
unsuccessful attempt, since the government had commandeered the road.
Prices of materials and labor rose steadily, while new sources of revenue
remained few. In making a free gift of the right of way to the Washington
& Georgetown Street Railroad Company, Congress in 1862 denied the cities
the profits of selling a valuable franchise. By 1864, on top of a federal
income tax, local tax rates had increased to $1.00 on every $1.00 of assessed
valuation, and even then Washington's yearly income was less than $1,200,000,
too little to maintain, let alone widen, community services and still pay
out of current revenue over $100,000 in bounties. Merely to extend the

97 Eighth Census, 1860, Mortality and Misc. Statistics, p. 512;
Enumerators' Returns, 1860, Social Statistics; Star, 25 Jun 61, 21 Jan,
15 Apr, 21 Oct 62, 3 Mar 63; Daily Chronicle, 17 Mar 63; Journal 61st
and 62nd Councils, passim.
water mains into every section of the city would cost $1,000,000 at a
time when water fees netted the corporation $14,000. To forestall still
higher taxes, during 1864 citizens raised money by private subscription
for soldiers' bounties and for the hire of substitutes. But city revenues
continued to lag so far behind needs that the councils, shutting their
eyes to the future, passed bill after bill for improvements without making
provision to pay for them. In alarm Mayor Wallach asserted that the public
works approved in the last year of the war would consume Washington's
entire revenue for two years to come; yet, he admitted, "We are woefully
deficient in charitable and reformatory institutions." Federal officials
showed little sympathy. On the contrary, the Secretary of the Interior
declared that Washington had a lower tax rate and lighter obligations
than any city he knew: no state government to support, few charities to
maintain and virtually no courts to pay for; her dilatoriness about under-
taking needed improvements was a device for saddling the burden upon
Congress.\textsuperscript{98}

These municipal troubles were mere pinpricks, however, as long as
the Army of the Potomac, under McDowell and then McClellan, under Burnside,
Meade and then Grant, was fighting the Confederate army in nearby Virginia
and Maryland. From the secession of Virginia in April 1861 to General
Early's raid in July 1864, fears for the safety of the capital rose and

\textsuperscript{98} Eighth Census, 1860, Mortality and Misc Statistics, pp. 317, 511;
Journal 61st Council, 31 Aug 63, p. 116, 1 Feb 64, p. 317, Feb 64, p. 386,
398; Journal 62nd Council, 1 Aug 64, pp. 1-6, 31 Oct 64, p. 12, 20 Mar 65,
pp. 2-3; Journal 63rd Council, 26 Jun 65, p. 19, 11 Sep 65, p. 139; Journal
64th Council, 25 Jun 65, p. 30; Star, 2 May, 21 Jun, 29 Jul 62, 13 Nov,
3 Dec 63; Daily Chronicle, 5 Nov 62, 23 Jul, 1, 3, 20, 22, 23 Sep, 11 Oct
15 Nov 64; The Patriot, 22 Nov 70; Rpt Sec/Int, 1865, p. 13, Ser 1220.
subsided and rose again at intervals. No one could forget that Washington was a main goal of the enemy, just as was Richmond for the Union. The military took precautions: forty-eight forts ringed the District cities, and a clearing fifteen miles long and a mile and a half wide, cut through the woodlands from the Eastern Branch above the Almshouse to the Potomac at the Chain Bridge, formed a barricade of felled trees designed to prevent surprise attacks. But except for the wounded and ill, during much of the war seasoned soldiers were few in Washington; inexperienced militia and hastily organized companies of government clerks afforded thin protection. In the summer of 1864, when Jubal Early's men in gray marched through Silver Springs, Maryland, and advanced toward Fort Stevens, scarcely five miles above Boundary street, only the arrival of the VI Army Corps rushed up from Petersburg seemingly kept Washington from capture.

Moreover, from the first battle of Bull Run to the end of the war and after, householders unable to perform more than minor services had to see thousands of soldiers no one knew how to save die of wounds and dysentery and typhoid fever. At times, 50,000 men lay in the military hospitals, - "a population", Walt Whitman asserted, "more numerous in itself than the Washington of ten or fifteen years ago." Wounded men filled improvised wards in churches, in St. Elizabeth's rooms at the Insane Asylum, in the halls of the Capitol, and at the Patent Office in passageways between ponderous glass cases crowded with miniature models of inventions. Carts carrying the dead to the cemeteries daily lumbered through the streets.

And in Washington and Georgetown, as throughout the North, beneath anxiety for the Union and for the capital, beneath grief for the dead and the
maimed, fear lay heavy for husbands and sweethearts, sons and brothers still fighting on the war's bloody battlefields.99 Yet amid the anguish of mind and spirit and the physical discomforts in Washington, as the war went on, the capital enjoyed a material prosperity wholly new to the District. Commissary and Quartermaster supplies poured into the city month after month. The government put up new warehouses and built, bought or leased accommodations for offices, hospitals and workshops for repair of military equipment until, by mid 1862, real estate prices had become as inflated as they had been depressed in the first months of the war. New storehouses close to the wharves at the end of 7th street, a huge slaughter-house surrounded by cattle pens on the Monument grounds, wagon sheds and corrals for 30,000 horses and mules, located near the present-day site of the new State Department building, appeared first.

Quarter Master General Montgomery C. Meigs installed part of his staff in the Winder building across 17th street from the War and Navy Department offices and commandeered for his own headquarters the not yet fully completed Corcoran Art Gallery on the northeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th street. Nearby he established harness and wagon repair shops and the principal army clothing depot. In 1863 Giesboro Point, now Bolling Field of the Air Force, became the chief cavalry depot, a locality that permitted shipping by water the 21,600 tons of forage the army of the Potomac needed monthly. From the beginning, the Baltimore & Ohio railroad was

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choked with incoming freight and, in order to move some of it on promptly to the army in northern Virginia, the government laid rails across the Long Bridge. In three and a half years more than 30,000 loaded cars passed over these tracks. By 1862 the Navy Yard was employing 1700 workmen, and by 1863 was building a new foundry. Besides the needs of the Navy Yard and of the Army Quartermaster and Commissary, the requirements of the Surgeon General for the area's twenty-five military hospitals and for the Bureau of Medicine increased the flow of materiel into Washington. Army contractors, men seeking contracts of special favors, and heavy hearted men and women come to inquire for wounded relatives filled the hotels to overflowing; five hundred new arrivals a day came to be a commonplace.100

At first this sudden activity scarcely benefited local residents at all. Contractors in bigger cities continued to supply the army, except for the flour from Georgetown and county mills, and the rentals the government paid for buildings were not high initially. But as the war moved into its second year, Northern business men began to buy Washington real estate at rapidly mounting prices, and new stores and hotels arose. A group of local men bid in vain for a controlling interest in the newly chartered Washington & Georgetown Street Railroad, an enterprise that proved, when the tracks were laid and travel by horsecar became possible, at once a

100 Star, 19 Aug, 5 Nov 61, 6 Feb, 2 Mar 62, 14 Apr, 14 Sep 63; Daily Chronicle, 5 Aug, 7 Sep 63; Rpt Engr Aqueduct, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1861, p. , Ser 1220, S Ex Doc 17, 42C, 2S, 9 Jan 72, Ser 1173; Rpt Commissary Gen'l to Sec/War, 1861, p. 72, Ser 1118; Rpt Director and Gen'l Manager Mil RRs, to Sec/War, 22 May 66, p. 5, Ser 1251.
highly profitable undertaking for the stockholders and a convenience for
people needing to get from Georgetown to the Capitol or down 7th street and
cut to the Navy Yard. Local men then organized the Metropolitan Street
Railway, and its route along F Street to the railroad station further eased
transport within the city. People flooding into Washington created demand
for food, lodging, household wares and clothes. Prices of necessities
rose steadily, lining the pockets of merchants in Washington and Georgetown.
The landlords of the three largest hotels, according to the New York
Express, were clearing between $50,000 and $100,000 a year, and the war was
enriching tailors, stationers, blacksmiths and saddlers, as well as local
contractors for military hardware, mattresses and iron bedsteads. While
Harvey's "fish house" added kettles for steaming oysters to build up its
reputation, Washington supported some 50 other restaurants and bars.
The city corporation in 1863 took in $91,000 in fees for liquor licenses,
whereas $10,000 had been normal before the war. "The inspiration of Northern
ideas and industry," declared the Chronicle, was behind the boom, and
Washington's lackadaisical pre-war leaders must not be allowed hereafter
to blot out the effect of "Northern enterprise and thrift." 101

Permanent residents realized that some of this new business would
vanish at the end of the war, but, encouraged by the growth of the city,
they hoped to preserve some of the gain. Apart from transients, population
doubled between 1861 and 1863, and before 1864, the Metropolitan Police

101 S Ex Doc 17, 326, 28, 9 Jan 72, Ser 1178; Star, 13 Sep 61, 23
Apr, 7, 27, 30 May, 9, 11, 25 Jun, 13 Oct 62, 12, 17, 28 Mar, 25 Nov
quoting New York Express, 6, 31 Dec 63; Daily Chronicle, 3 Nov 62, 1 Jun
63, 22 Feb 61. See also Washington and Georgetown Directories, 1861,
1863 - 1865.
stated, had climbed to 140,000. Postmaster Lewis Clephane declared that
the 60,000 people he had to serve when Lincoln appointed him had become
in two years over a million, counting the soldiers stationed in the
immediate vicinity. While Mayor Wallach boasted that, though manufacturing
in most parts of the country had shrunk, "ours has increased in an almost
inverse ratio," Clephane looked forward to seeing "the banks of the Potomac
above Georgetown lined with manufactories worked by white labor." New indus-
tries in Washington seemingly could develop, making use of the fifty-foot
drop between the Great Falls and the city. Furthermore, for the first
time local banks appeared to be strong enough to finance such ventures.
Riggs and Company had advanced a half million dollars to army contractors
in the first year of the war, Jay Cooke and Company had set up a banking
house on 15th street in early 1862 and, upon the passage of the National
Banking Act of 1863, the First National Bank opened in Washington, its
capital $500,000 and its president Henry D. Cooke, brother of that financial
wizard, Jay Cooke; in 1864 the Merchants' National Bank got a charter.
Available capital, enormous power potential and growing local demand all
seemed to promise a future for manufacturing. Only skilled labor was scarce,
and demobilization of the army eventually should meet that want.102

Not everybody profited. Skilled workmen commanded unheard-of wages,
merchants with stock bought cheap could sell at fabulous markups, and real
estate brokers made killings, but petty tradesmen without credit, common

102 Star, 5 Feb, 4, 9 Jun 62, 2 Apr, 20 May, 30 Sep, 23 Dec 63;
Intelligencer, 2 Nov 61; Rpt Sec/Int, 1864, p. 15, Ser 1220.
laborers and people on salaries suffered, while families who had depended on income from the South or from the hire of their slaves faced real want.\textsuperscript{103} A first difficulty grew out of the federal suspension of specie payments. As long as the government paid its employees in coin, the Congressional act of 1854 forbidding circulation in the District of notes of less than \$5 denomination occasioned no hardship, but when clerks received their pay in greenbacks, tradesmen unable to make change were forced to accept the small notes issued by state banks, paper of depreciated or uncertain value and easily counterfeited. After 1863 the National Banking Act and issue of small Treasury greenbacks largely wiped out that hazard, but as prices rose higher, the person without capital to buy in quantity found his resources running behind his needs.

By the President's order, work on the Capitol had resumed in August 1861, in 1862 construction of an extension to the Treasury began, and, from 1862 on, the Superintendent of the Aqueduct needed day laborers. Still, unskilled workmen, particularly freedmen, faced seasonal layoffs during which the cost of necessities rose again. Semiskilled and skilled workmen earning from $2 to $3.50 a day used the weapon of the strike to get pay increases, shorter hours, or both, but the common laborer paid $1.25 a day rarely dared risk revolt. Gentle people who had never before had to earn their livings, and ministers, clerks and teachers with fixed salaries and appearances to maintain, these above all, felt the pinch.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{103} See above, Ch. VI, p.

\textsuperscript{104} Petition, S37A-H7, 17 Jan, 13 Feb 62; S Ex Doc 65, 37C 28, 24 Jun 62, Ser 1122; Star, 1 Feb 62, 12 Oct, 2, 3, 24, 25, 30 Nov 63; Intelligencer, 8 Mar 62; Sunday Chronicle, 29 Nov 63.
Inflation brought misery to every town in America, but the sudden growth of demand, military priorities and the loss of easy access to former sources of supply heightened the problem in Civil-War Washington. Foodstuffs, housing and fuel sufficient for 60,000 could not feed and shelter 140,000 people. By 1863 living quarters were at such a premium that a number of "meritorious mechanics" moved their families across the Eastern Branch opposite the Navy Yard to build up Uniontown. Shanties sprang up in Washington and Georgetown alleyways where ex-slaves lived in squalor, while in the swampy land near the Long Bridge huts made of scrap lumber, tar paper and odd bits of junk housed another settlement of freedmen. Produce and coal, before the war shipped down the C & O canal and across the aqueduct canal into Alexandria and then back by barge to Washington, could no longer take that inexpensive route once the army had transformed the aqueduct canal into a military bridge; instead, cargoes had to be unloaded in Georgetown and carted thence into Washington, since Georgetown, in order to maintain her monopoly on canal traffic, had carefully built her bridges too low to give canal boats direct access to the river. Living costs reached such a figure that citizens held mass meetings to discuss forming a Consumers' Protective Association for cooperative buying. Government employees at one point organized a Clerks' Emigration Society when investigation showed prices in Baltimore well below those in Washington; meat that sold in Baltimore at 15 cents a pound cost 20 cents in Washington, coal, wood and flour at $8 in Baltimore cost $10 here, houses such as rented in Baltimore at $200 cost $400 - all told, the difference between $940 a year and $1333, which, even adding $125 a year for railroad fare to commute, made a move to Baltimore an economy. Nothing, however, stopped
the upward spiral of living costs in the District. Reputable citizens fell behind on their taxes, and landlords could not always collect their rents. In the summer of 1864, flour went up to $20 a barrel, potatoes to $5 a bushel and butter to 70 cents a pound. Only the end of the war promised relief. 105

Nevertheless, this bloodiest, bitterest war ever fought by the United States changed every-day routines very little. Georgetown Seminary and Columbian College enrolled fewer students than formerly, but men not in the army generally carried on their usual pursuits. Children trudged to school or played noisily at home. Women ran their households, carried their baskets of food home from the market houses and sewed for the men serving their country. Foreign ministers dined out and sent their governments dispatches estimating the Union's chances of survival. Carpenters and bricklayers labored to complete the extension of the Treasury. Stonemasons pushed forward work on that symbol of national strength, the new dome of the Capitol, until on December 2, 1863, while cannon boomed from every fort about Washington, Thomas Crawford's bronze Freedom, hoisted by huge pulleys, rose to her place on top of the dome's crowning cupola.

Mathematicians at the National Observatory continued their investigations of the heavenly bodies, after 1863 men appointed to the new National Academy of Science prepared studies on subjects ranging from the solar spectrum to the quality of whiskey the Navy issued sailors. Joseph Henry,

gifted head of the Smithsonian, sponsored balloon ascensions for the army and in experimenting with improvements in lighthouse lamps, opened himself to accusations of signalling to the enemy from the red sandstone turrets of the Smithsonian. Lecturers engaged by the Washington Scientific Association, the newly founded YMCA, or some of the churches, held forth on geography and morals, on abolitionism, temperance and ancient civilizations. Life went on.

And because anxiety and pain and death were too omnipresent not to ignore, a hectic gaiety prevailed. Well-to-do families who had always spent the summers at "different watering places of more northern climes" stayed in Washington, but compensated by making the most of the city's entertainments. The newspapers, abetting the universal wish to forget the present, gave almost as much space to amusements as to serious local affairs. Troubled businessmen, visitors, soldiers on leave or the President himself, attended Ford's or Grover's or Nixon's or the Washington theatre, where plays for every taste appeared - Macbeth and Othello, Pocahontas, The French Boy, Napoleon's Old Guard or melodrama like Six Degrees of Crime advertised as illustrating "with absorbing power, the progress towards ruin of INTEMPERANCE, LICENTIOUSNESS, GAMBLING, THEFT, MURDER, and the SCAFFOLD." The popular young John Wilkes Booth made his last formal stage appearance at Ford's theatre in The Apostate. Fifteen months after the repeal of the Black Code, the owner of Grover's theatre added a gallery with seats marked off for colored people; formerly Negroes had been forbidden the streets after 9 in the evening. Variety shows and

106 Star, 10, 12 Feb 62, 2 Dec 63; H Ex Doc 66, 38C, 23, 13 Feb 65, Ser 1229;
circuses - in 1862 Nixon's and P.T. Barnum's at the same time - offered other diversion. The Burns' Club celebrated "Bobby's birthday," a group of young men formed the Washington Literary Society, and the Union Chess Club organized. Sporting men raced their horses along E street near the old Congressional Cemetery and, when the police arrested them for reckless driving, opened a "trotting course" across the river adjacent to the Government Hospital for the Insane. Interest in baseball also revived, with the "Nationals" using the old Potomac grounds for their games. Despite attempts of temperance societies to ban liquor, hotel barrooms, dance halls, and less reputable places catered nightly to a large clientele. An opera company came every season, and concerts were frequent. Adeline Patti made her first Washington appearance in the old Baptist church on 10th street. Although the Star commented with vast amusement on "Professor" Scala's choosing to play the Marseillaise, "the French revolutionary air," to welcome the Imperial "Prince Napoleon" to Washington, the Marine Band concerts were unfailingly popular. During each spring and summer the Band played regularly on the Capitol grounds and in the "President's Park" about the White House after the President took up summer residence at the Soldiers' Home. Now and again parades and reviews of troops took place. Spectators enjoyed watching the new battalion of mounted "Lancers" ride through the streets, each trooper carrying a 12-foot black spear with a small red pennant at its tip, a form of weapon that won the battalion the name "Turkey Drivers." Military reviews were often impressive. On one occasion the ranks of soldiers stretched from the Eastern Branch near the Marine Barracks and the Almshouse westward over the plain for
more than two miles.  

Official Washington went through the motions of festivity. Ladies dressed in wide, tiered, hoopskirted dresses called upon each other punctiliously, sat in the House and Senate galleries to applaud fiery speeches, and gave supper parties after the day's business ended about 9 o'clock.

The marriage of Kate Chase, handsome daughter of the wealthy Secretary of the Treasury, to Senator Sprague of Rhode Island was a special event; the bride wore a "magnificent tiara on her head studded with diamonds."

Although, until the war was nearly over, celebrations of Union victories and national holidays were restrained, the President set an example of burying personal grief; while his son Willie lay at death's door with typhoid, he gave a formal reception at the White House. Ex-Mayor Berret was a guest. Mailliard of New York catered, decorating the tables with spun sugar helmets, American frigates and goddesses of liberty. Eleven-year old Willie died a fortnight later.

Rumors of international intrigue also created moments of interest, if only because people could exercise their imaginations unimpeded by much information. District residents were elated over the seemingly friendly gesture of Imperial Russia when four vessels of the Russian fleet anchored in the Potomac above Alexandria. Men angered by British dalliance with the Confederacy early in the war doubtless felt special gratification at Lord Lyons' eventual recall, though it occurred three years after the

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British minister had reportedly threatened to break off diplomatic relations in a brusque demand: "Passports or Mason and Slidell," a reference to the Confederate emissaries forcibly removed by an American naval vessel from a British ship on the high seas. When Polish Count Gurowski, employed as a translator in the State Department, published his diary, Washington delightedly read its gossipy pages until, discovering that every public figure sooner or later appeared as a knave or a fool, most readers' malicious amusement gave way to annoyance. Even realization that Confederate spies were always about the city, while a source of alarm, contributed a fillip of pleasurable excitement; wondering how many pedlars of military secrets escaped the vigilance of Colonel Baker and his secret service men scarcely dimmed the satisfaction of knowing that Miss Poole had been caught smuggling $7500 across the lines or that the ample skirts of another "petticoat spy" had concealed a dozen bottles of contraband whiskey. Whatever its anxieties, life in the war-time capital gave residents a sense of being in the thick of stirring events.

By March 1865, with the fall of Petersburg and Richmond drawing near, tensions relaxed slightly in Washington. The Lame Duck session of the 38th Congress closed quietly, the 29th Congress would not convene before fall, and while waiting for good news from Virginia, people let themselves enjoy Lincoln's second inauguration. For the first time organizations of colored citizens took part in the parade. The Inaugural Ball held at the Patent Office turned into a lavish affair. The menu of sixty-five dishes included terrapin stew, "Filet de Beef", "Leg of Veal Fricandeau", grouse, pheasant, pheasant.

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When early April at last brought word of the capture of Richmond, Washington embarked upon wild celebrations — illuminations, bonfires, speeches. And on the heels of that news came Grant's communiqué telling of Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse on Sunday, April 9th. The end was at hand. Wise men realized that rebuilding the nation would bring new troubles, but most of Washington, recognizing President Lincoln's singular lack of vindictiveness, dared trust to his generosity and good sense. And for the moment it was enough to know that the bloodshed would soon be over. On the night of Good Friday, April 14th, the President, yielding to his wife's insistence, went to see Our American Cousin at Ford's Theatre. There John Wilkes Booth's murderous shot turned thankfulness into sorrow.

Washington had lived through threats of betrayal and seizure, through physical hardships and travail of spirit. Old residents had felt wrath over vilification by radical Republicans, dismay at the influx of freedmen and alarm at the portents of the future. Yet probably no Washingtonian realized how completely the war had swept the old life away. Clouds of suspicion not quickly to be dissipated by peace enveloped families once honored as among the best of the South. Householders whose income had derived from Southern investments and who had been unable to liquidate

them were impoverished, and though a new plutocracy in the post-war era would dominate in Washington less fully than in big cities of the North, family background would count far less in the capital under Reconstruction than in years past. Money made, few people knew how, gave prominence to men hitherto obscure. Alexander Shepherd, for example, in 1861 a gas-fitter's assistant, would soon emerge as a power in Washington, a man possessed of a farm valued at $65,000 and of considerable real estate within the city. New Yorkers and Philadelphians, having gained control of the banks and the principal street railway, now overshadowed local capitalists of antebellum fame, men like W.W. Corcoran and his associates. The war-time prosperity had pricked the ambition of native Washingtonians, leading them to envisage vast industrial growth and vigorous commercial expansion for the District. A community formerly made up of "Society," small tradesmen, clerks, artisans, white day laborers, free Negroes and slaves had become largely a city of rich men and poor, "niggers", "nigger-lovers" and "nigger-haters." Citizens resentful of the social revolution forcing in upon them would fight further change, but the old Washington was gone forever.

That late April morning as the sixteen-foot, black-velvet-draped hearse drawn by six gray cavalry horses moved slowly down Pennsylvania avenue toward the Capitol where Abraham Lincoln's body would lie in state before beginning the journey through the cities of the North and on to Springfield, Illinois, men watching the procession and hearing the muffled roll of the drums sensed dimly that they had come to the end of an era.
Chapter VIII

Reconstruction: The Death of the Municipalities

Reconstruction, ostensibly designed to reunite the South with the North, brought changes to both sections of the country before the last of three constitutional amendments became the law of the land. But the North as a whole escaped punitive measures, and the District of Columbia, however inimically viewed by some members of Congress, during the first post-war years was subject to no legislation not eventually applied to the country at large. Nevertheless there were differences, first, in the timing and, second and more important, in the degree to which the new order affected the entire community; most significant of all, District citizens, in contrast to people of the northern states, had no voice whatsoever in decisions that ran counter to their own deep-seated beliefs and assumptions. Just as the District of Columbia, because under the control of a Republican Congress, had been the first segment of slave-holding America to see emancipation take effect, so the District was to be the first political unit outside the defunct Confederacy where, in the face of voters' objections, racial political equality became law. Here, in consequence, white citizens felt themselves victims of a vindictiveness they did not deserve. Only as the rest of the United States accepted identical laws did resentment fade. Meanwhile, consternation at the costs of running the cities and at the continued refusal of the federal government to bear its share of the burden increased with each passing year. Indignation gave way to alarm, heightened, as 1870 approached, by insistent petitions to Congress from midwestern...
constituents to move the capital to the West. Between 1865 and 1871 fear thus followed upon anger in Washington and Georgetown to end at last in what most citizens dared think an ideal solution: extinction of the municipal governments and creation of the Territory of the District of Columbia with a representative in Congress.

When the surrender at Appomattox came, citizens of Washington had every reason to be grateful that Congress was not in session, for old residents had tasted the bitter wrath of Congress and could have little faith in radical Republican policies of reconstruction for the District or for the rebel South. Far better to let the President map the course. Lincoln's assassination aroused genuine horror in the city. Political wisdom may have entered into some men's distress, for anyone with vision could foresee the nightmare that would ensue. The day Lincoln died, the city councils voted a $20,000 reward for the assassins' arrest — eloquent testimony to the strong emotion of the financially hard-pressed corporation.

Three weeks later the councils issued an angry warning to former citizens who had joined the Confederacy not to attempt a return to the District. Fortunately, Washingtonians knew, not even Secretary of War Stanton, who had taken command the night of the shooting of the President and simultaneous attack on Secretary of State Seward, could accuse the city of negligence, since the Provost Guard and the Metropolitan Police were federal employees outside municipal control. Once the panic about a Confederacy-inspired, city-wide conspiracy had died down, evaporating under proof that the plot was the work of a half-dozen "outsiders," no

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1 Journal 62nd Council, pp. 2, 3, 6, l4-15.
wife of the newly deposed Vice President, Mrs. Thomas Marshall, the other a private dance given for some six hundred GOP merrymakers by "Ned" McLean, chairman of the inaugural committee. If on that occasion Mrs. McLean wore the famous Hope diamond, its reputed evil powers may have seemed to the superstitious to account for the ills that two years later overwhelmed several of the party. Mrs. Harding herself, an arch believer in the rightness of the clairvoyants she sometimes consulted, apparently had no forebodings.9

Springtime in Washington, along whose tree-lined streets in 1921 people still walked for pleasure, exercised peculiar charms that year. For the first time the war receded into the distant past. The very sight of the open gates of the White House grounds inviting the world to walk and drive in and out freely lightened the atmosphere; on Easter Sunday children and Easter eggs again dotted the lawns. "Balloon men," wrote a Senator's wife, "with their rainbow-colored balls floating lightly above them in great clusters, and vendors of flowers stand on every corner; the Japanese cherry blossoms, a mass of fragrant bloom, border the basin and speedway above the Potomac River; the stary dogwood scatters its petals in Rock Creek Park; and wisteria, drooping and feathery, hangs over doorways and porches, and cloths the rotunda at Arlington." Newly appointed federal officials took up their duties with leisurely zest, while with still greater enthusiasm wives new to Washington society set about mastering the mysteries of etiquette in the capital.10

9 Ibid., 5 Mar 21; Sullivan, Our Times, VI, op. ; Longworth, Crowded House, p. 327-24; Star, 6, 9 Mar 21.

official sought to pin responsibility for the tragedy upon local people. Yet the murder cast long shadows upon the community, and the compounding of grief and anxiety made the future look black. The killing of John Wilkes Booth and the hanging of three of the conspirators—as well as the almost certainly innocent Mrs. Surratt—brought little comfort to thoughtful men in that summer of 1865.

But the capital rejoiced with the rest of the nation that the war was over, "staying," the city councils proclaimed, "the red hand of fratricide." The District also welcomed the signs that President Andrew Johnson was steadily veering toward the lenient course of reconstruction which Lincoln had projected. Demobilization of the army, moreover, provided distraction. In the forty days between late May and early July, nearly a quarter million soldiers passed through the city. Hour after hour, through the brilliant sunshine of May 23rd, the Army of the Potomac, rank after rank, paraded up Pennsylvania avenue to the reviewing stand in front of the White House. The next day came Sherman's veterans of the march through Georgia, followed by the notorious "Bummers" who had attached themselves to the Division of the Mississippi and by long strings of mules and horses laden with tents, knapsacks, clothing and an occasional pickaninny. Cheering crowds from every state in the North lined the Avenue. Perhaps few onlookers, observing the lean hardness of these soldiers, could recall the youthful gaiety of those who had set out for Bull Run less than four years before. Later troops marched without fanfare to headquarters preparatory to discharge and return home. The military hospitals, crowded during much

\[2\] Ibid., pp. 11-12.
of the summer, emptied slowly, until by late autumn only two, given over to stubborn and chronic cases remained. In November came the execution of Captain Henry Wirz, one-time commanding officer at Andersonville Prison and originator of the infamous "deadline"; the outcome of his trial had been a foregone conclusion, but the torchlight parade staged to celebrate the hanging in the Old Capital Prison yard revealed the savagery of the tempers that might rule in Washington.3 By December, when Congress convened and debates on reconstruction opened, the troubles of the District of Columbia were looming large.

During the first post-war years, three problems, so closely related as to be virtually one, confronted the people of the District. The most basic question was economic: how to forestall a sharp decline in business by developing commercial and industrial interests independent of the federal government. Second, the status of Negroes, was a problem affecting at once the material well-being of the cities and their social and political structure as well. Third was the matter of converting war-damaged Washington and Georgetown into cities possessing the conveniences urban dwellers had come to demand – easy transportation, clean, well-lighted streets, adequate sanitation, means of protecting persons and property and, finally, good schools. None of these could be found in the District, and to get them would require tax rates high enough to discourage new investment. Yet without these improvements, Washingtonians knew they would be risking the greatest danger of all, namely a decision in Congress to make a fresh

3Rpts QM Gen and Surgeon Gen to Sec/War, 1865, pp. 102, Ser 1249; H Ex Doc 23, LOC, 28, Ser 1331; Poore, Reminiscences, II, 187-92.
start by establishing a new national capital in the West.

Economic troubles struck first. With the mustering out of troops and the closing of the hospitals in 1865, the shrinkage of business, begun in April, accelerated, and at the very moment when men returning to civilian life most needed jobs. Hotel registrations no longer ran to hundreds daily. Cuts in employment at the Navy Yard and in the Quarter Master repair shops had already occurred. The saddlers and blacksmiths and the purveyors of mattresses and iron bedsteads who reportedly had all found war a bonanza were now forced to curtail. In attempt to halt further losses a group of businessmen formed a Board of Trade. The Federal Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, established in March, was concentrating on finding work for contrabands but the unemployed freedmen thronging the streets of Washington served as a constant reminder to white men of social changes to come. Perhaps the best gauge of the drop in business activity was the loss reported by the Washington & Georgetown Street Railroad Company for the second six months of 1865. Instead of the 9 percent profits of the two previous years, the company declared that, owing to the decline in population, receipts between July and the end of December had fallen off 30 percent and, although equipment was up-to-date and the horsecars had carried over seven and a half million passengers during the year, the company was barely solvent. Deficits appeared in

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4 Rpt Sec/Navy, 1865, pp., Ser 1253; Rpt QM Gen to Sec/War, 1865, pp., Ser 1249; Ledgers, Topham, 1864-66, (ms., CH3); Rpt Asst Comr Freedmen's Bureau 5 Dec 65, 5 Ex Doc 27, 39C, 18, pp. 151-55, Ser 1238; ltr, S. N. Clark to Brig Gen C. H. Howard, 31 Mar 66, RG105, 222, #7 (War Dept, N.A.); Daily Chronicle, 13, 25, 27 Oct 65.
the next several years. In 1866 the Merchants' National Bank failed. Washington and Georgetown could be grateful to escape the tribulations of Alexandria in trying to recover from four years of military occupation, but as Lincoln had urged in 1861, and senators talked of now, Congress were to reannex the Virginia part of the original ten-mile square, might not the entire area be thrown into fresh confusion?

Happily, the worst fears of businessmen proved groundless. Despite the pleas of a few Alexandrians, the plan of reclaiming northern Virginia for the District lapsed eventually, and, had the scheme succeeded, Washington's commerce could hardly have suffered in consequence. Authorization in 1865 of an extension to the Government Printing Office nursed hope that new government business might partly offset the reduction in army and navy activities. By 1866 war claims filed by both Northerners and Southerners were again bringing visitors to the capital. House-building, halted during the war, gradually resumed. Row houses sprang up in the section east of the Capitol, and, almost unheard of event, several senators bought or built residences in the more sophisticated areas Northwest, along Massachusetts avenue and K Street beyond 13th. When Congress was in session business always revived, and President Johnson's fights with the legislature through most of his administration kept senators and representatives in the city long months at a time. Whether or not men believed Mayor Wallach's contention that natural developments, not "adventitious causes," were bringing Washington prosperity, by 1867 local firms felt encouraged. A special census that year showed a population of 106,052, a big drop from the estimated 140,000 of 1864, but

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6 Centennial History of Washington, p. 11; Intelligencer, 12 Jan 63; Cong Globe, 37C, 18, 3 Aug 61, p. 420, and 37C, 25, 10 Dec 61, p. 17; Pres Message to Cong, H Ex Doc 1, 37C, 25, 1 Dec 61, p. 12, Ser 1117.

still a 57.8 percent increase over 1860. A careful reading of the report, to be sure, indicated only 89,451 persons intending permanent residence, of whom over a third were Negroes and thus, in the view of white businessmen, not assets. Prospects nevertheless looked brighter, and judicious advertising might help.

The first need, Washingtonians had long declared, was better transport, more railroads to link the District to the rest of the country and toll-free wagon roads between city and county. Ferries still plied regularly between Washington and Alexandria, and the railroad tracks laid during the war still crossed the Long Bridge into northern Virginia, but as long as the Baltimore & Ohio was the only railroad connecting the District with the North and the rapidly growing West, the capital was isolated. In ending this isolation, the first step was the chartering in 1865 of the Metropolitan Branch of the B & O; the new route into western Maryland would reduce by some forty miles the distance by rail to the Ohio Valley. The city councils considered the line so important that they talked of investing $500,000 in bonds to hasten construction, a proposal that lapsed for the very good reason that the municipality had neither credit nor cash to invest. But all Washington thought it a great event when in 1869 the first train to run as far as Silver Springs made the six miles easily in eighteen minutes. The gradual elimination of toll roads was another source of gratification; proprietors could no longer exact a fee for every carriage passing the gates to drive out to the Catholic cemetery and for every wagon carting farm produce into the city. Best of

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8 Spec Rpt Comr Education, 1871, p. 255; Journal 65th Council, Jul 67, p. 34.
all, in 1868 the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad, an affiliate of the powerful Pennsylvania, began building a "branch" line to enter Washington from the northeast, and in 1870 Congress authorized the company to carry its tracks over the Long Bridge to connect with Virginia railroads. When this was accomplished the Baltimore & Ohio's thirty-five-year monopoly in the District would end.9

While waiting for the competing railroad to reach the city, leading businessmen conceived a plan of advertising Washington by holding a world's fair in the capital in 1871. An international exposition, the first in the United States, should draw a stream of visitors and give Washington a name for enterprise. Enthusiastic citizens subscribed some $2,000,000 to finance the fair. It needed only the blessing of Congress. Congress refused to endorse the scheme, partly because it might involve government spending, and partly because members of House and Senate believed the undertaking would prove a dismal failure in so backward a city. "The idea of inviting the world to see this town, with its want of railroads and its muddy streets," declared Senator Stewart of Nevada, "seems to me altogether out of the question."10 Ruefully Washington had to watch Philadelphia launch the first American exposition in 1876.

Industrial growth was another goal of Washington's promoters. In

10 Cong Globe, HJC, 23, 22 Dec 69, pp. 303-4, and 18 Feb 70, pp. 1394-96; S Rpt 298, HJC, 35, 19 Jan 71, Ser 1143.
the summer of 1869 the city councils appointed a committee to investigate methods of attracting investment capital. "Washington," the formal resolution read, "possesses a good harbor, a fine, healthy climate, and has in and about it water power unsurpassed, which, with its geographical position, (lying close to the grain and cotton growing districts of the South) should make it one of the leading commercial and manufacturing cities of the country." The Star carried the campaign further:

"That the water power of the Potomac, now running to waste at our doors, will be utilized before many years there can be no doubt. The manufacturers of the north are even now obliged to eke out their water supply by expensive purchases of lake lands, hundreds of miles away from their mills.... But cannot we develop the desired consumption?"

"Instead of waiting for northern capitalists to take the thing in hand, let us develop our own Spragues, Browns, Hills and Bateses. Our citizens have shown the ability to subscribe a million or two of dollars for an international exposition. This same amount put into manufacturing enterprises would create a means of permanent prosperity for the District of Columbia, and we would suggest that if the exposition enterprises should be nipped in the bud through the failure of Congress to give a proper charter, the money subscribed for it, or an equivalent subscription be devoted to the noble work of starting a line of factories on the Potomac. Any dozen, or score, or fifty or hundred gentle men who would undertake this work may count on an honorable immortality as the creators of a self-respecting independent existence for the people of Washington."12

12 Star, 21 Feb 70.
In 1870, although Washington factories equipped with power-driven machinery numbered only 37, an increase of but three in a decade, the federal decennial census indicated larger capital resources in the community than people had supposed: personal property valued at more than $53,000,000, and real property worth over $60,000,000. Riggs and Company, which for years had accepted Washington municipal bonds as security for loans, might now see fit to finance large-scale industrial enterprise. W. W. Corcoran, his Southern sympathies forgiven, might be persuaded to add practical beneficences to his charitable and cultural gifts to the city; industrial investment might enhance the value of his real estate holdings.13

But before the days of electric power transmission lines any plan of bringing into Washington power generated at the Great Falls presented enormous difficulties. Factories lining the Potomac from the Chain Bridge to Easy's Point, if practicable or profitable for Georgetown, would scarcely benefit her neighbor at all, and the cost of piping water sufficient to turn factory wheels farther downstream discouraged the most intrepid investor. The rights of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, the United States' control of the aqueduct and, finally, lack of a corps of skilled labor compounded the complications. Neither a dozen, nor a score, nor a hundred gentlemen came forward to put the plan into effect.

While citizens, because of circumstance and long habit, postponed vigorous action in the purely economic realm, their response to new social and political pressures was as prompt as it was ineffectual. Not all, but certainly a great many, white householders had watched with anxiety the

increase of the black population of Washington and Georgetown. From the 15 percent of 1860, the free colored population had grown to nearly 35 percent by the end of the war, and the help the Freedmen's Bureau gave to Negroes persuaded whites to anticipate a still larger invasion. The Freedmen's Bureau would not last forever, the burden of caring for helpless colored people would then fall upon local taxpayers: ex-slaves who had worked as field hands were ill-suited to most city jobs, least of all to the type of skilled industrial work Washingtonians vaguely hoped to create. In the autumn of 1865, however, this consideration was minor.

People were far more afraid that Congress was about to force upon the District full racial equality, political and social, as well as economic. And in a community where the conviction predominated that the Negro race was inherently and unalterably inferior, the fear was well-founded. Even staunch Republicans like Lewis Clephane, Washington's first wartime postmaster, were uneasy. All Washington knew that a bill would shortly come before Congress proposing suffrage for Negroes in local elections.

In November a committee of the Common Council voiced the city's official view:

"The white man, being the superior race, must rule the black, in harmony with Providence, Why we are white and superior, he black and inferior, are matters beyond our comprehension. The fact remains. Our civil and Christian duty is to determine how much privilege the negro can be conceded. To do this, a comparison with the white race under like

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circumstances will reveal the negro's ability. It took the Briton 1,000 years to emerge from a half-civilized state to the point where he can exercise his franchise. How long will it take the black, arrived from Africa only two hundred years ago? By a mixture of blood many of the colored have increased in intelligence. These, with a few of the more favored, are, in some instances better qualified to vote than white. This is the exception, however, not the rule.

"Intelligence and property are usually considered, among whites, requisites for voting. If so, only one in a hundred grown-up negroes can read or write, while their claim to government through property is insufficient.

"More forcible reasons can be advanced for women's suffrage....

The argument that unlettered aliens are permitted to vote, who have lesser qualifications than negroes, can be answered by stating that the leading citizens of society are descendants, often, in the first generation of these aliens, whereas nowhere in society can you see a descendant of any generation, of negroes holding an equal place in society....

"If the negro does not like the social order, let him leave the country. Already, he is resented by white laborers because of the competition he represents in this city. To give him the vote would be a pretext for a collision."

A more temperate resolution met with little approval: "That we are not opposed to granting the right of suffrage to colored men simply because they are colored men, but that we believe the safety of our free institutions
demands that the elective franchise should only be granted to men who can read or write or to those who, "without regard to color" possess mental and moral qualifications acceptable to an enlightened public. 16

When a month later Charles Sumner, that impassioned defender of the Negro, presented his franchise bill in the Senate, feeling was running high in the District. Some 2500 Negroes headed by John F. Cook, son of the educator, petitioned Congress to enact the bill; Mayor Wallach immediately checked the names on the list and reported only 573 taxpayers among the signers. The President of the Board of Aldermen, in answer to the frequently heard Negro argument that colored men who had served in the army had every right to vote, declared that the first colored regiment of the District had been recruited not by voluntary enlistment but by kidnapping carried on by Negroes. "Of the Negroes residing here in 1861 and 1862, ... not one hundred entered the service of the United States, but those who did go were refugees and contrabands who came here to seek bread and who were taken possession of by men of their own color, and sold into the service of the United States." 17 In mid-December Washington and Georgetown each conducted a referendum. In Washington the outcome was 6591 against, 35 for, Negro suffrage, in Georgetown 465 against, no one in favor. The vote was small, and some citizens labelled it unrepresentative. Sayles J. Bowen, for example, postmaster of Washington and later mayor, believed the referendum improper because the assessors registered only the people they wished to see vote; "experience has proved that a fair election cannot be held in

16 Ibid., p. 318.

And the Star fulminated: "The ballot box at the special election doubtless received many ballots from fingers that pulled rebel triggers."16

While the Senate, occupied with other phases of reconstruction, delayed its discussion of the bill, the House debate began in January 1866. A minority protested the proposal as a tyrannical imposition upon an unwilling people. Thomas of Maryland, pointing out that he himself had worked and voted for emancipation in Maryland, argued that northern states, where census figures showed the proportion of Negroes small, should not legislate upon a problem with which they had had no first-hand experience.19 But the abolitionist wing of the 39th Congress and men of more political acumen than principle held the floor. A speech of George Julian of Indiana, an idealist, a proponent of woman suffrage, a land reformer and ordinarily a man of sound judgment, revealed the temper of the radicals: After listing the many virtues of the District Negroes who, he asserted, owned property worth "at least $1,225,000", supported twenty-one churches, twenty Sabbath schools and thirty benevolent and civic organizations, and had furnished three full regiments to the Union Army and 60 to 70 percent of the men for the drafts, Julian concluded:

"I have argued that the ballot should be given to the negroes as a matter of justice to them. It should likewise be done as a matter of retributive justice to the slaveholders and rebels. According to the

18 Star, 23 Dec 65; Chronicle, 16 Dec 65.

best information I can obtain, a very large majority of the white people of this District have been rebels in heart during the war, and are rebels in heart still. That contempt for the negro and scorn of free industry which constituted the mainspring of the rebellion cropped out here during the war in every form that was possible under the immediate shadow of the central Government. Meaner rebels than many in this District could scarcely have been found in the whole land.... Congress in this District has the power to punish by ballot, and there will be a beautiful, poetic justice in the exercise of this power.... The rebels here will recoil from it with horror. Some of the worst of them, sooner than submit to black suffrage, will doubtless leave the District, and thus render it an unspeakable service. To be voted down by Yankee and negro ballots will seem to them an intolerable grievance, and this is among the excellent reasons why I am in favor of it.... Not shall I stop to inquire very critically whether the negroes are fit to vote. As between themselves and white rebels, who deserve to be hung, they are eminently fit.

In the Senate a counter proposal, amendments to the original bill and the excessive heat of that June of 1866 combined to delay action. Lot Morrill of Maine wished precedence for consideration of a bill revoking the city charters, returning their powers to Congress and thus eliminating all suffrage, both white and black, in the District. Senator Hendricks wanted an early adjournment, in order to get out of "this hot-house." Senator Hale of New Hampshire and several supporters urged a literacy qualification for every male except taxpayers and returned soldiers, but when 19 nays

to 15 years killed that amendment, political finesse postponed further
debate; a pocket veto would have been inconvenient. In December the bill
for unrestricted manhood suffrage went through quickly. President Johnson
vetoed it in a message pronouncing the act premature and, in view of local
sentiment, unjust; many of the men who voted for Negro enfranchisement here
would not have advocated it at home. Connecticut, Minnesota and Wisconsin
had already refused to let colored men vote, and Kansas, Ohio and Michigan
would soon forbid it. But a majority in Congress looked upon Andrew Johnson
as an intolerable obstructionist. House and Senate overrode the veto the
day after it reached Capitol Hill. A by-product of the struggle was
shelving of the President's proposal to give the District representation
in Congress.21

Omission of a literacy qualification from the suffrage act threatened
the District cities with several thousand new voters who, if delighted at
the prospect of sharing white men's political privileges, still were wholly
unfamiliar with the obligations of citizenship. At least two thirds of
the colored men in the District had been slaves only three or four years
before, as slaves denied education, and as freedmen little better able to
care for themselves than as slaves. Small wonder that intelligent white
women at times marvelled at the vagaries of Congress which enfranchised the
ignorant male contraband and refused the educated white woman a vote. What­
ever people's feelings toward Negroes, sounder reasons than sheer social
prejudice seemed to justify forebodings about Washington's and Georgetown's
future. During the spring of 1867 some 9800 white men and 8200 colored men

21 Ibid., 39C, 18, 27 Jun 66, pp. 3191, 3422, and 39C, 28, Dec 66, p. 9;
Pres Message to Cong, H Ex Doc 1, 39C, 28, p. 1281.
registered to vote in Washington's municipal election. Yet contrary to gloomy expectations, colored voters, guided by Negro leaders in Washington and Georgetown, displayed political discretion; not until 1868 did they elect Negroes to office.

On the other hand, neither Congressional law nor the efforts of educated Negroes could greatly lighten the immediate miseries of freedmen. Ill-prepared to earn a living in a competitive world, contrabands who had had jobs of sorts during the war found themselves out of work when the army demobilized, the corrals emptied and the military hospitals closed. The Freedmen's Bureau during 1865 turned army barracks into tenements for about 350 families, issued weekly rations of food and fuel, and now and again found jobs for some of the able-bodied, but need constantly outran what the Bureau could supply. Relief societies and individuals contributed food, clothing, medicines and even rudimentary lessons in housekeeping. The Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children found homes in the North for a few contraband orphans and, after the official pardon of the rebel whose Georgetown house had served as the orphanage during the war, the society moved its charges to a farm in the county near Kendall Green.

Yet in spite of all efforts, unemployed or unemployable freedmen in Washington and Georgetown continued to live and to die in desperate want. In eleven months the new Freedmen's Hospital treated 22,798 Negroes and boasted of cutting the death rate among patients to less than four per hundred.  

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22 Eighth Census, 1860, Population, pp. 620-23; see table p. 88; Bryan, National Capital, II, 563, n. 3.

a member of Washington's Common Council, professedly quoting official records, declared that "of these people who have migrated to this District between the first of January 1862 and the first of January 1866, more than a third are already in their graves."\textsuperscript{24}

Thousands of freedmen lived in utmost squalor. Some of them occupied hovels near the river below L Street, others crowded into the blocks just east of the Capitol, or in "Adams shanties" near the city limits, or in "Fredericksburg" on Rhode Island avenue, where in 1866 213 persons lived in a space 200 feet square. Still more notorious was "Murder Bay", a swampy stretch south of the Treasury near the Washington canal on land of Commerce and of where the buildings of the Departments of Labor would later stand. "Here crime, filth and poverty," reported the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Police, "seem to vie with each other in a career of degradation and death. Whole families...are crowded into mere apologies for shanties.... During storms of rain or snow their roofs afford but slight protection, while from beneath a few rough boards used for floors, the miasmatic effluvia from the most disgustingly filthy and stagnant water.... renders the atmosphere within these hovels stifling and sickening in the extreme.... In a space about fifty yards square I found about one hundred families, composed of from three to ten persons each, living in shanties one story high.... and from five to eight dollars per month are paid for the rent of these shanties except... where a ground rent of three dollars per month is paid for a few square feet-- there some of the more enterprising have erected cabins of their own. There are no proper privy accommodations.... Nor can

\textsuperscript{24} Journal 65th Council, 6 Jun 67, pp. 27-29.
the sanitary laws be properly enforced against delinquents, for they have no means wherewith to pay fines and a commitment to the workhouse is no punishment." An officer of the Freedmen's Bureau spent four months and used 1,000 barrels of lime in whitewashing freedmen's quarters, but disinfectant, though forestalling city-wide epidemics of typhoid and dysentery, ended neither overcrowding nor unsanitary living conditions. The once half-empty sprawling city of "magnificent distances" had suddenly acquired slums as horrifying as those of New York.

The federal government tried various ways of helping freedmen to help themselves. Men in charge of the Freedmen's Bureau employment office attempted to persuade former field hands to take jobs that farm labor shortages in other parts of the country opened to them, but most of them somehow managed to refuse to move from the District, or, if they left, return. Even when the Bureau threatened to strike from the relief rolls the names of those who balked at settling on the farmlands across the Eastern Branch, freedmen stayed on, trusting the government which had given them freedom to watch over them now. Indeed, so far from an exodus out of the District, during 1866 and 1867 a fresh influx of freedmen poured in. When the Negro suffrage act passed, colored men considered the privilege of voting worth the price of unemployment. Congress meanwhile authorized the conversion of additional


26 See n. 21; Rpt., Asst Comr Freedmen's Bureau, 22 Oct 66, 3 Ex Doc 6, 39th Cong., 1st Sess.; H Ex Doc 117, 11th Cong., 28, 16 Feb 70, Ser. II, 17; ltr, J. N. Vandenburg to Freedmen's Bureau, 20 Oct 66, RG 105, 224, Box 77 (War Dept., NA). Unless otherwise noted all Freedmen's Bureau correspondence cited is in the War Dept section of the National Archives, and all references to the Freedmen's Bureau are given as F.B. Ltrs, W.W. Rogers, Adj Gen, to Lt. Col. S.M. Beebe, local Supt., 1 Apr 67, and C.H. Howard, Asst Comr F.B., to Anna Lowell, 4 Apr 67, RG 105, 222, No. 8, and 10, and to Sayles J. Bowen, 11 Jul 68.
government-owned buildings into low rental tenements where freedmen of "good character" might live, but the new housing helped very little.27 "Good character" meant to Bureau officials people who would pay their rent promptly, keep their homes clean and live by the moral code of whites. "No persons professing to be husband and wife," read one regulation, "will be permitted to occupy a tenement until they give satisfactory proof of lawful marriage."28 Freedmen without jobs could not pay their rent, families ignorant of the most elementary principles of hygiene soon turned their tenements into shambles of filth, and former slaves who understood cohabitation rarely understood the legal formalities of marriage. Patient teaching and opportunities to earn a living manifestly offered the only way out of the wilderness through which, Henry Ward Beecher declared, all must pass "who travel from the Egypt of ignorance to the promised land of civilization."29 Congress realized that an adequate colored school system would hasten that journey. Mayor Wallach at the end of the war had announced Washington's readiness to remit to the Trustees of the Colored Schools the entire amount Negroes paid yearly in taxes but stated flatly that the city could not do more and still support "the thousands of colored


28 Ltr, S.N. Clark to Rev Roberts, in charge of freedmen's tenements, 27 Mar 66, and to F.B., 1 Oct 66, RG 105, 222, no 7; Rpt, 1867, RG 105, 222, no. 30.

29 See n. 24.
forced upon the city by the General Government." His legalistic evasions of the clear intent of the law of 1864 had prevented the colored schools from getting more than a part of the money due them, and Georgetown had kept her payments to token sums. In the summer of 1866, consequently, Congress had authorized the use of empty army barracks as Negro schoolrooms, appropriated $10,000 for building schoolhouses for colored children in the county, given three lots for a similar purpose in Washington and empowered the Trustees to sue the cities for the principal and 10 percent interest on the money owing them then or whenever arrearages occurred. But despite the new law and the openly expressed wish of some officials to have the cities comply, both corporations still procrastinated. The Washington Common Council toyed with a plan of paying over the money for the colored schools only after all bills for white schools had been met, for, one councilman averred, records of the Freedmen's Bureau showed nearly a third of all District children to be Negro, while the value of colored-owned property was but a seventieth of white and brought in "very little in excess of a sum sufficient to meet the burdens their presence imposes upon society here." Georgetown behaved equally badly. The council chosen in the first Washington election in which Negroes voted debated from June till December 1867 before they agreed to pay the Trustees of Colored Schools $34,000 of arrears; the Trustees had claimed $51,000 due.

32 Ibid., 28 Jan 67, pp. 442-43.
Hope of extracting federal aid for white schools as well as colored partly explains these delaying tactics. The chain of reasoning apparently ran thus: the District has no spokesman in Congress; therefore only constant agitation keeps local problems before the national legislature; once the cities accept the colored school laws, the issue will die, inasmuch as newcomers in Congress, unfamiliar with District history and present troubles, are unlikely to bother with revisions of legislation of no national significance. Anger, unfortunately, warped citizens' judgment about how to proceed. George Julian's speech on Negro enfranchisement suggested the punitive character of recent laws for the District, laws seemingly springing from belief in the wickedness of local people whose anti-Negro sentiment, rooted in the doctrine of white supremacy, proved them all rebels. The pleas for moderation repeated by men who believed in Negro rights and in the wisdom of cooperating with Congress consequently fell on deaf ears; indignation got the upper hand in this struggle for federal aid.34

By using vinegar instead of honey, city officials merely heightened Congressional ill-will. One councilman bitterly characterized the authors of the District school laws as "locomotive philanthropists," wealthy men seeking national distinction who displayed no interest in the welfare of the ignorant, impoverished children of communities in their own states. Washington, he contended, spent more than any other American city for schools, 20 percent of her annual income, whereas New York spent but 8 percent. Four thousand government clerks in Washington who had children to educate added a burden Congress should share.35  "And while in its zeal for public

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education," declared Mayor Wallach, "it [Congress] has granted... to states and other territories, 78,130,000 acres of public land, which... would yield the enormous sum of $97,662,500, to the District of Columbia, which is supposed to be under the fostering care of the general government.... and whose people it now inordinately taxes to educate the thousands of contrabands allured to this 'paradise of freedmen' by the temptation to indolence offered by the gratuitous of the Freedmen's Bureau, it has never given a foot of public land or a dollar of money."36 There was enough truth in this statement to make it peculiarly unpalatable.

In refusing the demands of the colored school trustees, before November 1867 both cities had the justification of faulty census data on the numbers of white children and black, the legal basis for division of funds. Because the figures of 1860 were clearly inapplicable to the post-war District, the mayors of Washington and Georgetown, the federal Commissioner of Education, and the president of the county Levy Court jointly requested a special census calculated to show "the wants of the local government." Congress approved, though it made no appropriation to cover the expenses. Directed with scrupulous care by an experienced investigator and statistician, the census turned into far more than an enumeration of school children. The final report, running to more than 800 closely printed pages, included comparative data on public schools in Europe and in other American cities, a history of education in the District since its beginning, and a wealth of detailed information ranging from analyses of occupations to tables

showing where residents voted — altogether a far more exhaustive compilation of facts and figures on social conditions than any decennial census before or after ever assembled. Though the full report did not appear in print until 1871, school trustees and other officials quickly had available to them the most immediately pertinent data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>Georgetown</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>106,052</td>
<td>11,793</td>
<td>9,145</td>
<td>126,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Population</td>
<td>74,115</td>
<td>8,509</td>
<td>5,703</td>
<td>88,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colored Population</td>
<td>31,937</td>
<td>3,284</td>
<td>3,442</td>
<td>38,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White children bet. ages 6 and 18</td>
<td>17,801</td>
<td>2,152</td>
<td>1,494</td>
<td>21,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colored children 6 to 18</td>
<td>8,401</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>10,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro children of all children</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>41.07</td>
<td>63.26</td>
<td>47.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av Attendance in white public schools</td>
<td>4,531</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>5,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av attendance in colored public schools</td>
<td>2,415</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>3,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av attendance white private schools</td>
<td>4,717</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>3,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av attendance colored private schools</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% white children in pub school of total white children</td>
<td>26.01</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro children in pub school of total no. Negro children</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>37.24</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 Spec Rpt Comm Education, 1871, pp. 5-9, 15-76. The figures on illiteracy of persons over fifteen years of age are computed from the tables listing the number of inhabitants of every age between one and twenty-one, and from the total illiteracy figures given on pp.
| Teachers, white pub schools | 89 | 8 | 8 | 105 |
| Teachers, Negro pub schools | 49 | 8 | 7 | 64 |

| % illiteracy among whites over 15 yrs. | 3.07 |
| % illiteracy among Negroes over 15 yrs. | 41.18 |

Here were incontestable figures. Georgetown immediately paid over to the colored schools their share of the funds, while Washington, however grudgingly, paid eventually.38

Of the startling facts the special census brought to light perhaps none was more surprising than the evidence that a larger percentage of colored children than of white were attending the public schools. Negro education in the District had made remarkable progress. In 1867 illiteracy among Negroes over fifteen years of age was astonishingly low, astonishing because at least 60 percent of the colored population had come since 1861, most of the newcomers contrabands from Southern states where law forbade the education of slaves. Yet instead of 75 to 80 percent illiteracy, two years after the war only 11 percent of all Negro adults were unable to read. For this extraordinary achievement the Freedmen's Aid societies and the federal Freedmen's Bureau could claim most of the credit; they had supplied most of the teachers and kept interest in the school crusade alive in the North. By January 1866 a hundred men and women were teaching about 5600 colored children in fifty-four day schools, twenty-five Sabbath schools had enrolled over 2300

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pupils, and another 500 pupils were attending the "eight or ten self-supporting schools taught by colored teachers." Six months later the Freedmen's Bureau reported 10,000 Negroes receiving some instruction.  

But after 1868, when all but one group of Northern philanthropists withdrew their aid, the program moved forward slowly. In 1870 about 3,000 colored children were regularly attending the public schools in Washington and Georgetown, but there were no longer classes for adults and in the entire District but sixty-six classes for children. Besides restricted budgets, inadequate equipment and the reluctance of white people to have Negro schoolhouses built in their neighborhoods, Trustees and superintendents had to contend with ignorant, sometimes unco-operative parents, incompetent, badly trained Negro teachers and bored, undisciplined children. George F. Cook, the first Negro to be made colored school superintendent, took charge in 1868. That year the Secretary of the Interior appointed a Negro to the Board of Trustees and in 1870 a second. White or black, all the Trustees deplored the shortcomings of the school system. Tardiness, they reported, was nearly universal, perhaps because most colored families had no way of telling time. Attendance records were equally discouraging, in 1870 averaging only 84 percent of enrollment. Pupils in the private colored schools learned nothing beyond the ABC's. Worst of all, though attendance was compulsory, the Negro schools were reaching few more than a third of the colored children of school age.  

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Since public schools for colored children were an innovation in the District of the 1860's, Negro leaders, anticipating trouble in mixed schools, at first made no move for integration. They welcomed the founding of Howard University in 1866, the first south of the Mason-Dixon line to enroll students of both races, but, though Congress made an annual appropriation, the college was only a quasi-public institution, supported in part by students' fees - $3 a term - and by the gifts of its founders, General O.O. Howard, head of the Freedmen's Bureau, and some of his friends. Colored people well knew that Howard University, landmark in Negro education though it was, would be unlikely to open the way to mixed primary and grammar schools in the District.\textsuperscript{41} But in Congress plans for mixed schools were in the making some time before Negroes voiced their interest publicly. The men preparing the special census report of 1867 had seized the opportunity to cite evidence of the advantages of school integration: Chicago had tried segregation in 1864-65, only to find it a failure and to return to a single school system. "All the difficulty with the children of color has disappeared, except such as may be common to all children who have had no better advantages than themselves."\textsuperscript{42} Perhaps considering administration an entering wedge, in 1869 Congress passed a bill merging the white and colored school boards; Negroes, fearful lest their own schools suffer, persuaded President Johnson to veto the act.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} RG105, 222, #20, Appendix F, Abstract of Circular Relative to Howard University, 1867 (W.D., NA); Cong Globe, 39C, 28, 2 Mar 67, p. 1992.
\textsuperscript{42} Spec Ret Comm Education, 1871, p. 343.
\textsuperscript{43} Cong Globe, 40C, 35, 13 Feb 69, p. 1164; S Ex Doc 47, 40C, 38, 13 Feb 69, Ser 1360.
Seven months later a group of white and Negro citizens of Washington's Fourth Ward threw a bomb-shell; they requested a mixed school in their neighborhood. The area concerned lay east of North Capitol street beyond Tiber Creek. Living in a thinly built up, poor section where the streets were unusually muddy in winter, the fifty-seven white and twenty-eight Negro petitioners stressed the benefits to themselves of one school for the 120 to 130 children of both races. Several aldermen and the Trustees of the Public Schools approved. Negro voting had caused no disturbance, colored men sat on the city councils, and liberals saw no reason now to forbid educating white and colored children together. Legally the innovation required an amendment to a city ordinance, and the city councils took no action. Yet that winter saw a mixed school in Washington.

Why this admirable experiment failed is uncertain. As a result of a shakeup in the School Board, no annual report appeared. Doubtless to men who looked upon all Negroes as intrinsically inferior, the mere existence of an integrated school was a source of annoyance and alarm; the idea might prove contagious. It didn't. Ward Four abandoned the plan the next year. White people deploring racial segregation on principle or because of the extravagance of maintaining two separate systems were as impotent to win over the community as were the Negroes who protested the "depressing effect of segregation] on the minds of colored children." The Patriot, a local newspaper managed by James Berret, the conservative deposed Mayor of Washington, asserted that the trial of non-segregation had all but wrecked the school system. In April 1871, the Trustees of Colored Schools posed the
unanswerable question: "If the fathers are fit to associate, why are not the children equally so?" Republicans in Congress in the interim had endeavored to pass laws prohibiting segregation; one bill stipulating no racial discrimination "in the admission of pupils to any of the schools," a second specifying "no distinction on account of race or color, so that all unmarried youth ... shall be entitled to and receive equal benefits of the public schools of their respective districts." But each bill died without coming to a final vote, leaving the fate of separate or mixed schools to be settled later.

Throughout the sixties, schooling was a matter of deep concern to only a segment of the District's colored population; to the great mass of freedmen survival remained the all-important problem. But initiative developed slowly in people born in servitude. The intelligence to guide them lay largely in the colored families of the District who had grown up in freedom. For while white philanthropists and the Freedmen's Bureau offered help, established Negro families knew that in the long run the responsibility would be theirs. They shouldered the burden with fortitude.

Negro aristocrats, however, did not look upon all colored people as equals. The distinctions maintained down into World War II were less those of education, professional status or wealth than degree of color. Unlike the gifted, part-white W.E.B. Du Bois, who came toward the end of his life to prefer black skins, Negroes in Washington and Georgetown put at the top of their social hierarchy people light in

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45 S Mis Dox 130, 41C, 28, 29 Apr 70, Ser 1408; Patriot, 6, 9 Feb, 3 Apr 71.
46 Cong Globe, 41C, 38, 8 Feb 71, pp. 1053-54, and 17 Feb 71, pp. 1365-67.
color, a sign of the admixture of white blood. The Negro author of a recent study of Negro participation in the city government of this period notes meticulously the complexion of each member of the Washington city councils. In 1868, when for the first time two colored men were elected, Alderman John F. Cook and Councilman Carter Stewart were both "light." During the next two years Stewart, a barber, served as the only colored alderman. Of the seven Negroes elected in 1869 to the 67th Common Council, three, a caterer, a preacher and a brickmaker, were "black", four were "light", a government messenger, a cloak room attendant at the Capitol, and two laborers. The 68th, and last, Common Council included two blacks, a preacher and a government clerk, and four light men, two of them government messengers, one a teacher and one a day laborer.47

By the end of the sixties conditions within the Negro community had bettered in some particulars. If the report of the reconstituted Board of Health is to be trusted, the over-all death rate in Washington had dropped to 15.30 per thousand, whereas Philadelphia's stood at 19.18, New York's at , and London's at 24.66. Though mortality in localities like Murder Bay was unquestionably still high, reduction of overcrowding had improved health in other Negro sections. During 1868 and 1869 several hundred colored families had moved across the Eastern Branch to farmlands made available on easy terms by the Freedmen's Bureau, and probably some families left the District altogether. As the most able of those who remained found work, a number of freedmen salted away savings with the Freedmen's Savings and Trust

Company, now located on Pennsylvania Avenue across from the Treasury in a fine new building where an affable Negro cashier and elegantly dressed Negro tellers gave colored depositors a sense of security.46

Yet suffering among freedmen in the District was still widespread. Indeed, a widely travelled Quaker woman reportedly "found the suffering and the poverty of the poor of this city in excess of anything she had seen anywhere else on the face of the globe." As on virtually every question affecting the District, opinion in Congress divided about what to do. Poor laws carried over from eighteenth century Maryland offered no solution to troubles rooted in an unprecedented migration of field hands into an urban community. Admitting that unemployment was the fundamental difficulty and that local taxpayers should not have to assume the entire burden of relief, the Senate still reached no consensus about whether to embark upon a federal public works program of laying sewers and paving streets in Washington, as various petitioners urged, or whether for the moment to vote relief funds and attempt later to evolve a permanent welfare system "that would send that population [freedmen] from this sink of poverty, wretchedness and vice, and colonize them all over the country, and enable them to get suitable labor."49

Certainly the urgency of the distress in the early months of 1870 demanded prompt action.

Congress passed an emergency act appropriating $30,000 for

46 Journal 68th Council, 27 Jan 70, pp. 16-19; Investigation into the Freedmen's Bank, H Rpt 502, 490, 1s, May 76, pp. 92-93, Ser 1710; Star, 29 May 67, 15 Oct 69; Baltimore Sun, 30 Sep, 16 Oct 69.

49 Cong Globe, 390, 1s, 20 Apr 66, p. 2052; 390, 23, 13 Feb 67, p. 1341, and 2 Mar 57, pp. 1765-66; 400, 1s, Appendix, 16 Mar 67, p. 45; 400, 38, 1 Feb 69, p. 776; 41C, 28, 28 Jan 70, pp. 844-48; S Mis Doc 53, 41C, 28, 28 Jun 70, Ser 1408.
the destitute, and, in order to prevent the funds from becoming an electioneering weapon in the hands of city officials and to guarantee freedmen's getting the bulk of the benefits, vested responsibility for distributing relief in the Secretary of War. The army lieutenant put in charge of the program reported that in a single month charity societies had recommended for relief 23,221 colored adults and 25,348 colored children, figures which, even allowing for duplication, would indicate most of the Negro population of the area in bitter want. remarking the probability "that relief has been denied to some who should have been aided," Lt. Bridges issued rations and coal that month to about 16,600 freedmen, and whenever he found jobs for them "at a distance,... they were provisioned to their destination."50

Though business in the North was prospering, in Washington and Georgetown unemployment remained. And always both cities were irked by Congressional readiness to give freedmen aid while showing no concern for needy whites.

At this point Congress tried a new plan of providing federal assistance. An act chartered the Washington Market Company and granted the corporation a ninety-nine year lease of the site of the old Centre Market on Pennsylvania avenue between 7th and 9th streets, on condition that within the next two years the company build a new market house and pay the city an annual ground rent of $25,000 to be used for poor relief. Students of Washington's history knew that the official plan of the city accepted by President's Washington and Adams and approved by Congress in 1798 showed the very square in question reserved for a public market, and that Congress' gift now to a private company was somewhat improper. But everyone welcomed

50 H Ex Doc 57, 31 Dec 70, Ser 1416.
the plan of a fine new building with office space and a large auditorium, and mayor and council were pleased at controlling $25,000 yearly, not all of which need go to Negroes.51

Both city governments looked upon Negro wants as a federal responsibility; the cities had other troubles. Neither Washington nor Georgetown, it is true, spent large sums on indigent whites; the federal government, in its capacity of state government for the District, carried some of that load, private philanthropy most of the rest. Yearly the federal government contracted with the Sisters of Providence to care for sick "transient paupers"; in 1868 an appropriation of $30,000 completed the Providence Hospital. Congress also chartered the Columbia Hospital for Women and Lying-in Asylum.

Equipped with fifty free beds, twenty of them for the wives, widows and daughters and soldiers and sailors, the hospital opened in 1866. Its dispensary for out-patients and modest charges or none for the hospitalized -- $10 a week at most -- made this "national charity" a godsend to the community.

Congress annually appropriated funds for the Government Hospital for the Insane, now coming to be known as St. Elizabeths, a name originally applied only to the wards for mentally sound wounded soldiers. In defense of his institution, the head of the hospital periodically felt obliged to explain that insanity was no more prevalent in the capital than elsewhere and that many of the inmates of St. Elizabeths were Union soldiers and sailors unbalanced by the stress of the war. Occasionally an economy-minded Congress-

man protested giving public money to a private organization like the school

51 S. Rpt 149, 43d, 13, 13 Jun 74, Ser 1587; ltr, Mayor Wallach to Sec/Int, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1865, pp. 863-69, Ser 1248.
for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, but the reports of its directors and its president, Edward Gallaudet, yearly elicited from Congress $15,000, $20,000 or even as much as $40,000. All these institutions, however, were national in character; government support of local organizations was distinctly thin. Congress gave sparingly to the House of Correction for Boys which private citizens maintained on a farm above Georgetown. Institutions designed to prevent rather than cure juvenile delinquency, undertakings like the Newsboys Home and like the Industrial Home School which Washington and Georgetown women opened in 1867 to keep boys off the streets and give them vocational training, got only token aid from the government, while the Guardian Society struggled along on meagre funds. If the Washington Female Orphan Asylum, first sponsored by Dolly Madison, and the Roman Catholic St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum fared better, they owed their relative success to private individuals. The municipalities, as formerly, confined their efforts to running the Washington Asylum and the Georgetown Poor House and doling out fuel every winter to impoverished families.

Over other civic needs, the Washington city government all but despaired. They followed in general outline a pattern grown familiar during

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52 H Ex Doc 10, 41C, 2S, 6 Dec 69, Ser 1418; H Ex Doc 58, 42C, 3S, Jun 72, Ser 1565; S Ex Doc 2, 41C, 2S, 6 Dec 69, Ser 1105; H Ex Doc 1, 41C, 2S, 2 Oct 69, Ser 1411; Cong Globe, 42C, 3S, 3 Mar 69, p. 653; Rpts Govt Hospital for the Insane and Directors of Col Instn for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind, in Rpts Sec/Int, 1865-70; H Rpt 34, 40C, 2S, 8 May 68, Ser 1351.

the war but now etched deeper by diminished prosperity and by the sheer passage of time. Answers depended primarily upon spending more money than Washington felt she should be expected to raise, not only money for welfare, but for school teachers' salaries, for lighting and paving the inordinately wide streets and, most immediately urgent, for a city-wide sewerage system that, one way or another, would end the health menace of the stagnating Washington canal and the leaky privies in many parts of the city. Mayor and councils might tacitly admit that the federal government had contributed liberally to poor relief and at least something to the school fund, but they considered the failure of Congress to make appropriations for the expensive work of modernizing the capital an outright breach of faith. In the fall of 1865 a letter from Mayor Wallach to the Secretary of the Interior reviewed the historical facts of what the federal government in the 1790's had pledged itself to do for the new federal capital in return for title to most of the land and gave figures indicating how far short of redeeming its promises the government had fallen since 1854. Secretary of the Interior, James Harlan, supported Wallach's contention and statements of aldermen and council members reiterated the theme.

But influential senators and representatives ill-versed in District history brushed the argument aside, even after a tabulation compiled from Treasury records showed that between 1790 and 1870 federal expenditures in the District for purposes that directly benefitted the community came to less than $9,000,000; the rest of the $44,000,000 had gone into government

[54] Rpt Sec/Int, 1865, p. xxiii, and ltr Mayor Wallach to Sec/Int, pp. 856-61, Ser 1248; see also n. 34.
buildings and federal services. Yet the value of the original proprietors' gift of land now stood at more than $100,000,000.55 Unhappily for local taxpayers, the counter argument that it was the presence of the federal government that had enhanced property values carried weight in Congress, particularly in the House where the majority of members were frequently less familiar than senators with District problems and failed to perceive that the presence of the federal government also created problems that would otherwise not have obtained. Moreover, in both houses sufficient anger persisted at the predominant anti-Negro sentiment in the District to discourage second attempts to pass measures once defeated. Radicals continued to elaborate ancient arguments about Washington's parasitic do-nothing policies. A House resolution of 1868 went so far as to propose forcing the city to install street lights by imposing for the purpose a federal tax to be collected from local property owners by the Secretary of the Interior. The Senate rejected the plan but had nothing better to offer than an act authorizing the city to place the whole cost of gas lamps, like the cost of paving, upon private property abutting on streets so improved. Everyone agreed that something must be done to make the capital liveable; controversy centered upon who was to pay for it.56

Partly in hopes of bettering relations with the men who held the federal purse strings, in 1868 voters elected Sayles J. Bowen mayor of Washington. Bowen as a Free-Soiler and Republican of many years standing,

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55 H Ex Doc 156, H1C, 25, 19 Feb 70, Ser 1418; Cong Globe, H1C, 25, 28 Jan 70, p. 842.

a believer in equal rights for Negroes and one of the first Trustees of the Colored Schools, would presumably be persona grata on Capitol Hill. But Bowen, handicapped initially by a protracted fight within the Board of Aldermen over seating members and, later, by his own injudicious, partisan tactics, succeeded no better than Wallach before him in getting appropriations for a large scale program of public works. During his two years in office the city laid fifteen miles of sidewalks and four miles of sewers, but more than two hundred miles of thoroughfares in the city remained unpaved and some 250 miles of streets were still without sewers. Congress, however, lightened the costs of paving, not to be sure, by voting federal money, but by sanctioning the city's narrowing the streets to a 35-foot carriage way flanked by 35-foot strips of parking and 10-foot sidewalks. When northwest K street between 12th and 16th was thus narrowed and paved, the broad sweeps of parking planted with trees and grass gave citizens pleasure even as they remembered how much was still to be done in other parts of the city. Bowen was little more successful in eliciting federal aid for schools than in persuading Congress to pave the avenues. Yet the census of 1867 proved the validity of the old contention that Washington's 10,050 taxpayers were bearing the cost of educating the children of temporary, non-taxpaying residents: some 13,000 federal employees in a city of 20,073 families. Under these circumstances, mayor and councils were unwilling to increase the school tax, and a fund of $110,000 would not stretch to engage additional teachers or pay higher salaries. The three

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S's, schools, streets and sewers, like the three fates, remained a trio of troubles.

To pave most of the streets before laying sewers would be an extravagance, regardless of who paid the bills, and to extend the sewer lines obviously was folly until Congress and the municipality had settled what to do about the main outlet, the Washington canal. As it stood, that waterway was a disgrace to the capital, but if the sewerage of the entire city was to empty into the canal, it must be deepened and its flow somehow controlled to ensure its carrying refuse far out into the river below the Long Bridge where the current would be strong enough to prevent backwash at high tide. In 1866 the city had spent $75,000 on dredging, using the muck to fill some 1,000,000 square feet of low land below the White House, but the Senate Committee on the District declared the deepened canal still "greatly deficient" as a sewer. Many people advocated filling the "Stygian pool" its entire length. Joseph Henry and fellow scientists of the Smithsonian held up as a model London's recently completed sewerage system and argued that since an open sewer running through a city of residences equipped with water closets would always be a danger to health, the only safe course to pursue was to arch over the canal, turning it into an underground culvert, and by filling above it make valuable land in the heart of the city. Army engineers, on the other hand, after surveying the possibilities, contended that a better plan consisted of extending the Chesapeake and Ohio canal by aqueduct over Rock Creek and thence through locks to debouch into the Washington canal at 17th street, and then giving the deepened Washington canal single-directional flow north and east to drain into the Eastern
Branch of the Potomac, a system that would create sufficient current to scour out the canal daily. Admittedly expensive to carry out, that arrangement promised to solve the disposal problem and at the same time provide power for factories near the Naval Observatory, make a large ship basin at 17th street, and permit canal barges to come through locks into Washington as the original plans for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal had intended. The proposal gained in attractiveness as Washingtonians read of what the Erie Canal had done for Albany. But Congress, its approval necessary because federal property abutted upon most of the Washington canal, chose to endorse the "tidal plan," requiring merely dredging and the installation of tide gates to regulate flow. When the city was able to let contracts for the work in the fall of 1870, local taxpayers, upon whom the costs would fall, dared hope that at last the evil smells of the city would vanish, the periodic threat of "Russian cholera" disappear and the river front regain its natural charm.

Occasions for self-gratulation nevertheless were few in Washington as 1870 wore on. True, Congress was discussing acquiring land for a public park; inasmuch as over seven and a half million persons had visited New York's Central Park in 1865, the national capital should have something similar. True also, Congress had agreed to pay $200,000 of the $300,000 needed for a new jail, had sanctioned the creation of police courts to

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handle petty offenses, and had recently given a $4,000 lot and unused army mess hall at northwest I and 22nd Streets for a white school. But there federal contributions appeared to stop.\textsuperscript{59} Congress, remembering the $3,300,000 the government had spent on the aqueduct, decreed that Washington and Georgetown taxpayers unaided were to pay the nearly $500,000 for a new 36-inch water main from the distributing reservoir to Capitol Hill. Congress, without increasing the federal appropriation, had added seventy men to the Metropolitan Police force and raised patrolmen's salaries, a needed but expensive measure. The government had taken no steps to build a reformatory, with the result, the Secretary of the Interior declared, that organized bands of "young bandits" flourished, who, if convicted and sent to the "common jail", merely became "more hardened and reckless," and, if not punished, considered "their dismissal but a license to continue their depredations." Congress had whittled down the city's bills for work done on "the public squares and reservations," then, by failing to make the necessary appropriations, forced the municipality to wait for reimbursement, and now was refusing to pay more than part of the costs of repaving the "Avenue," always recognized as federal property and damaged during the war not by private citizens but by army wagons.\textsuperscript{60} Every plan for civic improvements seemed to shatter on the twin


\textsuperscript{60} H Rpt 85, 39C, 15, 22 Jun 66, Ser 1272; Journal 63rd Council, 29 Jan 66, pp. 118-25; H Rpt 17, l10C, 25, 21 Feb 66, Ser 1357; H Ex Doc 56, l10C, 25, Dec 69, Ser 1117; H Ex Doc 39 l11C, 38, 19 Dec 70, Ser 11153; Rpt Sec/Int, 1869, pp. , Ser 1111; Cong Globe, 39C, 25, 20 Feb 67, pp. 296-98; Patriot, 10 Dec 70, 16 Apr 71. \textsuperscript{396, 13, Appendix, 23 Jul 66, pp. 380-81, and}
rocks of Congressional parsimony and municipal poverty.

Bowen, elected in belief he could overcome those obstacles, had made matters worse; in his determination to relieve unemployment, he had hired hundreds of Negroes to grade and gravel the streets but, unable to get federal support for his make-work program, had increased by half both the funded and the floating debt inherited from Wallach's regime. Amid accusations of graft on city contracts and charges of corruption in importing Negroes from the county and Maryland to vote in elections, Bowen went down in defeat in June 1870, repudiated even by colored men who had helped put him in office. But a clean sweep in the City Hall was no answer to the basic problem. The new mayor, Matthew Emery, best known as the mason who had laid the corner stone of the Washington Monument, was as helpless as Bowen. While denouncing his predecessors for an extravagance that had accumulated a funded debt of $1,500,000 and run the floating debt up to nearly $900,000, Emery presented his ultimatum: the tax rate must rise to $1.80 per $100, two and a half times the rate of 1863, but high enough to bring in over a million dollars of revenue; otherwise he would have to cancel all work on the streets and every other public project. The second course was unthinkable.

Of the forces militating against halting civic improvements, the most subtle was Washington's renewed fear of losing her status as national...

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capital. Georgetown and the county were also concerned. That threat, to be sure, was as old as the War of 1812 and had been heard during the Civil War; when emancipation for the District was under discussion early in 1862, an alderman had advocated the bill as a means of quieting agitation moving the government elsewhere.

After the rebuilding of the Capitol and the White House two generations before, no one, however, had taken the recurrent proposals very seriously until the expiration of Washington's 20-year charter of 1848 drew near. In the spring of 1868 the vote of Congress to renew the charter conditionally while the lawmakers examined alternatives had revived apprehensions. In the mayoralty campaign the word had spread: "A vote for Bowen is a vote to keep the capital in the District of Columbia." But anxieties deepened after Grant's election to the Presidency, as petitions for transfer of the seat of government to the Mississippi valley multiplied in number and urgency. The legislature of Kansas begged Congress to spend no more money in the District of Columbia; the heart of the country now lay inland.63 The arguments contained in the memorials from other state legislatures and from conventions held in Cincinnati and St. Louis carried insidious appeals to all Northern prejudices: professing to cherish "no mean spirit of hostility to the District," Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri urged abandoning the Potomac location in order to save the capital "from the bane of secession, from any taint of the spirit of treason, and to place it where no hostile power could ever threaten its safety."64 The shadows of the Civil War still lay black

63 Star, 25 Mar 62, 3 Jun 62, 3 Aug, 9 Nov 69; H Mis Docs 91 and 105, 41c, 33, Mar 71, Ser 1463.

64 H Rpt 52, 41c, 33, 3 Mar 71, Ser 1464.
over Washington. Seemingly the one argument in the District of Columbia's favor was the fact that George Washington had selected the site, although common sense also pointed to the wisdom of General Sherman's prophesy that rival cities would cease bidding for the honor of becoming the capital when they learned that residents of the federal District, wherever located, would lose their state citizenship and their votes. Yet common sense, local citizens knew, did not always govern political decisions, and worries increased whenever a member of Congress held forth on Washington's shortcomings.

Another cause for uneasiness among Washington property-owners lay in the signs of a reversal of "the disposition" as the Star put it, "on the part of persons of means and culture residing elsewhere to invest in property here": the city's untidy appearance and inconvenience discouraged people otherwise tempted by "the delightful climate, the beautiful suburban surroundings and the unequalled social attractions." Men who had acquired wealth here during the war were likely to look elsewhere and even old residents, the newspaper editor warned, might be driven to leave. Senator Stewart considered an exposition in Washington the worst possible advertisement for the United States, since the capital was "the ugliest city in the whole country." Senator Edmunds' description, however humorous, was still more depressing: "Take, for instance, the infamous, abominable nuisance of cows, and horses, and sheep and goats, running through all the streets of this city, and whenever we appropriate money to set up a shade

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65 Star, 25 Nov 69; Patriot, 17 Nov 70;
66 Star, 30 Oct 69.
tree, there comes along a cow or a horse or a goat, and tears it down the next day, and then we appropriate again. There are not today two trees in a hundred in this city, which ought to be the most beautiful and the most highly ornamented in the country, which do not show the marks of ill-treatment by horned animals or by pigs or by some animals that are running at large." And, quoting a local wit, the Vermonter concluded, when the Board of Health abolished the nuisance, the city councils abolished the Board of Health for interfering with voters.\(^\text{67}\)

At President Grant's inauguration, hackmen, realizing that no lady would risk soiling her gown in the filth on the avenues, had charged $40 a day for a carriage, $30 merely for driving a couple to the Inaugural Ball. The city was dirty and unsanitary, beggars besieged the residential areas and, since the public schools were inadequate and the new truancy law was not yet in force, hundreds of children of school age roamed the streets. Although scientists engaged in research at the Naval Observatory or for some project of the Smithsonian Institution or the National Academy of Science found life interesting here, not because Washington was Washington, but because the federal government, in these days before any American university was sponsoring scientific investigations, was able to assemble the largest group of able research men to be found in the United States. Cabinet members and their subordinates, the diplomatic corps, army and naval officers, particularly after General Grant became President Grant, and moneyed men from the North, drawn by the power the federal government represented, also enjoyed Washington but only because she was the capital. Otherwise, why would anybody

choose to endure the discomforts of living here? The 174-foot shaft of the unfinished Washington Monument standing amid a litter of stone and the debris left from the army's war-time slaughter houses seemed to symbolize the city's defeat. 68

But determination and discipline could turn defeat into victory. Apart from the business opportunities and the "unequalled social attractions" created by the government, apart indeed from the dubious charm of her climate, Washington had several assets. If the campaign to bring industry into Washington had failed thus far, the failure had also left the city free of the smoke of factory chimneys and prevented what nativists deemed an undesirable influx of foreign immigrants whose extreme poverty and strange tongues were thrusting special problems upon other American cities. In the decade since 1860 Washington had added fewer than 1,300 foreign-born to her population; they represented a scant eighth of her 109,000 souls. She remained thus a community of native Americans, a third of them colored, it is true, but, because of their color, people that most whites simply ignored.

Lack of industrial growth had also kept Washington a residential city, dignified by nearly a hundred public buildings, by beautiful Federal houses and comfortable frame dwellings. If the Negro quarters were noisome slums, they were generally tucked out of sight in alleyways and areas whites rarely frequented. Including her crowded Negro sections, Washington had housing enough to keep the average number of occupants per dwelling at 6.16, whereas the figures for her western competitors ran to 8.67 in Cincinnati and 7.4 in St. Louis, while New York had nearly 15.69.


In cultural and spiritual realms, moreover, Washington laid claim to some distinction independent of what the Smithsonian and the National Academy of Science had to offer. Thanks to William Corcoran's generosity, the Corcoran Art Gallery, at last reclaimed from the Quarter Master General who had occupied it since 1861, would soon open its doors to the public. Georgetown Seminary, Columbian College and Howard University were giving the District a reputation as a center of higher education, and the forty writers who made up the Washington Literary Society added luster. The city also took pride in her churches, the twenty-three Presbyterian, the sixteen Methodist, twelve Episcopal, nine Roman Catholic, two Jewish and a dozen other congregations, all told, seventy-three white and twenty colored religious bodies. If behavior fell short of ideals, the church-going community was nevertheless a power in the city. Finally, if these features alone were not enough to offset the visible drawbacks, Washington's poten­tialities for beauty, unrealized but there, stood as a challenge to men of imagination. The elaborate, detailed plan of the city, the broad sweep of the avenues, the very spaciousness that led foreign visitors to poke fun at the emptiness, all held magnificent promise. Patience, high taxes, bond issues, and the good will of Congress together could make a city so beautiful that talk of moving the government elsewhere would die.70

Upon Congressional favor hung all the law and the prophets. No District resident disputed that fact. But there unanimity ended. Ideas about how to win and use that favor varied from conviction that long-term renewal

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70 City Directory, 1871; S Ex Doc 17, 112, 28, 9 Jan 72, Ser 1178; Cornelia Meigs, History of the Washington Literary Society, pp.
of the city charter and concerted effort to exercise its powers effectively would suffice to the diametrically opposite belief that nothing short of disenfranchisement and full Congressional control would keep the capital in Washington and prevent huge losses for local investors. Between these extremes lay the alternative of consolidating Washington, Georgetown and county into a single jurisdiction with a concentration of authority calculated to create an "identity of interest" strong enough to carry through needed reforms. None of these plans was new. In 1860 a proposal had come before Congress to appoint federal commissioners to manage the District, and during the war the Washington councils discussed the advantages of a union with Georgetown in order to reduce the number of governmental bodies.71

Certainly the machinery had become needlessly complex -- two city governments, two white School Boards, a Levy Court, a federally controlled Metropolitan Police force and federally appointed Trustees of the Colored Schools, all of them supported wholly or in part by local taxes. Simplification would help, but the chief bone of contention was whether demolition of the entire structure was necessary in the interests of eliminating improper political pressures and introducing order into administration. If Congress itself were running the District, criticisms of the city might subside and federal aid be forthcoming.

In 1866 when Lot Morrill of Maine submitted his proposal for Congressional "resumption" of the government of the District, the bill encountered vigorous opposition from colleagues who wanted to try out Negro suffrage in the District cities.72 Some residents of Washington, "willing," one

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Congressman noted contemptuously, "to surrender their own rights rather than to respect the rights of others," welcomed Senator Morrill's plan.\textsuperscript{73}

Other citizens protested: "It takes away the fragments of self-government which from the creation of this District had been accorded to its people; it subjects us to the rule of men utter strangers to our habits, feelings and interests."\textsuperscript{74} The Morrill bill failed to pass, partly because some members of Congress considered it an act depriving free men of their rightful prerogatives, and more largely because radical Republicans saw that disenfranchisement of all District citizens would cancel the politically important experiment of giving Negroes votes.\textsuperscript{75}

After Negro suffrage went into effect, a number of property owners led by the Board of Trade professed to see good reasons to dispense with all local suffrage.\textsuperscript{76} As the time approached for the renewal or lapse of Washington's municipal charter, agitation for an act like the Morrill bill gathered force. Undoubtedly a good many men looked upon the measure as the quickest way of ending paralyzing conflicts and ensuring civic improvements. Senator Morrill had declared: "If there is anything like bad government, shameless government anywhere, it is in this District... Outrageous abuses have characterized the government of this District in the last fifteen or twenty years."\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 10 Jan 66, p. 174.


\textsuperscript{75} Cong Globe, 39C, 18, 15 Jun 66, p. 3191.

\textsuperscript{76} Star, 26 Feb, 5 Mar 67.

\textsuperscript{77} See n. 75.
Yet however unjust, the pronouncement may have deepened the feeling of conscientious citizens—men like Lewis Clephane, Chief Justice David K. Carter of the District Supreme Court, J. Ormond Wilson, Superintendent of Schools, and A.C. Richards, head of the Metropolitan Police—that it was futile, in the face of such attitudes, to seek Congressional cooperation with locally elected officials, no matter who. On the other hand, they might be among the petitioners requesting revocation of the city charter and the appointment of federal commissioners were men whose motives presumably were less altruistic, newcomers concerned above all with profits on their local investments, as well as men who thought an electorate which included Negroes an electorate so debased as to be a travesty. Washington's Common Council, dubbing the proposal one "without parallel in the history of the country," charged its proponents with attempting to govern the District "by means of a moneyed aristocracy." The Council's assumption that appointed officials would lend a readier ear to wealthy men than to the majority of humbler citizens was not wholly far-fetched in the America of the late sixties. Indeed the probabilities are that the real estate firms and Washington merchants who begged for Congressional rule believed it a two-edged sword, that would rid the cities of the social handicap of colored voters and, at the same stroke, enhance local real estate values by substituting the efficiency of appointed administrators for the flounderings produced by the democratic process. But Republican senators and representatives

78 Journal 65th Council, 27 Jan 68, p. 476; S Mis Doc 2d, 41C, 18, 20 Mar 69, Ser 1399.
79 Journal 65th Council, 10 Feb 68, p. 507.
who had introduced Negro suffrage into the District were loath to enact a law that would seem to repudiate that act. Furthermore, during the spring of 1868 they were too engrossed in the impeachment of President Johnson to give more than fleeting attention to District affairs. Questions of reorganizing its government had to wait.

Eighteen months later the Star, that careful recorder of local opinion, observed: "The number who continue to hope against hope that anything can be done under the present form of municipal government to set things to rights here is small, and growing smaller every day. This is not so much the fault of parties or of men as of the awkward system of municipal government, complicated as it is with congressional control... It may be said that... a board of commissioners may be both arbitrary and corrupt. But most of our citizens, we take it, will cheerfully stand the chances of the experiment. If it works badly it would be easy to return to a charter government... The citizens of Washington would like a change." But the less drastic course of consolidating Washington with Georgetown and the county was also gaining support. Georgetown, who had long stood against loss of her separate identity and had suggested that "an experiment of 115 years" was sufficient to prove her capacity for self-government, now began to think it a lesser sacrifice than loss of all voice in the management of local affairs. "In fact," the Star remarked, "those classes throughout the District who have most at stake are completely disgusted with the inharmonious workings of five conflicting governments -- Congress, the corporations of the two

80 Star, 19 Jan 68.
81 Ibid., 5 Oct 69.
cities, the levy court and the board of metropolitan police commissioners. These are continually interfering with each other, to the detriment of the property and business interests here, which are damaged by too much legislation in some directions and too little in others. There should be but one government for the District of Columbia. And perhaps Senator Davis' comments in January 1870 gave taxpayers pause about entrusting their affairs solely to federal officials. Never in all his years in Congress, said the Kentuckian, had any member of the District committee been a true friend to the District. "These committees...have been organized upon the principle of elevating the negro and, when there was a conflict, of subordinating the rights and interest and feelings of the white man to those of the negro." Were that harsh judgment even partly true, it strengthened the argument for the retention of some local control. At the same time everyone knew that no bill could pass which did not reserve to Congress large powers over the District. Consequently, early in 1870 a meeting of 150 influential citizens explored possible compromises. The upshot was a request for a territorial government to extend to the entire District.

President Grant upon his advent to the White House had disappointed people who counted on his interest in modernizing the city, but at least he had shown no disposition to favor moving the capital westward.

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82 Ibid., 28 Jan 62, 12 Oct 69; Petition 839A-3 for June 66; Journal 65th Council, 27 Jan, pp. 175-76, 10 Feb 68, p. 496; Cong Globe, 41C, 15, 5 Apr 69, p. 527.

83 Cong Globe, 41C, 28, 28 Jan 70, p. 547.

84 Patriot, 20 Aug 72.

85 Star, 4 Jan 70.
that worry faded into the background. Scarcely less gratifying, as Congress began discussion about how to run the District, were the indications pointing to adoption of the territorial bill drafted by the citizens' committee.

Perhaps as a final safeguard against enactment of a law placing appointed commissioners in charge, the Washington councils indulged in a last round of invective: the disenfranchisement plan had originated, they contended, "in the selfish, aristocratical, and bitter spirit of those who either sympathized with the rebellion, or who can see nothing good...in the liberty of all men, or in the minds of selfish speculators and their allies or political demagogues who for money, place, and power would barter the dearest interests and privileges of the happiest and freest Government on Earth." To the relief of sober-minded Washingtonians, however, the Senate bill contemplated no arbitrary action. It incorporated most of the features requested by the special citizens' group, namely a territorial government, with a popularly elected governor and council to act as executive and legislature, and, like other territories, a non-voting delegate to Congress. The bill forbade the annulment of the municipal charters without the express approval of a majority of the legal voters in each city obtained at a legal meeting assembled to pass upon that particular question. In addition, as a basis for future taxation, a valuation was to be made every two years of all real and personal property, both private and federal, in distinct and separate schedules. By implication, the United States would then bear its proportionate share of the costs of running the new territory.


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In January 1871, when the House District Committee presented its recommendations, the bill had undergone significant changes. Who inspired them initially and why remains a mystery; rumor attributed them to the committee chairman, Burton Cook of Illinois. The first revision proposed Presidential appointment of the governor and an upper chamber, leaving only a lower house to be elected by popular vote. A second change dropped the provision for including all federal property in valuations for tax purposes, an indication that private property alone might have to carry the costs of whatever the territorial government undertook. Third, the House added a new section, one that at the time provoked little debate, the creation of a Board of Public Works, its members to be appointed by the President and, virtually independent of any control, authorized to take charge of public improvements and to assess the costs as it saw fit. The fight that ensued in Congress centered around only the first of these changes. The objections of Congressman Ela of New Hampshire best represented the opposition. He denied the frequently repeated charges that the District had proved itself incapable of self-government. "I have traveled this District, and every part of it, at all times, and I do not believe there is a body of men in equal numbers in any city upon the continent who are so well-behaved, and whose life and property are more secure, than in the District of Columbia."

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insisted that the people of a federal district were to have municipal self-government. Ela concluded that if the Territory of the District of Columbia were to be denied the right to elect its legislature as other United States territories did, Congress would do better to appoint commissioners clothed with powers unmistakably independent of popular sanction. George Julian, arguing that no government could be "half slave and half free," urged provision for women suffrage, but, like Senator Sumner's plea for a civil rights clause in any new legislation for the District, the amendment was lost. The District Territorial act which became law on February 21, 1871, was in essentials the bill as rewritten in the House and rushed through, men later charged angrily, before most people discovered that "plotters" had persuaded the House to alter the Senate version in vitally important particulars.

Most of the provisions of the act were wholly specific. The President was to appoint a governor and the eleven members of a governor's council all of whom must have lived in the District at least a year. Qualified voters in the eleven precincts into which the area was to be divided could elect three members each to the House of Delegates. Any male not a felon might vote in the first election to be held in April 1871, if he had lived in the District for three months, and in later elections after a year's residence. All elected officials were to hold office for two years, appointed officials for four. The delegate elected to Congress would be a non-voting member of the House Committee on the District of Columbia. The President was to appoint five men to a Board of Health whose duties included abatement of nuisances.


90 See note 88; Patriot, 20 Aug 72.
like the free-running pigs and goats about which Senator Edmunds had complained so graphically. The members of the five-man Board of Public Works, destined shortly to be the storm center of controversy in Washington, were also to be Presidential appointees, the governor ex-officio. Responsible to no local authority, the Board of Public Works was empowered to plan and contract for all public improvements, assessing a third of the costs upon adjoining private property; the only limitation upon the Board's powers was that it could enter into no binding contract until the legislature had appropriated money or sanctioned a bond issue to cover expenses not met by the assessments. In fact, no money for any purpose could be drawn from territorial treasury except in pursuance of an appropriation made by law. Increases in appropriations must receive a two-thirds favorable vote in both houses, and public indebtedness must not exceed 5 percent of assessed property values unless a majority of voters approved by referendum an increase in the debt. The tax rate was to be no higher than $2 on every $100. The city charters were to run until June 1, 1871, in order to give the corporations time to collect bills due and pay off debts, but neither body might impose new taxes in the interim. Thus the rights and obligations of the new territorial government were minutely detailed. 91

Federal commitments on the other hand, were vague, except for the provision that the United States would pay the salaries of appointed officials. Congress reserved to itself the right to annul any act of the District legislature. Federal property was to remain tax-exempt, although an evaluator appointed by the Secretary of the Interior was to report once every five years.

91 16 U.S. Statutes at Large, 119, ch. 62.
years on the value of public lands in the District apart from parks and squares dedicated to public use. Presumably that valuation would guide Congress in making federal appropriations for the District. The perpetuation of uncertainty about how much financial assistance the community could expect from Congress seemed to be the one flaw in the new act.

Most residents apparently were happy at the outcome of the prolonged struggle. Doubtless there were those who saw no panacea for civic ills in substituting one form of government for another, but prevailing opinion regarded any change as one for the better. Congress, glad to have had the District to use as a proving ground for the first reconstruction measures, was now more than ready to delegate responsibility for their execution; President Grant would select sound party men to fill appointive positions, and Senate and House need no longer spend hours on relatively petty local problems. Negroes could feel gratification over the guarantee in the territorial act that their political rights would be safe, and, though presumably neither Negroes nor whites dared think the problem of race relations settled, its proportions should shrink in the sunny atmosphere of harmony between Congress and local community. Men of property believed the new order, headed by persons prominent enough to attract the notice of the President, would safeguard vested interests, and the District, freed from the threat of relocation of the national capital, would enjoy boundless prosperity. For the first time a local government had power to issue bonds to finance public works and, unimpeded by conflicts of authority, should be able to carry out efficiently the improvements Washington had long awaited. Perhaps a

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92 Ibid.
resolution introduced into the Washington Common Council, whose authority would end if and when Congress created a territory, summarized the general attitude: "a uniform system of government for the District of Columbia would be the means of materially developing its great natural resources, giving increased vitality to commerce and manufactures, the building of new railroads, beautifying and improving its splendid streets and avenues, increasing its population, investment of capital from abroad, and opening a 'new era' in its history, and making it a location every way desirable for the capital of a great nation."93

On February 20, 1871, Washington inaugurated a three-day celebration of her "new era." Citizens had planned a carnival in honor of completing the last stretch of new wood pavement on Pennsylvania avenue, and now passage of the territorial act and the opening of Mr. Corcoran's Gallery of Art tripled causes for rejoicing. Reportedly 10,000 visitors joined with District residents in watching the Mardi Gras parade and the races in which horsemen drove six-in-hands and boys goat-drawn carts over the smoothly surfaced pavement of the "Avenue." At night, calcium lamps, gas jets and Chinese lanterns illuminated the thoroughfare for admiring crowds and for carnival-costumed people en route to the masked balls. At the Corcoran Gallery at 17th street and Pennsylvania avenue, foreign diplomats and other distinguished guests danced in the picture-lined halls. Washington's birthday, in 1871 not yet proclaimed a national holiday, seemed to citizens of the District of Columbia to mark Washington City's rebirth.94

94 Star, 23 Feb 71.
The brief career of the Territory of the District of Columbia was tumultuous. To the consternation of people who had believed any change one for the better, by midsummer 1871 influential Washingtonians were labelling the new government a despotism. The next three years saw turmoil and anger scarcely less bitter than the Civil War itself had evoked. Revelations of corruption in Congress and improper behavior in high federal office, if unrelated to local affairs, still further undermined confidence that the community could make orderly progress under the new regime. "The Uncivil War," as one student has called it, was primarily a political contest, rooted, however, in economic anxieties. As long as it lasted, it overshadowed every other interest of permanent residents, and the heat generated by the feuding for a time shrivelled the cultural life of the city. In Georgetown indignation ran nearly as high as in Washington. Accusations and counter-accusations confused the issues until the struggle took on the air of an unsavory domestic squabble. Indeed, had the consequences not been so far-reaching, the three years might be dismissed as merely a sorry interlude during which Washington suffered the ills common to American cities of the Grant era; but the final outcome was of lasting

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1 James Whyte, "The Uncivil War", ms in author's possession.
importance. The first result was the emergence of an outwardly magnificent city, the second, the supposedly temporary, ultimately permanent loss of all self-rule in the District.

During the spring of 1871 the golden hopes born in late winter endured. When uneasiness stirred, the signs of new business activity in Washington tended to quiet doubts. In March Congressional authorization of a multi-million dollar building to house the State, War and Navy Departments laid to rest fears of the government's moving the capital to the Mississippi valley. Furthermore, the work of erecting the huge new building to rise on Pennsylvania avenue just west of the White House promised to provide jobs for the District's unemployed. Private real estate transactions immediately picked up. Compared to the $6,927,000 spent in real estate deals during the entire preceding year, the sale price of property transferred in the four months between March and July 1871 totalled over $2,500,000. And real estate values in the 1870's, as now, were the best gauge of prosperity in Washington.

Appointments and the First Territorial Election

Yet President Grant had already planted the first seeds of fresh dissension when in March and April 1871 he announced his appointments to posts in the territorial government—all simon pure Republicans. Democrats in Congress, who later told the press they had voted for the

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2 Star, 25 Mar 72.
Territory on the distinct understanding that its government would be non-partisan, shared the anger of local Democrats who, according to the Patriot, paid three quarters of all taxes in the District. Individually the men Grant had chosen were inoffensive. Henry D. Cooke, President of the First National Bank of Washington, brother of the still nationally powerful Jay Cooke, won the coveted governorship. He had lived in Georgetown since 1863, had agreeable manners and, rumor said, had the still greater appeal of a large bank account. Norton P. Chipman, a patent attorney with many friends in Congress, a fluent speaker who had made the most of his opportunities as one of the prosecutors of Major Henry Wirz, was appointed Secretary of the District. The Board of Public Works, besides Governor Cooke, consisted of Samuel R. Brown, a war-time contractor and a successful speculator in Washington real estate, James Magruder, formerly an army engineer, now United States Collector of Customs in Georgetown, A. B. Mullett, architect of the Treasury, and Alexander Shepherd, alderman under Mayor Emery and during 1869 and 1870 the most active promoter of a new form of government for the District. Shepherd, Brown and Magruder had all been members of the citizens' committee that first proposed the territorial form. The members of the Government's council were unremarkable save that three of the eleven were colored men, John Gray, a caterer, Adolphus Hall, a miller, and Frederick Douglass, ex-slave, lecturer and newspaper man, in 1871 editor of Washington's new Negro weekly, the New National Era.

Most residents recognized Shepherd's driving force, though he seemed an unfortunate choice to householders of the old school, for his
background, while respectable, was humble and his recent large-scale
building ventures bespoke the reckless gambler; unlike the others, he
at least was a native Washingtonian.

Most citizens also tacitly admitted that if Negroes must be
represented on the Governor's Council Frederick Douglass' reputation
as a spokesman for his people entitled him to a place. But the George­
town Courier dubbed Council members "the fit nominees of a pigmy on a
pedestal... Not an old resident, nor a Democrat, nor a Catholic, nor
an Irishman, and yet we have three darkies, Douglass, Gray and Hall,
a German, two natives of Maine and one of Massachusetts." By and large,
the appointed officials were undistinguished, well-meaning enough but
conveying the impression that they were more concerned with keeping
Republican favor than with serving the District impartially.³

In fact, as the campaign opened for nomination of candidates for
the House of Delegates and the seat in Congress, the least astute
resident of the District could see that the Republicans looked upon the
coming election as a handy tool with which to entrench the national
party in power. At the local Republican convention held in March, one
speaker declared that "upon the result of the election in this District"
would hang the success of the Presidential election in 1872, and
Governor Cooke announced that insofar as he could control the territorial

³ Patriot, 12, 14 Apr 71; Georgetown Courier, 15 Apr 71; Franklin
government it would "be administered in the interest of the Republican party and no one who was not a well-tried Republican should, with his consent, hold office thereunder." To men who believed that what was good for the Republican party was good for the United States capital, these views were sound, justifying even the compulsory registration of government clerks. A circular reportedly distributed to federal employees read: "There can be no valid objection to your voting in this District, and if you should conclude, next year, to make your residence in some State or other Territory, or to resume your previous residence and vote there, the fact of having voted here this year will in no way interfere with such a purpose." If government clerks were unhappy at being corralled to save the District for the Republican party, women suffragists were more than ready to go to the polls. When Congress extended local suffrage to male Negroes, petitions from several hundred women had urged the propriety of giving them the privilege granted illiterate blacks. Later arguments that the 14th Amendment nowhere mentioned the word male and thus opened the polls to women netted the "petticoat politicians" only ridicule. During the convention of the National Woman's Suffrage Association in 1870, Emily Briggs, that novelty in the newspaper world, a woman reporter, had described with more vivacity than sympathy the performance of a delegation appealing to the Senate and House District

4 Patriot, 8 Mar 71.
5 Ibid., 15 Apr 71: Republican, 19 Apr 71.
Committees. Now organization of a new local government seemed to open up fresh opportunity. But the stalwarts of the party, however anxious to enlist "safe" votes, obviously dared not risk adding an element so unpredictable as female suffragists and the District Supreme Court soon afterward ruled the 19th Amendment inapplicable to women. 6

Although by law a majority in the House of Delegates would have to approve all territorial money bills, public interest centered on the election of the District's non-voting representative in Congress, for his persuasiveness might affect the course of federal legislation for the territory. Norton Chipman, Republican nominee, clung to his post of Secretary of the District while he campaigned. With the exception of the Patriot, the only Democratic organ in Washington since the demise of the National Intelligencer in 1869, every newspaper in Washington supported him. Democrats dubbed him "a bird of passage," a temporary resident who had defaulted on some of his business commitments, a carpetbagger who "appealed to the cupidity of the blacks and the necessities of Government clerks," and a politician not above aping Mayor Bowen's supposed tactics of importing Negroes from Maryland and Virginia to vote. Even worse, according to his opponents he advocated mixed schools! Chipman called that charge ridiculous, as it undoubtedly was. 7

6 S Mis Doc 57, 14C, 28, 8 Feb 70; Ser 1408; Olivia Letters, pp. 130-63; Patriot, 12 May, 1 Nov, 9, 23 Dec 71; Georgetown Courier, 22 Apr 71.

7 Patriot, 4, 7, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21 Apr 71.
Apart from some waving of "the bloody shirt," he stood merely on the platform of the wisdom of putting a member of the Grand Old Party into a Republican Congress and like-minded men into the territorial House of Delegates to work with Governor and Council. The argument took. Richard Merrick, the Democratic candidate, who campaigned on the issue of amending the territorial act to make both chambers elective and to abolish an independent Board of Public Works, went down in defeat, and with him all but seven of the Democratic candidates for the twenty-two seats in the House of Delegates. A black preacher and a black messenger were among the successful Republican candidates.

The Star reported elatedly on April 21 that the election showed people's intention to "sustain the territorial government in its purposes to reform abuses and to carry out improvements in the interest of the whole community ... It is virtually a triumph of the class of citizens who wish to see Washington take its proper rank among the attractive cities of the world, and be no longer a name of reproach." Most classes of citizens, whatever their personal preferences and however wary of Republican domination, accepted the verdict with good grace, even women who had vainly marched to the polls and men who had hoped to see Negroes excluded from office. Weary after a decade of fierce controversy, Washingtonians stood ready, "to give the new government a fair trial unbiased by party affiliation." 8

8 Ibid., 8 Mar, 12 Apr 71; Star, 21 Apr 71.
The induction of the new officials took place on May 15th. Since the federal District courts were occupying most of the City Hall, the ceremonies were held in a rented building on Pennsylvania avenue, Metzgerott Hall, which was to be the legislature's headquarters. Here Governor Cooke in a speech singularly lacking in high-flown phrases outlined the tasks confronting the Territory and proposed methods of handling them. He pronounced Washington's funded debt of somewhat over two million dollars and her tax rate of about $13.26 per capita below those of all but four of the United States' eighteen largest cities; announced that bond issues should permit a reduction of taxes. He gave figures to show the inadequacies of a school system which provided for scarcely a third of the school population, and suggested that the $70,000 Washington spent yearly on poor relief might be better administered by a Board of Charities and Correction. All this sounded sensible. That night a torch-light parade accompanied by Washington's fire engines wound up Pennsylvania avenue and on to Governor Cooke's house in Georgetown where the Governor and several others again spoke. Norton Chipman chose the occasion to remind his listeners that the new local administration was dedicated to more than good local government: "All thoughtful citizens," he said, now had "a two-fold duty to perform, first as members of the great republican party of this country, and second, as citizens of this District." A Presidential election would occur in 1872.

First Acts of the Territorial Legislature

The first acts of the legislature gave proponents of efficient...
local government further pause. In the course of a few weeks the legislature created some 400 public offices—all to be filled by appointment—to handle the duties formerly carried out by perhaps 160 city and county officials. But if local Republicans had expected to garner all these new-grown plums, disappointment came quickly. A number of posts went to constituents of influential senators and representatives, other jobs to men linked with special racial and factional interests. Not untypical was the appointment of the Negro J. T. Johnson to the responsible position of District Treasurer: Johnson's business experience consisted of having served in the restaurant at the Capitol; as it happened, his patrons found him not incompetent and almost uncomfortably honest. The Nation later observed, "When the question of expensive improvements was under discussion, the people of Washington were told that they were like the citizens of other towns, and must pay the bills. But when any of the local offices was vacant, they were told that Washington was the seat of Government, and the politicians all over the country were equally entitled with its residents to share in its official plunder."¹⁰ In addition to tripling the size of the District payroll, Council and Delegates promptly authorized the rental of four buildings for District offices, — for the Governor and his staff the

¹⁰ Investigation, 1872, pp. 185, 229, 363-4, 493, 521-22; The Nation, 154386, 21 Nov 72, p. 329; Francis Colburn Adams, Our Little Monarchy, Who Runs It and What It Costs, p. 20.
building on Pennsylvania avenue across 17th street from the Corcoran
Gallery, for the Board of Public Works and lesser officials two
buildings on John Marshall Place, and for the legislature the Metzerott
building on Pennsylvania avenue near 9th street. Remodelling these
rented quarters and furnishing them with “Brussels carpets, great mirrors
with elaborately gilt frames, frescoed ceilings and black walnut
furniture, all carved,” cost $100,000, a third again as much as the
United States Government offered for the purchase of the City Hall.11

Authority of the Board of Public Works

But dismay at the workings of the spoils system and at the
legislature’s extravagances faded into the background as the plans of
the Board of Public Works unfolded before the eyes of horrified tax-
payers. From mid-June 1871 until it expired in 1874, the Board of
Public Works was the chief target of the criticisms hurled at the
territorial government. To an age hardened to billion-dollar public
works programs, the proposals of the District's Board sound modest
enough—six and a quarter million dollars to be spent for laying sewers,
grading and paving streets, planting trees and removing unsightly
nuisances in every part of Washington and Georgetown, four millions of
the cost to be met by a bond issue, the rest by assessments on private
property. But however much small-minded parsimony affected men’s
thinking, more legitimate reasons for protest also existed: first, the
almost untrammeled power of a body of men responsible neither to the

11 Investigation, 1872, pp. 229, 248-52, 267-73; S Mis Doc 8th,
420, 35, 2 Jan 73, Ser 1546.
local public, nor, save indirectly, to Congress; second, the character
of the individuals who composed the Board; and third, perhaps a
corollary, the extreme haste with which its members acted.

The Board of Public Works was quite separate from the rest of
the territorial government. The legislature, to be sure, in theory
had to appropriate the money for projects before the Board could under-
take them, and yearly reports were to go to both houses and to Congress.
Otherwise the five-man Board could do as it chose. Events quickly
showed the legislative review of plans to be cursory and advance
authorization of spending a formality the Board dispensed with. As
appointees of the President, members were free to carry out their
duties conscientiously or carelessly, acting with meticulous impar-
tiality or giving favors to their henchmen and penalizing their
opponents. The authority of the Board of Public Works rapidly sub-
merged that of all other territorial offices. The tail wagged the dog.

Character of "Boss" Shepherd

Utmost importance consequently attached to the character of the
five Board members, or rather to the character of Alexander Shepherd
who at once took charge. After the first meeting when Shepherd's
associates elected him vice president, the governor virtually withdrew,
and after September 1871 the other three left decisions and their
execution to the energetic vice president. To all intents and purposes
"Boss Shepherd" was the Board of Public Works, 12 and President Grant,

12 Investigation into the Affairs of the District of Columbia,
S Rpt 153, 43C, 18, 17 Jun 74, v.1, p. x-xi, Ser 159- (hereafter cited as Investigation, 1874).
who apparently had first been attracted to him by his vigor and genial
good humor, consistently supported him. Two months before the inaugura-
tion of the territory, while he himself was still an alderman and the
corporation charter still in force, Shepherd had made his power felt:
the Board of Public Works had obtained an injunction that prevented
Mayor Emery from letting any contracts for work on the streets; prior
commitments must not hamper the new Board. Tall, robust and hale-fellow-
well met, the father of five children, Shepherd enjoyed high living and
free spending. His post-war business career advertised his penchant for
large-scale operations financed on a shoestring. He had used his
small capital as security, borrowed extensively, and built row after
row of houses for sale, until by 1871 his personal indebtedness ran
into six figures. Here was a man who would not hesitate to plunge the
District into debt to achieve a goal he thought worth-while. In the
heat of later battles, his enemies accused him of using his office to
better his personal fortunes, but in spite of some circumstantial
evidence, the charge never stuck. He was a ruthless fighter for what
he believed in, and his highhanded disregard of law made him a dangerous
adversary. He cherished visions for Washington, and, in his determi-
ation to embody them quickly, he rode roughshod over everybody and
everything that stood in his way.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp. 396, 425; The Nation, 18#469, 25 Jun 74, p. 407;
man might have had few unhappy consequences had Shepherd possessed engineering experience. A "show of activity and energy" in the management of District affairs, the Nation remarked, had to do duty for "technical knowledge and administrative experience." Ignorant of the technical problems involved, Shepherd saw no reason to wait for advice.

If the engineer and the architect on the Board urged caution upon him, he swept it aside. His temperamental impatience over any delay and his domination of his fellows explain the speed with which the Board rushed into action. Many years later a warm friend, Shepherd's secretary during 1873, wrote of the Board of Public Works: "Its powers were beyond control, its work was of a magnitude never before attempted by any similar body within so short a space of time." Baron Haussmann took ten years to carry out his plans for Paris. Shepherd's unwillingness to take time to have accurate blueprints prepared, his readiness to improvise, and his insistence upon trying to complete a vast program within the span of three years largely caused his undoing. More important, his haste brought upon the District the bankruptcy that cost citizens Home Rule.

The "Comprehensive Plan of Improvements"

On 17 May 1871, two days after the inauguration, the Board engaged William Forsythe, formerly a surveyor of Washington, to map the District, indicating problems of terrain and drainage and how best to

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overcome them. Five weeks later the Board presented the legislature with a "comprehensive plan" of improvements. As the haste with which it was prepared suggested, it was more comprehensive than detailed. Its scope was tremendous. It called for altering street levels to make possible a drainage system for Washington and Georgetown which would carry off all surface water and sewage for a thickly settled area. All streets in the heart of Washington were to be paved, all, that is, in an area roughly encompassed between the Mall and F street on the north, New Jersey avenue on the east and New Hampshire avenue on the west, as well as all the main arteries extending to the city limits and the connecting county roads. Parking such as Mayor Bowen had introduced would narrow the streets, reduce costs and leave space for shade trees. Worried taxpayers, aghast at the scale of operations projected, pointed out that the work of a few weeks was insufficient to produce an adequate survey, a plan based on knowledge of the problems involved and a sound estimate of costs. But the legislature accepted Shepherd's cost figures at face value, approved the entire plan early in July and authorized the four-million-dollar bond issue the Board requested. The work of tearing up the streets began almost at once. Shepherd later justified his course by declaring that the Board's function was to effect improvements "as rapidly as possible..., in order that in this respect the capital of the nation might not remain a quarter of a century behind the times."\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{15}\) Investigation, 1872, pp. 45, 735; Patriot, 27, 30 Jun, 1, 4, 15 Jul, 3 Aug 71. Maps showing the areas of work on sewers and streets appear in the Rpt of the Board of Public Works, 1872, and 1873.
As soon as the loan bill passed, large property-owners protested. So far from objecting to a public works program, they insisted they would welcome any well-thought out plan based upon careful engineering studies. They urged the propriety of a pay-as-you-go method, raising a million and a half dollars by a special tax and undertaking, to begin with, only part of the program. Shepherd would not hear of the idea. With Board of Trade backing, opponents of the loan then obtained a court injunction against sale of the bonds, on the grounds that the act creating the Territory specified that voters must approve any increase in the public debt above 5 percent of the assessed valuation of property in the District, and the carry-over of municipal indebtedness would bring the total debt to 9 percent were the loan accepted. The legislature met this challenge by imposing a 5 percent income tax and by authorizing anticipation of a half million dollars of current revenue to start the Board's work. Still, lest the court decision prove adverse, the territorial legislature passed a second four-million-dollar loan bill with a safeguarding clause providing for a referendum to voters. This provision demanded a special election in November, but the expense of holding a second polling six months after the first was no deterrent. After all, the Patriot remarked, all members of the House of Delegates together paid scarcely $2500 in taxes.16

The Board of Public Works, using the half million dollars at its disposal, made the most of its patronage. Former Mayor Bowen, doubtless a prejudiced observer, remarked that the House of Delegates had supinely surrendered all power by allowing the Board to control appointments to positions which by law could have been elective. Where the city corporation of Washington had had ten salaried officials in its street department, Shepherd engaged eighty-six, and hopes of additional well-paying jobs to come if the loan went through added bait. The thousands of men employed in digging up the streets could be persuaded to vote for their bread and butter. For three months advertisements announcing the coming referendum appeared in each of Washington's sixteen newspapers, daily in several of them, a device for subsidizing the press, the opposition contended; necessary publicity, the Board declared. According to its enemies, the "Ring" took the further precaution of importing voters from Maryland and Virginia. At the polls anti-loan ballots bearing the invidious label "Against Special Improvements" were so hard to obtain that most dissidents had to write out their own ballots. The victory of the Board of Public Works was complete. The courts pronounced the first loan legal only a few days before voters, twelve to one, endorsed the second loan and elected acquiescent men to the House of Delegates. The vote was far smaller than in April; the haves, feeling the contest with have-nots hopeless, stayed at home.\footnote{17 Investigation, 1872, pp. 9, 89, 170, 190, 442, 614, 698; Baltimore Sun, 7 Aug, 18 Nov 71; Patriot, 27 Oct, 25 Nov 71.} One indignant citizen who described himself as "a poor colored man, who has been a
preacher among his people for over twenty years," complained to Congress of the coercion to which workingmen had been subjected. The loan election, he asserted, was no more free than "was the pretended election of Napoleon to be Emperor of France." Men who believed the program of the Board extravagant and its methods arbitrary and irresponsible were left with no recourse but appeals to Congress and court action following refusal to pay the assessments levied upon them.

Although later developments abundantly established the folly of much of Shepherd's precipitate planning—some of it obviously based on sheer guesswork—and although his steam-roller tactics were frequently lawless, the imagination and courage he brought to bear upon his task command admiration. Unsatisfied with half-measures, he believed nothing short of reshaping the entire city of Washington would answer, and piecemeal execution of the job would imperil the whole. Apart from new bridges across Rock Creek to ease communication with the capital, Georgetown could get along with minor changes, just as better bridging of the Potomac's Eastern Branch and a few improved roads north and east would suffice for the county. But Shepherd was determined to make Washington "a city worthy of the Nation's capital." His program of grading the streets aimed not only at the creation of an adequate drainage system but also, by levelling hilly stretches and filling hollows, at giving the avenues uniform gradients and opening the Capitol to view.

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from every part of the city. Since he was building for the future, streets still empty of residences must be improved with the rest.

Yet in early 1871, despite some post-war building, every section of Washington contained unkempt vacant lots; open fields still ringed the area north of O street and east of the Capitol beyond the newly laid out Lincoln Park. On 7th street horsecars ran to the city limits, but on 11th and 9th streets the lines ended at S and M streets respectively. A single house, occupied by a fortune-teller, stood on Massachusetts avenue west of 17th street, while the debris left after the recent removal of Hopkins' brickyard cluttered the stretch beyond Dupont Circle. Shepherd, however, reasoned that once supplied with urban facilities the capital would grow, and the city must be ready. The upturn in real estate lent him encouragement. In the spring of 1871 a syndicate of California miners, which included Curtis J. Hillyer, Thomas Sunderland and Senator William Stewart of Virginia City, Nevada, put some $600,000 into land in the Dupont Circle area. There on the square northwest of the circle "Stewart Castle," as imposing as its name implied, began to rise two years later, while Hillyer built an elaborate house on Massachusetts avenue where the Cosmos Club stands today. From the beginning Shepherd could argue that if California miners saw fit to invest in Washington real estate, no one need worry for the city's future.

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20 Investigation, 1874, II 209, 220; Patriot, 20 Aug 72.
However far-sighted in envisioning his goals, Shepherd displayed myopic indifference to the cost of attaining them. He seemed to combine the gambler's belief that somehow things would break right with a Mosaic faith that in a crisis manna would descend from heaven, in this case the United States government. His creed was: go ahead, do the job, and let the bills fall where they might. Immediately they began to fall thick and fast. The Board enlarged its staff to 203 salaried officials, expanded its program and specified for most of the streets asphalt or wood paving instead of the much cheaper macadam planned at first. To ensure no one's stopping him before it was too late, Shepherd decreed that work should start in every section of the city at once. When Congress reconvened in December 1871, members beheld "miles of incomplete sewers, half-graded streets and half-paved sidewalks." Though cold weather halted much of the work, by March 1872 the Board had spent over $2,000,000.

During seven months of 1871, moreover, the legislature had approved bond issues totalling $1,450,000 for purposes not originally included in the public works program - $450,000 in water bonds, $600,000 of Piedmont Railroad bonds, $300,000 market-house bonds and $100,000 for relief of Chicago after fire razed that city in October 1871. Belated discretion stopped the issue of the railroad bonds and half the market-house bonds, but large taxpayers still distrusted the legislature. As

21 Investigation, 1872, pp. 363-64, loc; Baltimore Sun, 5 Dec 71.
they stated to Congress, in a half year the territorial government had sanctioned an indebtedness larger than that of all but seven states of the Union, all told $9,450,000, nearly three times the debt the District cities and county had accumulated in seventy years.

The Investigation of 1872

In January 1872 the House Committee on the District opened the first of two long investigations into the "Affairs of the District of Columbia", for memorials signed by some 1200 citizens contained charges which the most ardent supporters of President Grant dared not ignore in an election year. One petition, directed primarily at the Board of Public Works, listed some sixteen abuses ranging from carelessness to outright corruption. The other memorial confined itself to presenting evidence of the territorial government's reckless spending and requesting Congress to forbid further increase in the District debt: "The minority, appalled by the perception that five voters who had nothing might surely be counted on to tax the property of a sixth, made no effort at the polls. Your memorialists on that occasion [the loan referendum] saw reason to fear that if the sum had been $600,000,000, the vote would have been the same." A defender of the good intentions of the Board of Public Works wrote at the end of the century: "It was noticeable, however, that but few of the small real estate owners were among those

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22 Investigation, 1872, pp. 8-9.

23 Ibid., pp. 1-2, 8-10; Cong. Globe, 42d, 22 Jan 72, pp. 504-06.
who became opposed to the march of improvements. Those who were most active in opposition to the Board and its work were men of wealth who could well afford to pay the special taxes assessed against their property because of the increased value that the improvements gave it. Well-to-do men, it is true, led the fight, but the fact that a good many householders, unable to pay the special assessments and taxes when due and faced with a 3 percent penalty for every month of delinquency, eventually lost their homes for non-payment suggests that more than the wealthy felt alarm.

Of the four main categories of complaint, the substantiated charge was the needless expense and faulty execution of work on the streets. The Board of Public Works had altered grades "without discretion or fixed plan." For example, the grading of the streets west of the White House where the ground rose slightly before descending into Foggy Bottom at 22nd street cost $300,000, whereas the city corporation had estimated $600 enough to do what was necessary. And the lowering of the street level left houses perched upon embankments that barred access to stables and outbuildings in the rear. Workmen laying a sewer on 2nd street found when digging reached the point of junction with a main


sewer that the lateral line was too low; because the engineer in charge had guessed at the levels, the contractor had to lay an entirely new sewer to drain into another main. For the improvement of 7th street running out through the county to the District line, the Board had requested $25,000, by "error" listed at $2500 in the plan submitted to the legislature, but had spent $95,000; to complete the job would take another $70,000. The majority of the House committee, while deploring the Board's miscalculations, declared them merely honest mistakes.26 The committee had faith that the Board in the future would take more care.

The angry protests at the Board of Public Work's reversal of the decision to narrow and dredge the Washington canal in order to open it to navigation and enable a one-way flow of water to wash sewage far out into the Eastern Branch received a less sympathetic hearing. The Board admitted to ignoring the advice of General Meigs, the army engineer chiefly responsible for the Washington aqueduct, and of four or five other experts upon sanitation, but it was easy to produce reputable contrary scientific opinion that the health of the city left no alternative to filling the canal along B street to its debouchment at 17th. Seven of the nine Congressional committee members reported the sacrifice of the $50,000 already spent on dredging a regrettable loss but one inescapably incurred in the course of acting in the best long-term

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interests of the city. 27

To justify the freedom with which the territorial government had spent public money was more difficult. Two Democratic members of the committee upheld the memorialists contention that irresponsible extravagance marked virtually every act of the legislature as well as of the Board of Public Works. A payroll of $600,000 for salaried officials, contingent expenses for seven months amounting to a larger sum than the wealthiest state in the Union allowed for a year, the $100,000 spent on rented offices and the $113,000 on advertising were all indications of an attitude not to be encouraged. One witness set the expenses of the District government at 300 to 400 percent higher than the city's had been. But because figures showed that the District debt, including the old corporation debts, had already reached $9,000,000, the committee majority felt all necessary safeguards against further loose spending provided for by the $10,000,000 debt limit which Congress had recently imposed. 28 That legal limitation seemingly met the demands of many of the memorialists.

The fourth group of charges were the most serious. In addition to accusing the Board of Public Works of importing Negroes from Virginia and Maryland to vote for the $4,000,000 loan and of coercing Board

27 Ibid., 113-56, 198-205, 211-29, 316-43; Patriot, 6 Jan 72. See also SMs Doc 14, 42C, 25, Ser 1451.

28 Investigation, 1872, pp. XI-XIII.
employees to support it, the petitioners undertook to prove that the
five men in whom the law had vested extraordinary authority were daily
exceeding their already extensive legal powers, notably by starting
new projects without waiting for legislative approval and then by paying
out public money through a Board officer instead of submitting vouchers
to the District Treasurer for payment. Perhaps the very gravity of these
indictments militated against the Congressional committee's accepting
them as valid. And much of the evidence was not incontrovertible,
though the testimony of the District auditor that he knew nothing about
Board expenditures might well have sounded ominous. Probably the most
compelling argument in the Board's favor was its avowed eagerness to do
a needed job quickly; the public, while inconvenienced at times, had
suffered no real injury and later would benefit, and if excessive zeal
for improvements had led those in charge to take shortcuts, their
ultimate goal was so desirable that criticisms of their procedures were
uncalled for. 29 The committee majority, including such able lawyers as
Luke Poland of Maine, commended instead of censuring these five "high-
minded," energetic men and, in order to abet their work, recommended
"generous appropriations from Congress in some manner corresponding to
the valuation of the property owned by the United States."

A minority report signed by two Democrats, John Crebs of Ohio
and Robert Roosevelt of New York, declared the memorialists' conten-
tions established and urged the remedy of amending the territorial act

to make all officials except the Governor elective and hence responsible to the public. Roosevelt, thirty years later best known as the uncle of a Republican President, argued that Congress, having let distrust of the District's ignorant Negro voters persuade it to create an undemocratic local government, should now show faith in the people. But the House of Representatives was tired of the controversy. The hearings had lasted four months, during which Shepherd had had to suspend all work on the streets. It was time to get on with the job, and since the new debt limit left only a million dollars for the Board of Public Works to spend, economy henceforward would guide it. Roosevelt, prophesying with painful accuracy that the Board would rapidly run the debt to $20,000,000, at length induced the House to inquire into the sums of money the Board figured necessary to finish its undertakings. But when Shepherd's reply pointed to $1,240,920 owed by the United States for improvements to federal property and set the costs to the District at not more than his original estimate of six and a quarter million dollars, the 42nd Congress accepted the statement. 30

Attitudes of the Local Press

Except for the Patriot, which cried "Whitewash," the local newspapers acclaimed the outcome of the House investigation. Progress had triumphed over petty fault-finding, and Congress would now vote money to cover the federal government's share of the cost of improvements.

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Why the local press so consistently upheld Boss Shepherd is hard to comprehend, for however inconclusive much of the testimony, the 650 closely printed pages of hearings contain more than a little damaging evidence presented by public-spirited men of unimpeachable integrity. Shepherd's quarter-ownership of the *Star* might account for that paper's views, but why other Washington papers wrote as if criticisms of the Board of Public Works constituted *lesé majesté* admits of no such explanation. Fear of discouraging Congressional generosity to the District was doubtless one reason. Presumably newspaper men, like numberless other citizens, believed that once the Board had carried its work far enough the federal government would assume payment of the $4,000,000 loan, and the *Star* dared think the government would also agree to meet part of the District's routine expenses. Furthermore, Shepherd was shrewd enough always to put his best foot forward in dealing with the press, and the official advertising that ran month after month in several Washington dailies represented a steady source of income no businessman would want to lose. Editors and business managers hoping to see Washington grow may have looked upon the public works program as their best guarantee. And until the reelection of Grant, local Republican sheets might hesitate to attack a regime in the District intimately associated with Republican party power. But by 1873, with the Grand Old Party safe for another two years, editors and owners might have been expected to scrutinize the local scene more critically. They didn't. Till the day of its death in June 1876, the Board of Public Works remained all but sacrosanct; the *Patriot* expired in November 1872,
and thereafter no Washington paper took exception to what Boss Shepherd chose to do. Though out-of-town journals were far less inhibited, the investigation of 1872 attracted little notice, and only months later did big city dailies begin to allude to Washington's "Tammany" and speak of analogies between the "Board of Public Works Ring" and the Ring of the recently indicted Boss Tweed.\textsuperscript{31}

Progress of the Public Works Program

By mid-May 1872 Shepherd, armed with Congressional blessings, was in a position again to hurry forward work on the streets. Seemingly nothing now need slow progress - except the occasional necessity for redoing improperly planned or shoddily performed jobs, such as ripping up newly paved streets in order to lay sewer pipes somehow forgotten when paving began. In actuality, serious delays occurred in the autumn when an epizootic disease killed or crippled hundreds of draft horses needed to cart the tons of earth removed from cuts and wanted for fills. Shepherd, however, refused to recognize man-made obstructions. Multiplying suits brought into court by taxpayers who declared the assessments levied upon them excessive failed to stop him. If popular anger mounted upon learning of the rebates allowed Senators but denied humbler people, the rebates were after all small. And when property-owners on M street engaged their own surveyors and proved

\textsuperscript{31} Patriot, 3, 25 Jul, 20 Aug 72; F. C. Adams, Our Little Monarchy, p. 23; Star, 3 Mar 73.
that Board measurements had foisted upon them $50,000 of over- assessments, the Board adjusted the bills. Instead of protesting against a special tax for sewer construction in addition to other levies, people should be grateful for having sewers. When the Star carried sixteen pages of official advertisements of property to be sold at auction for non-payment of taxes, the Board of Public Works did not falter; somebody would always step in and buy. The Nation's comment that "property originally valuable has been 'improved' and assessed out of existence" simply meant that smart men could pick up good bargains.  

Householders, Board attitudes implied, naturally had to endure some inconvenience, but they would later forget it. "It was a daily occurrence," one man wrote, "for citizens to leave their houses as usual in the morning, and when they returned at evening to find the sidewalks and curbs, which not unfrequently had, but recently [been] laid anew, at their own expense, all torn up and carted away." Changes in the established grades left some houses teetering on banks twenty feet above street level "while others were covered nearly to their roofs. Not unfrequently, buildings had their foundations so injured that they were in danger of falling, and then the owners were notified that they must render them safe within 30 days or they would be pulled down at their expense!" The Star in the thick of the turmoil explained:

"This revolutionary Washington required strong, resolute men, who could not be turned aside by clamor, or induced to take a vacillating irresolute course."  

Even the furor over the tearing down of the Northern Liberties market house had no effect; Shepherd had arranged to entertain at his farm five miles out 7th street the one judge in the District who could have issued an injunction to stop the demolition, but the fight between the wrecking crew and marketmen, ending only when falling timbers killed one of the butchers, was merely an unfortunate accident. Letters and pamphlets bearing titles like "Our Little Monarchy" and "More about our Washington Tammany, Its Tool in Congress" left Shepherd and his cohorts unmoved. The elections of 1872 had returned their friends to Congress and to the District legislature.

Let the "obstructionists" of the "factious ... malignant and mendacious opposition" squawk if they must.  

**Looks of the "New Washington"**

Indeed the physical changes the Board of Public Works had effected in Washington by the spring of 1873 took much of the wind out of the sails of critics and led visitors to declare the results the Board had achieved justification of its "despotic power." Where the old canal had stretched its smelly length from 7th street to 17th street below the

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33 E. E. Barton, Historical and Commercial Sketches of Washington and Environs, pp. 29, 30; Star, 29 Jul, 15 Oct 73; Baltimore Sun, 1 Sep 72.

34 Patriot, 19 Sep, 3 Oct 72.
White House "park", solid ground extended, drained by a strongly constructed sewer. If so sold, the land thus reclaimed, the Board asserted, would reimburse the United States four times over for the cost of the fill. Another main sewer draining the area to the east emptied into the Eastern Branch, while the L street line debouching into Rock Creek served a section of the city hitherto lacking any sewerage. Similarly the extension of water mains had brought Potomac water to a number of areas, while brick or cement sidewalks, miles of wooden pavement, and some concrete and some macadamized roadways ended the misery of dust in summer and heavy mire at other seasons. When new the expensive wood pavements seemed to contrast favorably with the tarred crushed stone surfaces in Paris, where "Imperial Hausmann [sic] humbugged the world for a short space of time into believing in macadam for city uses."

Since streets and alleys occupied 54 percent of all the area within Washington's limits, compared to 35 percent in Vienna, 25 percent in Paris, 35 percent in New York and 29 percent in Philadelphia, the most resentful taxpayer could see that the job done was tremendous and that his money had served some useful purpose. Gone was the filth on Pennsylvania avenue which had annoyed the Russian Grand Duke Alexis during his visit in 1871. Of Washington's "marvelous transformation" the Cincinnati Gazette wrote, "Probably no city in the Union has as many miles of smooth streets and wide new sidewalks." Along the parkings created by the device Mayor Bowen had introduced, grass and thousands of shade trees selected and planted by botanical experts were beginning to give a green beauty to the public ways. Eighty-five years
later the elm trees and wide lawns flanking 16th street would still charm Washingtonians, while the strip of turf and old trees dividing New York avenue into two roadways would please motorists still better.\textsuperscript{35}

The visible progress of the public works program inspired other enterprise also. Long-postponed discussion of how to finance completion of the Washington Monument resumed. In 1873 the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad opened a large new stone depot on 6th street at \& though the location in the bed of the old Washington canal gave envious officials opportunity to gibe at the "Sewer Route", the ponderous Gothic architecture of the new station gratified the city. Little by little householders felt stirred by an unfamiliar civic pride which, the Star proclaimed, "promises almost as much in behalf of the future growth of the city as the grand system of public works." Taxation and the special assessments frightened many people, but others looked upon the "new Washington" as a sound place for real estate investment. During 1872 over 1200 new buildings went up, sales of real estate ran to $10,000,000, and 1873 was topping that record. Extension of street railways north, west, and eastward across the Eastern Branch into Uniontown opened up new residential areas. As the Connecticut avenue line crept out toward Dupont Circle, Alexander Shepherd built an elaborate "mansion" at the corner of the avenue and L street, and on N street, nearer the site of Senator Stewart's "castle," the British

\textsuperscript{35} Rpts of BPW, 1 Nov 72 and 1 Nov 73, esp. p. 11. Star, 4 Nov 71, 20 Nov 72, and 21 Nov 72, quoting Cincinnati Gazette, 11: Feb 73 quoting Lippincotts Magazine.
government purchased land and built a house for Her Majesty's minister. This, except for the building bought by Prussia in 1866, was the first legation in Washington to be owned by a foreign government.36

The United States government itself caught the fever for improvement. Purchase of W. W. Corcoran's country estate, "Harewood," enlarged the grounds of the Soldiers' Home and provided a charming park on Washington's outskirts. The Commissioner of Public Buildings, eager to start a national zoological garden, put a caged American eagle into Franklin square, two deer and later a pair of prairie dogs into Lafayette Square and, having "purchased and liberated" a hundred pairs of English and German sparrows, reported proudly in 1873 that these "valuable" birds were multiplying.37 After the Board of Public Works had removed the street railway tracks from the Capitol grounds, Congress authorized the development of the "Capitol Park" where Frederick Olmstead would again display the talent for landscape architecture that had made his layout of New York's Central Park famous. Even The Nation which had displayed more skepticism about the Board of Public Works' competence than most journals admitted: "the improvements have attracted a respectable class...

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37 Star, 10 Dec 72, 10 Sep, 17 Dec 75; Comr Public Hlgs and Grounds, in An'l Rpts Ch/Engrs to Sec/War, Appendix BB, 1872, p. 10, 1873, pp. 10-12, 1874, p. 11, 1875, p. 1h, 1876, p. 12.
of winter residents who formerly held it in great contempt."36

Business Prospects

The arrival of new residents, if only for the winters, fanned hopes that Washington would not long remain "simply the seat of the General Government and ... be without a single manufacturing establishment or a single wholesale business house." Coal shipments down the C & O canal made fuel inexpensive. While the local newspapers drummed away at the advantages of the District for manufacturing, the House of Delegates talked of putting up a building equipped with steam power where mechanics could rent space. Why, asked one delegate, was the District not "the Lowell, the Lynn, or the Worcester, of the country?"

Men agreed that the area lacked skilled labor and needed more railroads, but by mid-1872 Congress had consented to let the Orange Alexandria and Manassas Railroad and the Washington and Point Lookout Railroad run tracks into the District and authorized the territorial government's subscribing to stock in the projected Piedmont and Potomac Railroad. Furthermore, early the next year an appropriation of $50,000 for dredging the river and deepening Washington's and Georgetown's harbors promised to increase river shipping. If, enthusiasts argued, the price of land between Georgetown and the Great Falls were lowered,

36 Rpts Architect of Capitol Extension in Rpts Sec/Int, 1873, p. 768, Ser 1601, 1874, p. 734, Ser 1639; Nation, 18, 1667, 11 Jun 74, p. 376.
advertising the power available would attract Northern capital and the skilled workers to man new factories; the 34-foot drop from canal to river could supply a number of textile plants and at least one large rolling mill, besides the ten flour and sawmills already drawing power from the canal. One promoter undertook to raise money in England for development at the Great Falls. Although by 1873 new industry had not yet appeared, save a small boot and shoe factory and a lock and bolt company, and although, compared to the 60 percent of the District's working population engaged in personal and professional occupations, the 23 percent in "manufacturing and mechanical" jobs was small, optimism prevailed among business leaders.39 Insurance companies were multiplying, canal traffic was growing, a new National bank opened, and two of Washington's four savings banks during 1872 and early 1873 were paying 6 percent interest on deposits. Before the late summer of 1873 anger at the expenditures of the Board of Public Works failed to breed discouragement in Washington's Board of Trade.40

Petty tradesmen and workingmen, unaccustomed or unable to carry on by borrowing, probably looked with dismay at the course of events,

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39 Nation, 15, 386, 21 Nov 72, p. 328-30; Patriot, 3, 21 Feb, 6 Mar, 19 Sep, 2 Oct 72; Star, 11 May 71, 20 Mar, 12 Apr, 5 Jun 72, 8 Jul 73; Cong Globe, 42C, 25, 19 Jan, 23 Feb, 3, 19 Apr, 4 Jun 72, pp. 179, 1178, 2122-23, 2167, 2546-88, 4219-20, and Appendix, 21, 23 May 72, pp. 1; Journal House of Delegates, 1871, 1, 686; 5 Mis Doc 15, 42C, 35, 17 Dec 72, Ser 1516; Rpt Comr Educ in Rpt Sec/Int, 1872, p. 396, Ser 1561.

40 Washington and Georgetown Directories, 1871 and 1873; Star, 2 Jul 72, 10 Sep 73; Patriot 27 Aug 72; 5 Mis Docs, 68 and 88, 42C, 25, 12, 21 Feb 73, Ser 1546.
but their opinions, if voiced, got scant public notice. Small shopowners lost money from having their places of business made inaccessible by streets torn up for months at a time during which taxes and assessments continued. Day laborers employed by the Board of Public Works or its local contractors had to accept the wage rates paid men brought in by New York and Philadelphia contractors, though the Board had first stipulated a $1.50 a day minimum wage, and in June 1872 the territorial legislature called for a $2.00 minimum for an eight-hour day. Plasterers and carpenters made feeble attempts to organize unions, a Trade Union Central Committee formed, and the National Labor Council held two or three meetings. The results were negligible. And since unions as a matter of course excluded Negroes, even efficient labor organizations would have provided few benefits for a large part of the District's work force. Skilled artisans like members of the typographical, bookbinders' and stone-cutters' unions were in a different situation, and in 1872 the thousand men employed at the Navy Yard were earning from $2.50 to $5.00 a day. But any of them who owned property in the District were subject to heavy taxation. When the panic of 1873 struck in September, craftsmen suffered along with common laborers and capitalists.

City Directory, 1871; Patriot; 3 Jun 71, 1 Oct 72, 13 Jun 73; Star, 12 Feb, 17 Jun 72, 3, 8, 11, 25 Jul 73, 23 Jan, 6 Apr 74; Chronicle, 13 Apr 74; Nation, 18, #469, 25 Jun 74, p. 407.
Financial Collapse of the Territorial Government

Meanwhile Washington's new splendor was costing more than the Board of Public Works itself knew. While its friends repeated that it had done its work "honestly and economically" and scoffed at hints that its books needed auditing, during the spring of 1873 signs were increasing that its bookkeeping methods were casual in the extreme and its Treasurer knew neither the total of his disbursements nor what money had gone for. In fact, despite a Congressional appropriation of three and a half million dollars to cover the costs of improvements to federal property, by July the District was bankrupt. It tried paying its employees in bonds for a time, but by the end of the summer was unable to pay wages in any form. School teachers, clerks, police, firemen, and day laborers had to tighten their belts. In September came the failure of the banking house of Jay Cooke and Company and the beginning of a country-wide depression. Bank after bank suspended payment. When the First National Bank of Washington closed its doors, its president, Henry D. Cooke resigned as governor of the District. President Grant appointed Alexander Shepherd to the post, but Shepherd, for all his assurance, could no longer obtain credit for the District. "The recent financial troubles," reported the Board of Public Works in November, "prevented any realization from a sale of the sewer certificates.

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\footnote{\textsuperscript{42} Star, 30 Apr, 9 Jun, 13 Jul 73; Investigation, 1874, vol 1, pp. 162, 169, vol 2 pp. 12, 128; Nation, 17, Dec 17, 7 Aug 73, p. 86; U.S. Stats., 17, 106 and 526, 8 Jan, 3 Mar 73; Patriot 29 Jun 72.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{43} Star, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 27 Sep 72.}
authorized by an act of the legislature, approved June 26, 1873, which had been negotiated in the city of New York at rates deemed advantageous to the District. Thus suddenly deprived of this means of resource, the Banks were, in many instances, compelled to pay the contractors with these certificates, which, in common with all securities, had been seriously affected in value. Property-owners could not or would not pay the special assessments. Taxpayers angry during prosperous times grew panicky as financial pressures on everyone heightened. In vain a Washington real estate firm pointed out that, thanks to the federal payroll, "no community in the country so rapidly regained its stability or is in so good condition for progressive development." The murmurs of wrath which had steadily gained in volume from 1871 onward now reached a roar. A second Congressional investigation of "Affairs in the District of Columbia" began in February 1874.

High Society and its Doings

Shepherd put up a bold front during that winter of 1873-74. As his enemies gathered their forces, he not only prodded contractors to hurry on with their jobs, but he and his wife carried on a round of social activity perhaps designed to reassure the community of the stability of its government, perhaps merely to let him enjoy to the full his status of governor while it lasted. Though a simplicity that

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44 Rpt BPW, 1 Nov 73, p. 5; Star, 24 Jan 74; Investigation, 1874, 1, 467; Cong Record, 43, 19, 17 Mar 74, p. 2183.
included dining at five in the afternoon marked President Grant's household, Governor Cooke had set his successor an example of lavish entertaining. "If refined taste did not prevail, the defect was covered by Oriental splendor," Emily Briggs had written of Henry Cooke's parties. "An official reception is given in mid-winter and $1,500 is paid for the single item of roses alone." The Olivia Letters, a collection of Miss Briggs' newspaper articles, noted: "In other cities of the Union the mansions of the opulent and hospitable are thrown open because the host and hostess desire to see their guests. In Washington this order is reversed." As "society columns" for the first time began to appear in every metropolitan daily, "the passion for notoriety to be won by prodigal display" found an outlet in the capital. If members of the newly organized Metropolitan Club at 15th and H streets or the men who frequented the less select Washington Club on New York avenue enjoyed hours spent in the clubrooms, and if old Washingtonians treasured above all invitations to the Horatio King's literary soirées - "The King Reunions" - or evenings at Professor Henry's at the Smithsonian, the "political element" preferred to attend the endless succession of elaborate formal receptions. There were to be seen a galaxy of diamonds with Mrs. Fernando Wood attached to the back of them," gowns of "extreme elegance" and an array of

important public figures.\textsuperscript{46} Begun with Grant's first inaugural amid rejoicings over the departure of the unpopular and unpolished Andrew Johnson, and then nourished by the influx of well-to-do winter residents drawn to the "new Washington", the fashion "for everyone who entertains at all to think to outdo everyone in extravagance" had reached such proportions before 1874 that the Star, uneasy over the impending investigation of District affairs, proposed: "Let us have cheaper pleasures, and it cannot be doubted that we shall soon hear less of 'rings' and deficits from the public treasury."\textsuperscript{47} As head of "the Monumental city, so celebrated for its lavish but tasteful hospitality," Governor Shepherd saw no wisdom in such counsel; at least his new house on Connecticut avenue continued to be the scene of "brilliant" receptions, masquerade balls or dances held in "the new ball room," and on every occasion the amiable host and his guests getting as much satisfaction "as if no previous opportunity had been given to enjoy the hospitality of the Governor's residence."\textsuperscript{48}

Public Welfare and Private Charity

While the festivities of high society mattered no more than

\textsuperscript{46} Patriot, 12 Feb 71; Baltimore Sun, 5, 13 Feb 72; Star, 17 Feb 72, 1 Jan 73; Marian Gouverneur, \textit{As I Remember}, p. 352; Olivia Letters, pp. 194, 320-22; Francis Blair Sands, \textit{True History of the Metropolitan Club}.

\textsuperscript{47} Star, 18, 20 Jan 3, 1 Mar 73, 19 Jan 74.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 1, 2, 3, 6, 16, 21, 23 Jan, 11, 12 Feb 74; Chronicle, 27 Feb 74.
formerly to the thousands of citizens struggling to keep the wolf from the door, the "fashionable" of the early 1870's, to a degree unknown in the Washington of earlier years, appeared to ignore the misery about them. Perhaps characteristic of the ambitious throughout the America of the gilded age, that indifference was particularly noticeable in a city where temporary residents who lacked roots in the community set the pace. The charity ball and the benefit whist party had not yet become a society routine. Philanthropy did not disappear: W. W. Corcoran built and endowed in memory of his wife the beautiful Louise Home for impoverished elderly gentlewomen; a score of citizens contributed time and money to the Industrial Home School, to the orphan asylums and to other good works; most of the Districts' ill churches helped "worthy" causes; a woman's club sought to rescue unwilling inmates of Washington's "houses of ill fame"; and a Citizens' Relief Committee collaborated with the Army Depot Commissary in trying to dole out federal relief funds wisely. But, unlike officials of the municipalities, the heads of the territorial government seemed to share the apathy or blindness fashionable newcomers displayed. Henry Cooke had restricted his charitable efforts in the main to serving on the board of the YMCA and as a Sunday School teacher. Alexander Shepherd and his closest associates divided their time between supervising the public works program, maintaining their newly acquired social positions and attending to their personal business affairs. The columns of the Star which for years had carried stories of want and endeavors to lighten it now rarely wrote of civic ills other than those due to opposing the
Board of Public Works. Even the House of Delegates, composed though it was of relatively humble men, evinced similar ostrich-like qualities. Urged on by its five Negro members, it passed acts to bring about racial non-discrimination but gave only fleeting attention to other social problems besetting the District. Some truth certainly clothed one contemporary comment: "There was never a time in Washington when the wants of the laboring man and the poor were so little understood and so much neglected."

In 1872 while abject poverty endured and, in spite of the efforts of the Board of Health, disease spread in the Negro quarters, the legislature had entered into an extraordinary agreement with the Washington Market Company: in return for use of the Pennsylvania avenue frontage of the still unfinished market house, delegates and Council members reduced from $25,000 to $7,500 the company's annual ground rent which Congress had earmarked for relief of the poor. In belief that the government would continue generous support of institutions like the public hospitals and the city orphan asylums, and knowing that Congress had voted $12,000 for care of the aged destitute, the legislature apparently persuaded itself that the Board of Public Works was providing enough work to prevent unemployment and that all was well.

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49 Nation, 18, 429, 18 Sep 73, p. 186 and 430, 25 Sep 73, p. 202; Star, 8, 9, 13 May 73, 8 Feb 1920; Patriot, 18, 19 Sep, 30 Nov 71, 18 Jan 72; Rpt Comr Education in Rpt Sec Int, 1872, 15, p. 398, Ser 1561; F. C. Adams, Our Little Monarchy, pp. 14-15.

The Board of Health

At a time when obliviousness was vying with indifference and black ignorance to heighten wretchedness in the District cities, the services performed by the Board of Health stood out as a signal achievement. The local press, intent upon boosting the Board of Public Works, was not always sympathetic to the health officers' program; the Star at one point protested at continuing a body whose five members got $2000 apiece "earned by throwing night soil at each other."Fortunately their work spoke for itself. Official reports presented facts a reluctant public needed to know, and while doctors and the sanitary inspectors were rarely in a position to eradicate the evils they noted, they made an essential beginning in carrying on a campaign of education, underscoring the importance of accurate vital statistics and of establishing and enforcing a sound sanitary code. By exercising such authority to quarantine as they had, and assisted by a Congressional appropriation, they gradually reduced the incidence of contagious disease. After an eighteen-month struggle to make vaccination compulsory for "every man, woman and child" in the District, they halted a severe

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51 Star, 15 Jun 74.
epidemic of smallpox which was ravaging Northern cities; that Washington was freed of it by midsummer 1873 was a tribute to the District health officers.  

Their attention to other forms of preventive medicine was equally painstaking, albeit less successful. They urged reclamation along the river front of "the vast areas now partially submerged, and on receding tides giving out poisonous vegetable emanations, generating malaria." They fought for public baths and wash houses: "Personal filth ... and the saturation of unwashed undergarments are among the prolific generators of plague and pestilence." They strove to organize an efficient street-cleaning service and regular garbage collections, and, however far they fell short of the ideal, the District cities at least enjoyed greater cleanliness than in many years past. In efforts to end the nuisance of animals running loose in the streets, the Board of Health introduced a system of impounding. The first catch, to everyone's huge amusement, was three of President Grant's horses strayed from the White House stable; it cost the President $6 to redeem them.  

Because, despite the new sewers, hundreds of privies still existed in Washington and Georgetown, disposal of night soil was a more serious problem. In 1874, a contract with the "Odorless Excavating Apparatus Company"

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52 Star, 6 Feb, 13, 21, Mar, 12, 13, 17 Jun, 20 Aug, 16, 18 Oct 72, 15 Feb 8, 9, 13 May, 25, 26 Jul 73; Patriot, 11 May, 16 Aug 71, 25 Sep 72, Cong. Globe, 42d, 25, 15 Apr 72, p. 2527, 18 Apr 72, p. 2527; Rpt of Brd of Health in Comrs' Rpt, 1874, pp. 281-82, 289.  

introduced the use of suction pumps and air-tight containers instead of the buckets and open carts formerly employed in removing night soil, but wagons still carted it to the wharf at 17th street below the White House and thence barges carried the load down the Potomac. Odd as the idea may sound to 20th century ears, the Board of Health strongly advocated dispensing with water closets altogether: the "earth closet system ... is cheaper and more salubrious," one report stated, citing the findings of European sanitation experts. The innovation would save city water and provide fertilizer for agriculture.

While the Board of Health congratulated "a community unaccustomed to sanitary restraints" for its general conformity to the new regulations, health officers failed to enlist public support for one of their most far-sighted and significant proposals: the elimination of alley-dwellings. Dr. Verdi in 1872 first put the case for wiping out that threat to public health, a danger "on account of its permanency; existing at all hours, in every part of the city, behind the palatial mansion as well as in front of the poor man's hut..."

"I allude to the hundred miles or more of alleys which run through our squares, and which receive the filth that flows from almost every house in our city. They are generally badly paved and undrained, and yet are used as the repository of all the disgusting and foul refuse

54 Patriot, 10 Aug 71; Comrs Rpt, 1871, p. 292-293; Star, 9 Jul 73.

of our dwellings... These alleys should not exist, and if they are tolerated at all, they should serve only for the transportation of wood, coal or such articles as require an easy access to the back premises of the dwellings." Cobblestone paving was "worse than useless, for it allows...filth to be absorbed and retained between interstices."

Every alley should be paved with concrete, be supplied with a sewer, and so graded that a nightly hosing from hydrants in each block could flush the alley clean.56

Such a program meant inducing the Board of Public Works to act, and the Board of Public Works, more anxious to make a fine showing where it would be immediately visible than to improve the cities' hidden recesses, confined itself to paving with "useless" cobblestone.

In 1874 the Board of Health took the unprecedented step of condemning 389 unsanitary dwellings but reported the inhabited alleys "a great source of evil" demanding "disposal of the squalid shanties that line them... and subjecting them to the same public regulations as the streets and avenues."57 Had Washington heeded this plea, the 20th century city would have escaped many ills.

In addition to alley-dwellings, all overcrowded and ill-ventilated buildings, whether privately or publicly owned, came under the fire of the Board of Health. In 1870, the Metropolitan Police, then in sole charge of sanitary inspections, had deplored the discontinuing of the

56 Quoted in Patriot, 23 Jul 72.
57 Rpt BFW, 1873, p. 54; Comrs Rpt, 1874, p. 287.
whitewashing that the Freedmen's Bureau had performed in Negro quarters; there the numerous small tenement houses in which large families each occupied a room scarcely ten feet square had become "dens of filth." Proceedings against the occupants rather than against the landlords were futile. Perhaps only Washington's fright over the small pox epidemic in 1872 persuaded citizens to accept the health regulation condemning property of this sort. Although before a law of June 1874 made registration of births obligatory, Board physicians could only guess at the infant mortality rate, they recognized the airlessness and dirt in which thousands of families had to live as one of the "constantly operating causes which destroy our cherished offspring." Nor did the federal government escape censure for its over-heated and ill-ventilated office buildings, particularly the Treasury and the recently finished Pension Office. "The rooms are crowded with clerks and employees much beyond their capacity. These, for an average of six hours per day, breathe an atmosphere saturated with carbonic acid, produced by their own respiration, rendered still more deleterious by a corresponding amount of effete animal exhalation from the surface of their bodies." The top story of the Treasury was a barbarous "den for cattle" and so used would "be favored by a

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58 Rpt Met Pol Brd, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1870, p. 933, Ser 1449, 1871, pp. 1215-17, Ser 1505, and 1872, p. 911, Ser 1560. For a brief summary of this phase of Board of Health activities, see William H. Baldwin, Chairman of the President's Homes Commission, Report of the Committee on Improvement of Existing Houses and Elimination of Unsanitary and Alley Houses, 1908, p. 1.
Crime and Juvenile Delinquency

Overcrowding and wretched living conditions contributed to a high crime rate. Though the police assigned the cause to legal delays in convicting lawbreakers, the shanties and tenements on the Island, Washington's largest slum area, bred half the crimes in the District. The District Supreme Court and the new police court, it is true, had over-loaded dockets, lightened slightly when in 1874 Congress permitted the Supreme Court justices to hold additional sessions. True also that a police force enlarged to 238 officers and men was still too small, and that ignorance and greed among Justices of the Peace and constables turned laws designed for creditors' protection into instruments of oppression of "the poorer classes." Furthermore, uncertainty about what constituted law in the District had created, in the Nation's phrase, "a hodge-podge of unreality," worsened by the fact that every judge when appointed was "a resident of a State unacquainted with the laws and usages of the District of Columbia." Though Congress rejected the clumsy codification of District law prepared in 1872 by territorial commissioners, the appearance in 1874 of an official volume entitled Revised Statutes of the District of Columbia, incomplete and badly organized as it was, helped matters somewhat. Better understanding of

the law, however, failed to stop thieving and gambling, prostitution and violent crime.60

Perhaps the strongest deterrent to crime was fear of even a brief sojourn in the old District jail: four to eight persons in 8 by 10-foot windowless cells without water closets and for an entire corridor only one tub of water allowed daily for prisoners to wash in. Here, under conditions worse than during the Civil War, all sorts and kinds of people awaited trial or served their sentences, in 1874 at one time 214 persons ranging, the Chronicle complained, "from the child of ten to the old man and woman of seventy,...from the Jeremy Diddles who swindles you out of your family Bible to the ambitious young man who demands $50,000 or your life." Until a new city jail or the long-talked-of federal penitentiary was built, the only other place for law-breakers was the workhouse or the Reform School for Boys.61

As the population of Washington and Georgetown grew, juvenile
delinquency increased. At the workhouse over a hundred children averaging in age about thirteen and a half years had to consort with "old and hardened characters," because the Reform School could accommodate only sixty-five boys. In fact the trustees felt obliged to release some prematurely to make room for others. "There is in this District, a large number of boys whose only home is the streets, whose dormitory is the market house, a stable, an out-house or sometimes the lee-side of a wall, or a door-step; and others who have parents, but might better, perhaps, be orphans." Firmly believing in the school's "salutary" effect upon its inmates, the trustees begged Congress for a larger building in a more healthful location than the malaria-ridden farm above Georgetown. And Congress, doubtless guilty at having appropriated nothing for the federal institution since 1870, responded at last by voting $100,000 for a building large enough for three hundred boys; it was to be located near the District line northeast of the Capitol. When opened in late 1874, the building housed fifty-five white boys and fifty-eight colored fellow inmates of the first bi-racial public "school" below the Mason-Dixon line.62

The School System

Conscientious citizens looked to education to reduce juvenile delinquency.
and adult crime. The federal Commissioner of Education spoke pointedly of the 39 percent of illiterates among the persons arrested in the area in 1871. That 24,000 of the District's nearly 29,000 illiterates were Negroes brought no comfort. Progress in expanding the school system was discouragingly slow. Continuation of the building program begun in Washington under Mayor Wallach had added by 1872 the Seaton, Curtis, Jefferson and Cranch schools for white children, and the Sumner and Capitol Hill schools for colored - all the new buildings patterned on the Wallach school of 1864 - but the District's Congressman, Norton Chipman, told the House that the District lacked space for ten thousand white children and for 5,800 colored. Some fifty-nine children to a class was the average, although few more than half the Negro children in the District attended, and only 41 percent of the white children were enrolled in the public schools, with perhaps another 30 percent in parochial or other private schools. Congress answered the appeal by giving not the two and a half million acres of public land Chipman asked for but part of a square on Virginia avenue in southeast Washington. 63 By 1873 the only way of offering education to thousands of children appeared to be half-day sessions with some pupils attending in the morning, others in the afternoon, an arrangement that doubled the

63 Rpt Comr Education in Rpt Sec/Int 1871, pp. 22-23, 64-65, 387-88, 399, 574-75, Ser 1506; Patriot, 29 Jan 72; Chronicle, 3 Jul 71; Rpt School Trustees, 1874-75, pp. 43-44, 77, 94; Cong Globe, 42d, 23, 16 Apr, 23 May 72, pp. 2527, 4035, and Appendix 4 Jun 72; Star, 29 Jun, 14 Oct 73. For a long list of private schools see Star, 11, 19, 27 Aug 73.
load upon teachers. A year later the school system had 1,100 additional pupils enrolled and only nine new class rooms. Hope of opening a high school faded in face of demands for more elementary schools. Since voluntary attendance more than filled the rooms, school authorities made no attempt to enforce the truancy law. Yet the Washington school tax was higher than that of any other city in the country, $46.81 per $100 of assessed valuation of property, whereas St. Louis' and San Francisco's, the next highest was $4.0, and Boston's only $17.90.64

The Investigation of 1874

Clearly all was not well in the Territory of the District of Columbia. Of that an investigation undertaken in 1874 by a joint Senate and House committee left no doubt. Many of the ills long antedated the Board of Public Works, but, so far from lessening them, Boss Shepherd, his critics averred, had greatly increased them. Vainly The Chronicle characterized the memorialists who begged for Congressional intervention as scalawags or worse: one was a "curbstone voteshaver", another "a red-hot Democrat and an original rebel", still another was "said to be the owner of several houses on ___ alley, used for purposes which cannot be mentioned in a family newspaper," and Sayles J. Bowen, once "fraudently" elected mayor, had earned "the just censure and anathema of every man." W. W. Corcoran, too much revered in

64Rpt Comr Education in Rpt Sec/Int, 1873, p. 135, Ser 1602, and 1874, p. 171, Ser 1640; Patriot, 29 Jan 72; Star, 3 Oct 73, 9 Feb 74.
Washington to be included in that kind of attack, nevertheless had to publish his bill of particulars against the District government in a Baltimore newspaper because no local paper would print it. While impassioned defenders of the Board of Public Works and its cohorts insisted that selfishness and petty vindictiveness motivated its enemies, by 1874 the opposition counted in its ranks citizens of every social stratum. Mutual distrust reached a pitch as intense as that of the spring of 1861, born then of suspicions of disloyalty, now of belief that dishonesty and corruption were undermining the community. Congress pursued its inquiry carefully. The published hearings cover 3000 pages of fine print. And in them crops up abundant evidence of very strange doings indeed.

The charge that District officials, members of the Board of Public Works first and foremost, were "negligent, careless, improvident, unjust, oppressive and illegal" summed up the memorialists' argument, but they supplied a long list of specific examples backed by a mass of detail. Needless and expensive changes ordered in the name of improvements, bad planning and shoddy work done at excessive cost - these repeated in general the accusations of 1872, but now most of the particulars offered were incontestable. Anyone traversing Washington's streets could see that the wooden pavements laid at vast

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65 Chronicle, 28 Jan 74; Star, 26 Feb 74; Baltimore Sun, 5 Feb 74; Nation, 13, 12 Feb 74, p. 99; F. C. Adams, Our Little Monarchy, pp. 1-9; Investigation, 1874, i, Charges of the Memorialists, p. 5; Washington and Georgetown Directory, 1874.
expense were already rotting, whereas had the planners heeded the experience of other American cities that costly mistake could not have occurred. The complainants furnished names, dates and places where dishonesty or incompetence had produced over-measurements of work and hence over-assessment upon property owners. Plaintiffs and the Congressional committee as jury held the Board's system of contracting responsible for many of the disasters. Instead of opening jobs to competitive bidding, after the summer of 1871 the Board had fixed prices for each type of work and Shepherd had then awarded contracts to whomever he chose. Favoritism and jobbery had resulted.  

"Any system," declared the committee, "which would enable an adventurer to come from a distant city, and, in the name of a contracting firm... succeed in securing a contract, and actually binding his principals, the contractors, to pay $97,000 for a contract of only about $700,000, in its nature must be vicious and ought to be condemned." But the Board's most "pernicious" error lay in projecting a more expensive system of improvements than the community could possibly support, all to be done "at one stroke without the preliminary organization of the various details of engineering-work and plans, plans and estimates."  

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67 Investigation, 1874, vol 1, pp. IX, VII-VIII, IX.
Figures offered by Governor Shepherd himself showed that, instead of $6,578,397, the Board had spent $18,872,565. Add to that the sums contracted for but not yet paid out, and expenditures for public works would run to more than $20,000,000, or $7,000,000 yearly since September 1871. Although the books of the Board treasurer and the auditor, insofar as they had kept records at all, were in such confusion that only time and a skilled accountant could unravel their mysteries, the alarming fact of the District's insolvency was clear. By June 1874 the deficit for ordinary operating expenses would come to a minimum of $1,000,000, even were every cent of the $1,031,778 of unpaid taxes collected by then. In the face of such evidence, the governor's scathing remarks about "pretended taxpayers" who, in effort to embarrass the District government, refused to remit what they owed had little effect. Nor did his tacit admission that he expected Congress to foot half the bills endear him to the committee.

By counting as federal property the square footage in every street and land "dedicated to public use as parks and squares," he calculated the value of government real estate in the District as about equal to the $96,433,000 of taxable property in private hands. Federal evaluators only a year before, using a highly selective method of computing, had valued government property at slightly over $16,000,000.69

68 Ibid., Governor's Statement, pp. 464-65.
69 Ibid., pp. XI, XIV-XV, XVIII, XX, Governor's Statement, p. 469; Rpt NPW, 1873, 4-5; S Mis Doc 34, 42C, 2S, 13 Jan 73; Star, 9 Aug 73.
Indignant at learning that Shepherd had proceeded on the assumption that the federal government would shoulder much of the debt, the committee reprimanded District officials sharply. The argument of the defense that they had broken no laws and that the series of special assessments upon private property were no part of the public debt met with the rejoinder that evasions of the spirit of the law were patent and to pile upon taxpayers heavier burdens than they could carry was tantamount to creating a debt the District treasury would eventually have to assume. While acknowledging the many hardships individuals had suffered, the committee, primarily concerned as it was with the financial catastrophe confronting the community, passed over lightly most of the memorialists' other complaints - the unequal and inequitable incidence of taxation and office-holders' use of their positions to amass "fortunes" for themselves. If Boss Shepherd had made excessive profits on the contract for installing plumbing in the District buildings, if the grading of 7th street out to the District line had greatly increased the value of his farm, if Henry D. Cocke and others had formed a "real estate pool" which, acting upon inside information, had bought property cheap and sold it at high prices after improvements in the neighborhood were announced, these and similar matters were of minor moment. In the eyes of the committee, Shepherd's personal honesty remained unchallenged.70

70 Investigation, 1874, vol I, pp. XIV, XVI, XX; Petition, Sh3A-E22, 10 Mar 74; Georgetown Courier, 18 Jul 74. For brief discussion of the careless methods the BPW used in levying assessments, see Comrs Rpt, 1874, p. 170.
While the local press rejoiced that "not one word" of the committee's report could "be fairly construed into censure" of District officials, least of all Shepherd, the "Bayard without fear and without reproach," other metropolitan journals lashed out at the committee's mildness. The reason for it, the New York Tribune opined and the Washington Chronicle agreed, was plain: Grant had so closely identified himself with his appointees that a strong indictment of them would have amounted to censuring the President. But satisfaction or anger over Congressional forgivingness faded somewhat as the future of the District came up for discussion in House and Senate. In April while the investigation was still in process, Congress had appropriated money to pay school teachers' salaries. In June, when debate opened on what to do about other debts of the District, Washingtonians still hoped for further federal assistance. Obviously the first necessity was to straighten out the financial tangle; the question of how the District was to be governed thereafter could wait.

Abolition of the Territory

No one expected the territorial government to endure. Nor did it.

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72 Nation 18, No. 467, 11 Jun 74, p. 376; Rpt Comr Education in Rpt Sec/Int, 1874, p. CCL, Ser 1640; Georgetown Courier, 25 Apr 74; Chronicle, 16 May 74.
Congress, pronouncing it a failure, voted without debate to abolish the governorship, the legislature and the Board of Public Works and temporarily place control in the hands of three commissioners to be appointed by the President. The only matter of brief controversy dealt with the rate of taxation, settled by imposing a 3 percent tax on Washington real estate, 2½ percent on Georgetown's and 2 percent on the county's. The First and Second Comptroller of the Treasury were to audit the accounts of the Territory and of the Board of Public Works and examine property-holders' claims to damages. Special commissioners were to handle funding of the District debt through fifty-year bonds bearing 3.65 percent interest and guaranteed by the "faith" of the United States. The Board of Health and the school boards were to remain intact. Finally, two senators appointed by the Vice President and two representatives chosen by the Speaker of the House were to draft a bill for a permanent form of government for the District and recommend what share of the costs should fall upon the United States, what upon the community.

Most citizens drew a long breath of relief. The credit of the United States would prevent a financial collapse, wanton spending would cease, injured property-owners could anticipate collecting damages, and Congress in time would return control of their own affairs to District citizens if by then they wanted it. For the time being the new law

offered the further advantage, as some men saw it, of disposing of the "curse" of Negro suffrage, the cause, the Georgetown Courier contended, of many ills of the recent past. Men who regretted the change were silenced by the ridicule that members of the now defunct House of Delegates brought upon themselves and their defenders when they first heard of the Territory's demise. A number of delegates rushed to the legislature's hall and pocketed inkwells and other small objects, while one pilferer, caught walking out with a red feather duster protruding from his trouser leg, fastened the label "Feather Duster legislature" upon the entire assembly. Thereafter whites opposed to the return of any local suffrage that included colored voters spoke of "The Feather Dusters" and "the Murder Bay politicians" - by implication all Negroes - as responsible for all the disasters of the territorial regime. Race questions apart, every resident welcomed the almost certain assurance that henceforward the United States government would meet part of the cost of running the federal District. Alexander Shepherd himself could find comfort in that prospect.74

Shepherd's political power was ended. President Grant nominated him as one of the three commissioners, but, despite the support of local newspapers, all but six senators, three of them "carpet baggers", refused to confirm him. Perhaps the "disgust which the results of the investigation have aroused" within the District would not have

74 Georgetown Courier, 20 Jun 74; Chronicle, 21 Jun 74; Star, 18 Jun 74, 29 Jan, 25 Feb 78; Sunday Chronicle, 3 Feb 78.
blocked the appointment, but constituents’ opinion did. Senator Logan of Illinois declared a visit to the West showed that "the people were feeling more strongly about the District investigation than about the currency itself."\textsuperscript{75} William Dennison, one-time governor of Ohio and Postmaster General in Lincoln’s second Cabinet, and former Congressmen Henry T. Blow of Missouri and John Ketchum of New York received the appointments. Shepherd remarked “a sacrifice was needed” and he was selected for the role. He brought libel suits against the editors of the New York Tribune and Sun for defaming his character, but in 1876, his fortune gone and his hopes of new public office withered, he moved himself and his family to Mexico.\textsuperscript{76}

The Position of Negroes

If intelligent colored people deplored the extinction of the territorial government, they voiced no protest. Perhaps faith in the beneficence of Congress offset disappointment over losing the franchise. During the territorial regime they had had reason to be hopeful of gradually achieving general acceptance as citizens. The President’s appointment of first three and later two Negroes to the Governor’s Council suggested his readiness to wipe out the color line in the District; the House of Delegates never had fewer than two Negro members and at

\textsuperscript{75} Georgetown Courier, 25 Apr 74; Star, 21 Jun 74; Nation, 18, # 169, 25 Jun 74, p. 103.

\textsuperscript{76} Star, 3 Jul 74, 22 Mar 75; Georgetown Courier, 18 Jul 74; Bryan, History of the National Capital, II, p. 623.
one session had five; and early in 1872 Senator Sumner had pressed for passage of two bills in Congress, one barring racial discrimination in the selection of teachers and in the admission of children to Washington's and Georgetown's public schools, the other bill, anticipating most of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, forbidding segregation in public places of entertainment, churches, and, perhaps for ultimate thoroughness, in cemeteries. When both Sumner bills failed in the Senate, the territorial legislature enacted a District civil rights law imposing a $100 fine upon any hotel, restaurant, saloon or barber shop that refused to serve "any respectable and well-behaved person regardless of color." Here under the eye of Congress the police and courts stood ready to enforce the act, notwithstanding attempted evasions such as the posting of exorbitant prices: "Haircut, $30, shampoo $40," or "Steak $2, ham and eggs $3," with a notice in small print offering "a liberal reduction...to our regular patrons." The famous Arlington Hotel near Madison Place had faced a law suit for denying a Negro a room.77 And at President Grant's second inauguration the wives of colored Congressmen danced at the ball alongside West Point cadets.78

77 The degree to which this act took effect requires careful exploration of court dockets, a task too time-consuming and specialized to undertake for this study. The failure of the contemporary local press to pursue the matter constitutes only negative evidence.

78 Cong. Globe, 42d, 2d, 16 Apr, 6, 7, 21 May 72, pp. 2539-42, 3099-3100, 3274, 3738-41; Council Journal, IV, 9 May, 20 Jun, 1 Aug 72, pp. 38, 211, L30, 550; Patriot, 6 Jan, 20, 22, 23 Jul, 9 Oct 72; Star, 30 Aug 72; Nation, 16, # 401, 13 Mar 73, p. 173.
By 1874 Negroes could feel they had made significant gains in status. Discrimination between the colored battalion and the whites in the District militia persisted, but the kind of hostility to Negro troops that had prevailed a decade before no longer existed. Colored men voting in territorial elections had been subject to no greater political pressures than had white laboring men. White churches rarely welcomed colored parishioners, but Negro churches had multiplied and in June 1874 the laying of the cornerstone of St. Augustine's on 15th street between K and L marked the building of the city's first exclusively Negro Roman Catholic church. A few colored men enjoyed business success; one of Washington's best hotels was the Wormley House owned and run by the Negro James Wormley. If Howard University faced sharp financial problems, if the three hundred patients at the Freedmen's Hospital got inadequate medical care, and the Medical Society of the District of Columbia refused to recognize Negro doctors, if other professions and well-paying jobs were largely closed to Negroes and street railway employees behaved rudely to colored passengers, nevertheless no other American community in which the proportion of Negroes was high offered colored people better legal protection or held out greater hope that as Negroes rose in the economic scale, racial barriers would vanish. 79

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79 Journal House of Delegates 1872, III, 189-200; City Directory, 1874; Star, 15 Jun '74; S Rpt 27, 410, 28, 5 Feb 70, Ser 1809; Ltr, Rev Francis S. Grinke to G. Smith Wormley, 23 Aug 74, Carter Woodson Papers, Addition 5, Box 2; Rpt Freedmen's Hospital in Rpt Sec/Int, 1874, pp. 787-88, Ser 1639; Patriot, 12 May 71, 10 May 72; Cong Globe, 42C, 18, 1, 13 Dec 71, pp. 2, 8h. See also Frederick Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, pp. 126-67.
The one realm in which proponents of "social equality" had made little headway was in the school system. By 1872 the great aspiration of the enlightened colored community had become school integration. Perhaps their progress in other areas stiffened white opposition to so basic a change. Even Frederick Douglass' mild proposal to provide the colored schools with every benefit enjoyed by the white schools failed to pass the Governor's Council. Repeated Negro protests over the division of funds gradually had some effect, but neither mass-meetings of Negro citizens nor the efforts of the territorial House of Delegates succeeded in establishing mixed public schools. When in 1873 the legislature discussed authorizing the school trustees to set aside money to launch a normal school where yearly twenty of the most promising white grammar school graduates might train as primary grade teachers, the House of Delegates amended the bill to allow colored as well as whites to attend. The Council at the instigation of a Negro member rejected the amendment. The Normal School opened in January 1874, with only white pupils enrolled. "The recreancy of our [Negro] representatives in the Council," colored citizens observed bitterly, killed the one possibility of breaking the wall of prejudice that guarded the dual school system. "Separate but equal," whites' justifying phrase, represented a half-truth throughout the seventies; the seven years of public schooling available to the most intelligent Negro child left him with a far sketchier education than the white child
could get. In spite of the defeat of school integration, an influential segment of the white population viewed the lesser successes of Negroes as a threat, for the rights they enjoyed in the District were likely to draw more colored people to the capital. In 1872 the Patriot had fumed over an estimated 4,000 Negro newcomers, arrived between 1870 and 1872 to swell the number of blacks to 18,000: "The native and natural colored population of this District is excellent in character, intelligent, and has always been respected... It has suffered by this unhealthy competition... The thirty thousand who draw costly rations from the District Treasury, as the price of their votes for the Board of Public Works, do not contribute a dime to the general expenditures. They are eating us out of house and home." However exaggerated that appraisal in prosperous times, by mid-1874 when the Board of Public Works and its contractors had ceased to hire laborers, taxpayers had cause for anxiety. The failure of the Freedmen's Bank in the summer of 1874 wiped out the savings of hundreds of Negroes, and in the thick of a severe economic depression, competition for jobs had grown. White day laborers were quite as adverse to a fresh influx of colored people as worried property owners were. Colored emigrants from the South had

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80 Patriot, 30 May, 5 Dec 71, 25 Apr, 10 May 72; Chronicle, 9 Jan 74; Star, 28 May, 30 Jun, 1, 23 Jul, 7 Aug 73, 23 Jan, 10 Jun 74; Journal, House of Delegates, IV, 1872, pp. 95-96, V, 1873, pp. 21-23, 121; Council Journal, V, 27 May, 17 Jun 73, pp. 121-22; 222-23; Rpt Comr Education, in Rpt Sec/Int, 1873, p. 437, Ser 1602.

81 Patriot, 26 Sep 72; Ninth Census, Population, I, pp.
few skills needed in an urban setting, least of all in a community where professional posts or clerical jobs in the government ordinarily composed the backbone of employment. The prospect of longer relief rolls was frightening and old residents had learned that Negroes once settled in Washington or Georgetown were loath to depart. Three quarters of the Negroes in the District had been slaves only twelve years before, and fully forty percent of the colored population was still totally illiterate. Postwar experience, while reducing white fears of blacks, had not dissipated the widespread conviction that they were an inferior and generally irresponsible people.

In retrospect, the notable fact becomes not that some whites felt resentment, but that all whites who had lived in the District since antebellum days did not regard the Negro as the source of most local troubles. The sequence of events lent deceptive force to that notion: the war and military policy had brought thousands of contrabands to Washington; as white citizens, witnessing an unwanted social revolution taking place in their midst, displayed anxiety or resentment, radicals in Congress had dubbed them rebels and enacted laws partly punitive in character, first requiring taxpayers to provide education for the unwelcome penniless newcomers and then giving ignorant blacks political power; every new privilege and right extended to Negroes had brought a

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82 Patriot, 26 Sep 72; 5 Oct 72, 2 Jul, 10 Sep 72; H Misc Doc 16, 13C, 25, Sep 74, Ser 1653; Chronicle, 1 Jun 74.
fresh invasion into the non-industrial, non-commercial federal city, until apprehensive taxpayers sought protection from an ill-informed, propertyless electorate by asking for appointed executives in the local government; and then a Board of Public Works, composed of Presidential appointees, after browbeating colored voters and needy workmen into support of its program, had plunged the District into bankruptcy. Ergo, had Negroes not overrun Washington, she would have escaped these successive disasters.

Yet until Congress reached the decision to wipe out temporarily a local electorate, nothing in print suggests that more than a handful of white men blamed the Districts' troubles upon its colored citizens. Long afterward a Negro student wrote of the period that whereas the greed of the real interests had brought about the panic and thereby disenfranchisement, "the harm and dishonesty of the Shepherd regime was charged to the colored voter, while the beauty and accomplishment of the reformed city was put to the credit of the white people."

True in its major thesis for a slightly later time, that statement not only assigns too much weight to local real estate speculation and the effects of the panic but also overemphasizes the influence of anti-Negro sentiment during the life of the Territory. As long as the territorial government endured, the "Negro question" was a minor issue, never obliterated entirely but not of foremost importance. The Board

of Public Works took the center of the stage, and men complaining about local conditions focused their dissatisfaction upon the Districts' white "Boss" rather than their colored neighbors. Not until the 1950's would Negroes attain so nearly equal status as they approached between 1871 and 1874. Twentieth century Washingtonians, if aware that a Territory of the District of Columbia once existed or that a Boss Shepherd redeemed the city's appearance, tend to think of that physical regeneration as the one admirable accomplishment of the territorial era. Closer examination indicates that the single greatest achievement of that brief three-year period lay in the progress white men and black together made in building a just bi-racial community. The forces that halted that progress and lost for the District most of its earlier gains gathered strength during the interregnum of 1874 to 1878.
In 1874, as before and after, a number of residents of Washington and Georgetown were largely indifferent to the cities' political future. What proportion of the people who lived in the District year after year ranked themselves as local citizens is as impossible to calculate for the mid-1870's as for today. Few or many, householders who maintained citizenship in any of the states and paid taxes in the District only if they owned real estate here were in a position to shrug their shoulders over local social and political problems. That detachment, conducive to an infectious apathy, cushioned the impact of local political change. Even during the fiercest battles over public works, much of Washington had seemingly remained aloof. The newspapers, presumably knowing the tastes of their readers, had consistently allotted as much space to murder and abortion trials and to review of available entertainment as to civic affairs of abiding importance. For a part of the reading public, the break created by the extinction of the territorial government marked no break at all. Except insofar as the country-wide depression forced personal economies and the sufferings of the city's destitute stirred compassion, Washington's "permanent-temporary" residents could live their lives as before, untroubled by local confusions.

Social and Cultural Life

Yearly after the adjournment of Congress, families packed themselves off to summer resorts where the women rocked in the chairs lining
hotel porches or, dressed in the elaborate black alpaca bathing costumes of the day, joined the gentlemen in morning dips in ocean, river or lake; children played on the beaches and explored the countryside. Depending partly on the visitor's pocketbook, the place might be Piney Point on the lower Potomac, or Cape May, smart "Ocean Wave, Long Branch" patronized by President Grant, Cobb's Island or Yeatow, Virginia, or perhaps Atlantic City or Monterey Springs, Pennsylvania. Less well-to-do Washingtonians and clerks tied to their desks till mid-afternoon substituted a steamer excursions, sometimes by moonlight to Mount Vernon, to Glymont somewhat further downstream and to picnic grounds nearer home. Doubtless to everyone's satisfaction, Fourth of July outings under the aegis of Sunday schools and benevolent societies had completely replaced the formal gatherings and speech-making of earlier years. Throughout the summer, people unable to afford expeditions costing as much as $1.50 a day per person made the most of such diversions as attending the "Six-tent Zoological and Arenic Triumph", or watching the annual regatta of yachts on the Potomac, and cheering the "Blue Stockings" of the Olympic nine when they played visiting teams. Although admission to P. T. Barnum's circus ordinarily cost fifty cents, purchasers of a copy of Barnum's Autobiography got tickets free. Every July or August the Washington Schuetzenverein conducted its Schuetzenfest, enthusiastically endorsed by the Turnvereine and other German societies which had federated to form the German American Union.

Come fall, the National Theatre, the Washington Theatre Comique,
Ford's and Wall's Opera House reopened to present old and new favorites - *Julius Caesar*, *Rip Van Winkle* with "Joe" Jefferson in the lead, *Fanchon*, *Lord Dundreggy*, Bret Harte's *Two Men of Sandy Bay* and dozens more. By 1876 two amateur dramatic clubs had also appeared. If informing public lectures were fewer than in earlier years, amusements were no less varied. When Congress reconvened, anyone interested in the workings of the national legislature might find a place in the House or Senate gallery, if not to witness an impeachment trial or the count that settled the disputed Presidential election of 1876, at least to hear vigorous debates on other public questions. On Easter Mondays children rolled dyed eggs on the Capitol grounds. And the year round a score of clairvoyants, "astrologists" and fortune-tellers offered their patrons full knowledge of the future.  

After Nellie Grant's wedding in May 1874 Washington's "World of Fashion" entertained with somewhat less extravagance than before hard times set in. By 1875 the leaders of what the newspapers had taken to calling "the beau monde" had agreed upon a method of dividing the calendar: the ladies of Georgetown received on Tuesdays, Cabinet wives on Wednesdays, senators' wives on Thursdays. Large receptions were still the standard vehicle of hospitality, perhaps because

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1 As merely a sample of notices of the diversion available, see *Star*, 5 Jul, 3 Aug, 12 Sep 71, 29 May, 20 Jul, 1, 8 Jul, 9 Aug, 26 Sep, 1 Dec 73, 20 Jan, 31 Aug 74, 30 Mar 75, 25 Apr, 7 Oct 76, 18 Dec 77; *Patriot*, 9 Jul, 12 Aug 71, 1, 29 Jul, 26 Aug 72; *Chronicle*, 1 Aug 71; *Sunday Chronicle*, 10 Oct 75; Invitation to join the Thalian Club, 9 Jan 77; Bowen Papers. From the 1850's onward, the advertisements of fortune-tellers appeared regularly in the local papers.
hostesses had already recognized in them "the easiest way to give the
greatest possible number of people the least possible pleasure." But
the Star defended the custom as "a kind act to the strangers in the
city, for it affords them more than a glimpse of how we live and the
perfect freedom from the stiff etiquette of other cities." That
etiquette, however, was crystallizing before President Grant left the
White House; books were appearing to instruct the greenhorn on what
was de rigueur in polite society of the capital.2

At the same time alongside the groups of the vulgar and inex­
experienced existed a cultivated society made up of men and women who
enjoyed each other as persons and whose interests were far-reaching.
Some were members of old Washington and Georgetown families who
carried on the gracious tradition of the forties and fifties; others,
arrived since the war, had come on official assignments or merely
because life in the capital promised to be agreeable. In those circles,
small teas, dinner parties and evenings of music, readings or conver­
sation supplied the backbone of social intercourse. Younger members
invariably attended the festive "Bachelors' Germans" held three or
four times every winter. Gradually the influence of this group widened.
Moreover, when Mrs. Rutherford Hayes became mistress of the White House
in 1877, the tone of official society changed, for Mrs. Hayes, a staunch
member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, lent her support to
the prohibition movement. Professing embarrassment over the Spartan

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2 Star, 21 May 74, 11, 20, 27, 28 Jan, 9 Feb 75, 18 Jan, 9 Feb 76.
refreshment offered foreign diplomats at state dinners, Secretary of State Evarts later said mournfully: "During the Hayes administration water flowed at the White House like champagne."  

Newcomers and old residents alike could enjoy pleasures rarely to be found in the United States of the 1870s outside a dozen large cities. Though plans to build a municipal opera house fell through, every season talented musicians gave concerts in Lincoln Hall, and during six months of the year the Marine Band performed outdoors twice weekly. The Star believed Washington might also develop a vigorous colony of painters: "There are many notably fine small private galleries here, a large number of lovers of art and many more than is generally supposed who draw and paint well as amateurs." Exploiting the pride Americans had begun to take in the capital, four hundred memorialists had petitioned Congress in 1873 to launch a national academy of art with a million-dollar building in Washington. "Such a school ... would soon call forth the latent artistic talent of our country." Like the scheme for an opera house, the idea came to nothing, but the Corcoran Gallery opened art classes that year, and in 1876 a Washington Art Club organized to help young painters find patrons. Recruitment of paying members took the form of promising them shares in annual distributions of "works of art."  

Besides seeing the exhibits at the Corcoran Gallery, the public

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3 Marian Gouverneur, As I Remember, pp. 352-83; Star, 27 Mar 76; Petitions, H W 45 A-D11, 1 Mar, 16 May 78, 15 Jan, 1, 28 Feb 79, Note; B. E. 14; Record, 44C, 28, 11 Dec 75, 21 Mar 76, pp. 198, 1828, 1871.

4 Patriot, 10 Jan, 15 Sep 72; Star, 29 Oct, 21 Nov 72, 18 Feb 75, 6 Mar 77; Chronicle, 20 Jan 71; S Ms Doc 89, 82C, 38, 25 Feb 73, Ser 1546; Folder, 25 May 76, Bowen Papers.
could frequent the Smithsonian where from time to time collections of paintings hung, vying with Indian artifaxes and botanical displays to catch the interest of visitors.

Furthermore, whatever its artistic defects, sculpture was more widely in evidence in Washington than anywhere else in America. Besides the statues already in place—Hiram Powers' "Greek Slave" at the Corcoran Gallery, the array of states' favorite sons in the Rotunda of the Capitol, Freedom atop the dome, Clark Mills' Washington in Washington Circle and in Lafayette Square his Andrew Jackson mounted on a prancing charger anchored by cannon ball in its tail—, new bronzes were appearing in the public squares. In 1874 came the unveiling of the huge equestrian figure of General Winfield Scott cast from cannon captured in the Mexican War, two years later the equally imposing bronze of General James E. McPherson, Commander of the Army of the Tennessee, and in Lincoln Park the touching Emancipation Memorial paid for by freedmen's subscriptions, and in 1877 the statue of the Revolutionary General Nathanael Greene. Every decade for the next fifty years would see additional castings and marbles emplaced in the triangles and spaces formed by the intersections of streets and avenues. To the gratification of all Washingtonians, in 1876 a Congressional appropriation permitted resumption of work on the Washington Monument. And if critics of the seventies shared Henry Adams' opinion when he dubbed the ornate new State Department building "the architectural infant asylum next the White House," numberless other Americans looked upon the art
Scholars and writers also found special advantages in Washington.

Under the guidance of Ainsworth Spofford, the Library of Congress was expanding its collections and a new generation of historians was beginning to make use of its resources. In 1874 George Bancroft returned to Washington to revise his ten-volume History of the United States and write his History of the Formation of the Constitution and his biography of Van Buren. Henry Adams moved from Cambridge to Washington in 1877, partly to write history and, as it turned out, novels, partly because he concluded that "as far as he had a function in life, it was as stable-companion to statesmen." Two years later John Hay followed Adams' example and during the eighties would turn out a novel, The Bread Winners, and, in collaboration with John Nicolay, the ten volumes of Abraham Lincoln: A History. Walt Whitman and John Burroughs had left Washington before 1874, but several of their disciples remained—William Douglas O'Connor, journalist, novelist, and defender of "The Good Gray Poet," John James Piatt and his equally gifted wife, and a half dozen lesser literary figures. Among the city's residents were also a succession of able newspaper correspondents. Fifty of them had founded the Gridiron Club in 1865, the fame of whose

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semi-annual dinners for the great personages in and about the capital had spread far by the mid-seventies. If the young women who launched the Washington Literary Society in the summer of 1874 had sociability more largely in mind than literature, the society nevertheless quickly came to occupy a special place in the city's cultural life. The regular meetings of the forty members brought together considerable and varied talents.  

More notable, because more unique, was Washington's position as a center of scientific research. Neither the state nor the privately supported universities had as yet undertaken much work in that diverse field, although land grant colleges such as Cornell, founded partly to serve as agricultural experimental stations, were making a beginning in applied research. Here and there disciples of Benjamin Silliman of Yale or Louis Agassiz in Cambridge were stirring students to intense excitement about the mysterious world of "Nature," but in the 1870's most American institutions of higher learning were still training schools for classical subjects and the orthodox professions of the ministry, teaching, medicine, and law. College and university presidents generally fended off government intrusion into these, their preserves, and when the National Education Association in 1872 and 1873 revived the proposal for a national university to be

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maintained in Washington at federal expense, President Eliot of Harvard with a few weighty strokes of his pen had sliced off the monster's head. In Washington/privately financed tiny National University of 1869 survived, Howard University managed to weather the loss of some federal funds after the demise of the Freedmen's Bureau, and a gift of money from W. W. Corcoran enabled Columbian College to expand into Columbian University, while Georgetown won recognition for its work in astronomy and seismology. But none of these ranked high among American universities, and the nucleus of scientific interests in Washington was non-academic. It lay in the federal government.

Government sponsorship of scientific investigations had widened steadily in scope since the opening of the Smithsonian in 1848 and, spurred on by war needs and by the creation of the Department of Agriculture for biological and botanical research, had gained further impetus after the war. The Naval Observatory had become the National Observatory in 1866 when the Navy transferred its chart service to a new Hydrographic Office; three years later the National weather service run by the Army Signal Corps had come into being; in 1871 the Fish Commission began its biological studies of methods of conserving the American fisheries; and, outgrowth of four separate geological surveys of public lands in the West undertaken by the Department of the Interior and the War Department, the Geological Survey would appear in 1879.

7 Nation, 17, no 425, 21 Aug 73, pp. 126-28; Star, 24 May 73, 30 Jun 75, 8 Aug 77.
Distinguished men, gathered in the capital to direct or advise on these activities, organized the Cosmos Club in 1878. Their mere presence created an atmosphere of intellectual vitality.

In spite of the political furor the Board of Public Works had aroused and in spite of the economic depression that followed upon the panic, life in Washington as the 1870's wore on thus offered singular attractions. Indeed fulfillment of a prophesy of 1871 seemed near: a member of the Washington Academy of Literature, Science and Art had declared that she was destined to become "the great focus of the American mind." True, the intellectual vigor was an import, just as the men of letters and the artists whose work lent the city distinction were rarely native Washingtonians and frequently lived here but a few years. The very coming and going of gifted men and women meant that nothing could long remain static. At the same time the community escaped many of the stresses of America's industrial and commercial centers. Others than Henry Adams fled from "banishment in Boston" to Washington.8

Economic Troubles

Yet economic distress in the District was severe between 1874 and 1878. The federal payroll and an appropriation of $75,000 for the back wages of laborers whom the Board of Public Works had not paid

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saved Washington from feeling the full force of the depression as promptly as other cities, but the drastic reduction in the number of District jobs, followed by a cut in laborers' wages to $1.25 or $1.00 a day, had created widespread unemployment and want by the summer of 1875. By then the Navy Yard had curtailed operations, there was talk of closing it altogether - and the Treasury had dismissed four hundred employees. A brief flurry of strikes proved as unproductive as the advertisement of the clerk who offered $100 for a government job. After lengthening federal office hours from six to seven a day, the government further reduced its clerkships in 1876. When the Bureau of Engraving closed, seven hundred women were left on "the ragged edge of starvation", and ousted federal employees, usually too impoverished to journey home to their own states, added to the District's problems. The commissioners and the newspapers occasionally pointed to signs of improvement: the crowds of visitors come from the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia to see the sights of Washington, a supposed growth of commerce and higher property values, particularly along the river front, an increase in the tonnage of coal shipped down the C & O canal, the incorporation of a paper and pulp company, the opening of a new lumber yard and the 1161 new buildings erected in Washington and Georgetown during 1876.9

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9 Star, 7 May, 7 Jun, 10, 21 Jul, 1 Nov, 6 Dec 75, 26 Feb. 76; Sunday Chronicle, 3 Jan 75, 1 Jul 77; Petition H R 13A-Dl, 11 Jan 75; Comrs Rpt, 1875, pp. 3, 15-16, Ser 1882.
By 1877 Georgetown, after years of clinging to her separate identity had become so involved in the difficulties she shared with the rest of the District that in most respects she had ceased to be an entity distinct from the capital. Distance, only partly obliterated by the horse-cars, still tended to limit social intercourse between the two cities, and old families of one were less intimate with the "best" families of the other than with each other. But after the Georgetown Courier ceased publication in 1876, leaving Washington newspapers to serve the entire area, the merging of the older, smaller city with the younger went forward rapidly, though Congress would not formally extinguish Georgetown until 1891.

In the meantime, common woes and common hopes made common cause in both cities and the county. During the winter of 1876-1877 suffering heightened. Beggars and tramps, for years past an affliction in the District, multiplied. The Relief Commission in charge of dispensing aid reported funds nearly exhausted in January and an average of three hundred applications for help coming in daily. No one dared guess at the number of families who, unwilling to have their poverty known, were starving in quiet gentility. Necessities had always been notoriously high in Washington; in vetoing a bill designed to halve his salary, President Grant had given the cost of living in the capital as one reason. When spring appeared to bring to other sections of the country an upturn in business, it was "not very satisfactory to the people of

non-commercial cities like Washington, as it simply amounts to a speculative rise in the price of provisions without supplying any additional occupation or increase in wages to enable the poor or the unemployed to pay the increased price." In Washington the price of bread rose from six cents a loaf to seven.11

Confronted with evidences of terrible want about them, senators and representatives may have wondered why they had voted for federal control of the District. The city and territorial governments in their day had at least carried most of the responsibility for the relief of local citizens even while petitions begging for federal aid had rolled in yearly. Taxes imposed and collected by locally elected officials had formerly met much of the need. Now the President had put his own appointees in charge, and a Congressional law of 1876 had made it a penal offense to increase the District debt; though a slightly later act permitted the commissioners, if need be, to anticipate taxes by borrowing from the federal government, uncertainty about whether Congress would carry the interest charges inspired caution. After endeavoring to extract from the Washington Market Company the arrears of ground rent due the poor fund, the commissioners had raised the allotments to the city almshouses and "charitable organizations" from the $38,000 of 1875 to $48,000 in 1876, but the total still was pitifully inadequate. Individual philanthropy and charity administered by churches and religious

11 Patriot, 15 Jun 72; Star, 26 Aug 75, 19 Apr 76, 10 Jan, 19, 27, 30 Apr, 5 Sep 77.
societies manifestly could not supplement sufficiently the Commissioners'
relief budget, particularly since bank failures had all but wiped out
the funds of several organizations. To raise the tax rate would only
add to the burdens of property-owners already hard hit and might well
dry up the flow of private benevolences. Other American cities got
help from their state governments. The District could turn only to
Congress. With the inauguration of commission rule, Congress had con­
tributed to various eleemosynary undertakings more generously than in
years past, but in the crisis reached in 1877 clearly the federal govern­
ment must do more, either by appropriating money for direct relief or
by creating employment on public works to be paid for out of the
federal Treasury. 12

For the moment the make-work plan got little support. Doubtless
the delays that might ensue prevented endorsement from men appalled by
the urgency of the need during the winter of 1876-77, and some Democrats
in Congress opposed "on principle" any excursion on the part of the
federal government into the field of welfare, hitherto a prerogative of
the states. During most of January 1877 the House of Representatives
debated a bill providing $20,000 for the destitute. As a counter to the

12 U.S. Stat., 19, 211, 14 Mar 76; Petitions, S 134-H8, B 85, 9
Jun 71, HR 134-D1, B 12, 25 Feb 76, S16-H6, h Aug 76; Comrs Rpts, 1875,
pp. 11-12, 38, 145, 150-55 , 1876, pp. 1877, pp.
Rpts Comr
Educ. in Rpts Sec/Int, 1873, p. 145, Ser 1602, 1875, p. 145, Ser 1602,
Rpts Col Inst for Deaf and Dumb and Govt Hospital for the Insane, in
Rpts Sec/Int, 1875, pp. 893, 931, Ser 1680; Record, 43C, 15, 18 May 74,
p. 3996, 44C, 15, 21 Jan 76, p. 596, 2, 20, 30 Mar 76, pp. 1404, 1819-
20, 2064.
argument that it was no function of Congress to serve as almoner for the District, Representative Otho Singleton of Mississippi declared the time past for discussion of abstract rights: "If we had power to send relief across the Atlantic Ocean to the starving poor of Ireland, can we not provide for the wants of our own poor?" He spoke of "indigent persons" who had come to his room at midnight to "ask for a pittance to buy coal to keep themselves and children from freezing to death."

Representative Adlai Stevenson of Illinois testified to the "absolute starvation in this city," and read out a petition from a number of local churchmen. Attributing conditions in Washington to "the general depression of business, the cessation of public works, and the recent numerous discharges of clerks and other employees from the Departments," the clergymen, though noting that the vast majority of the needy were colored people, stated: "There has not been a winter for many years past when there has been so much suffering and misery, not only among the laboring classes, but among people who have never known penury until now." The bill passed, in the Senate without debate.13

The year 1877 was grim throughout the United States. Hungry men looking for jobs walked the city streets. That summer the most violent labor revolt the nation had ever known swept across the continent from the freight yards in Baltimore to San Francisco; and sympathetic strikes in a dozen industries followed upon the railroad strike. Washington

had no industrial proletariat to consider, but neither had citizens reason to hope for immediate easing of pressures when industry and commerce elsewhere revived. The $20,000 from Congress constituted a stop-gap but offered no solution to a basic economic problem. Talk of developing the water power of the Potomac to bring factories to the area had stopped altogether, and campaigns aimed at improvements of the water front to stimulate commerce had petered out. Lack of figures on unemployment either here or in other cities of the period leaves unanswerable the question of whether the capital suffered as sharply as other communities; since wretchedness invaded them all, the question of degree becomes academic. Still, the surmise seems not too far-fetched that Washington's quiescence during the tense weeks of the national railroad strike was due not to the greater well-being of her population nor, conversely, to a deeper fear of the police, but to a sense of helplessness that led her workingmen to despair of bettering their lot by action.

Among the upper ranks of society, on the other hand, where hunger was more nearly a word than a gnawing reality, determination to find a way out of the impasse grew and with it mounting belief in a make-work policy. Leadership asserted itself in the fall of 1877 to organize a Labor Exchange. A newly appointed District Commissioner, Thomas B. Bryan, a Chicago lawyer and real estate operator, called the first

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14 Petition, S 1529-H8, 25 May 76; Ltr, R. V. Ingram to S. J. Bowen, 17 Nov 76, Bowen Papers; Star, 21 Jul 77.
public meeting of citizens to discuss ways and means. His plan was threefold: first, to ship some of the unemployed out of the District to sections of the country that needed workmen, second, to open a kind of public pawn shop where people without paying interest could get an "advance" on their "jewelry", and third, to launch a public works program. The resemblance to Marie Antoinette's nostrum went unnoticed; and citizens shut their eyes to the fact that a labor surplus apparently existed in all parts of the country and that a public works program would require Congressional approval. Cheerfully the Star remarked that the first people the Exchange would send out of the area were "the plantation bands who came here during the war . . . found employment to some extent while the extensive system of public improvements was going on, but who are now left stranded here, with no work whatsoever."15

The Labor Exchange, however, had little success. By the following spring the committee in charge could report only that the applicants for jobs were "noble fellows . . . and should be encouraged." A thousand, among them probably a good many who had struck in 1875 at a wage cut to $1.25 a day, were now ready to work for fifty cents a day. At this point, amid growlings from members of the House who objected to providing jobs for the District's unemployed without also giving work to the poor among their own constituents, Congress appropriated $20,000.

15 Star, 9 Aug, 3, 6, 7, 15 Sep, 3 Oct 77; Sunday Chronicle, 2, 16 Sep, 23 Dec 77.
$5,000 for medical care of the local poor, the rest for hiring men to fill and drain the land south of the Capitol along the line of the old canal. Here was the federal government's first tacit recognition of the utility of what men in the 1930's would call "pump-priming." In addition, Congress voted $1500 for support of a "Penny Lunch House." Coupled with a certain amount of work provided by landlords who chose to undertake repairs while prices were low, these appropriations, small though they were, helped tide the District over the last year of the long depression. 16

The Social Structure

In the contrasts between the richness of life for people standing high in the social hierarchy and the material want and narrow interests of the bulk of her population, Washington of the seventies differed little from other cities of the period. In fact, obscure people without means may well have found more satisfactions available here, if only the excitements of inaugural parades, than commercial centers like New York or Chicago or San Francisco could offer. The unique feature of Washington's social structure was not the disparities of wealth and position; those had always existed, though less obtrusive in the smaller, more homogeneous antebellum city than in the Washington of Grant's era and later. The social cleavage peculiar to the capital, and more

16 Star, 5 Mar 77, 15 Feb, 2 Apr 78; Record, 45C, 28, 18 Mar, 1 Apr 78, pp. 1280, 2135, 20, 25 May, 12 Jun 78, pp. 3590, 3786, 4490; Petition, 65 A-H1-H5, B 173, 29 Mar 78.
noticeable after 1874 than before, lay between the people who felt themselves part of the city and those who, no matter how long their residence in Washington, did not. Henry Adams' characterization of Washington in his first novel, Democracy, as a city of office-holders and office-seekers fitted only a group separated by a gulf of indifference from citizens to whom, whether rich and well-born or poor and unknown, the well-being of the permanent community mattered. Because of that common concern, tradesmen and "mechanics", boot blacks and day laborers at times stood less far removed from wealthy men like W. W. Corcoran, George Riggs and John T. Given than from departmental clerks and the host of needy government onhangers.

Initial Attitudes toward Commission Government

Interest in the future of Washington and Georgetown by no means created unanimity of opinion about what course to advocate, but after the commissioners took command in the summer of 1874 not only did local opinion cease to count heavily, but most citizens were content for the time being to let federal officials straighten out the District's tangled affairs. The arrangement was avowedly temporary, promising a welcome interlude of strict economy in public administration. In some quarters, it is true, consternation greeted the commissioners' immediate reduction of the District's clerical force from 371 to 133 and the only less drastic cut in the number of other employees. Congress itself had ordered a 20 percent cut in all salaries except those of school teachers and firemen. Still, public services continued, and until 1876 watchful
citizens by and large were satisfied.  

Reorganization of School Administration

Initial dismay over the commissioners' reorganization of school administration evaporated quickly as people came to see the drawbacks of continuing four separate school boards, one set of trustees for Washington's white schools, a second for Georgetown's, a third for the colored schools of both cities, and a fourth for all public schools in the county. The commissioners' orders of August and September 1874 established a single body made up of eleven trustees from Washington, five from the county, and three from Georgetown, three of the nineteen members Negroes. The disproportion between white members and black appears to have been unpremeditated: in 1873 Congress had transferred from the Secretary of the Interior to the District Governor the appointment of the trustees for the cities' colored schools, and having inherited that power, the Commissioners simply appointed the three Negro incumbents to the new consolidated board. This first administrative simplification and the slightly later change that put one superintendent in charge of all white schools and one colored superintendent over all Negro schools increased efficiency without resolving the essential educational problem. In 1875, with 274 rooms, 262 teachers and 18,875 children enrolled, the trustees resorted to opening additional half-day

17 Comrs Rpt, 1874, p. 13; H Rpt 702, 44th, 1s, 26 Jan 76, p. 21; Ser 1712; Star, 17 Jul 74; Record, 13C, 1s, 17 Jun 74, p. 5116.
schools. The next year nine more appeared, and shortage of funds cut the school year from ten months to eight. Yet expenditures had climbed to $376,000, and still several thousand children were getting no schooling at all. Using all the long-familiar arguments, the commissioners joined with the trustees and private citizens in pleading with Congress for aid, and in 1878 Congress yielded to the extent of giving a public square in Washington and lending the District $75,000. The economies obtainable by combining the colored and white schools into one system was a possibility the trustees chose to ignore. After all, scarcely fifteen years before, Washington and Georgetown had provided no public education whatsoever for Negroes, the county had no public schools for either blacks or whites, and the cities had fewer than fifty classrooms and sixty teachers, most of them grammar school graduates at best. Whatever the shortcomings of the school system of the late seventies, old District residents could marvel at its achievements.

The Board of Health

Enlightened citizens also took pride in the Board of Health's record. By 1875, health officers from other cities - even a delegation from Imperial Tokyo - were visiting Washington to observe the methods

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18 Comrs Rpt 1874, pp. 19, 105-07, 1875, pp. 16-18, 22, 317, 427; Rpt, Trustees Public Schools, 1874-75, pp. 3-9, 38-39, h3, 61-9h, 10h; Rpts Comr Edu in Rpts Sec/Int, 1875, Pt 5, pp. XLV, L82, Ser 1681, 1876, pp. XXVII, XLI, L39-L0, Ser 1750, 1877, p. XXI, Ser 1801; Petitions, H R L5A-D1, B 12, 22 Jan 77, H R L5A-D1, B 11, 18 Jan 78; Record, L5C, 25, 29 Apr, 11 Jun 78, pp. 2923, L418; Sunday Chronicle, 12 Sep 75.
in use here, and the Sunday Chronicle, in discussing the newly formed American Public Health Association, declared: "The first real impetus given to the question of sanitary reform and of inviting physicians and scientists of all sections of the country to form cooperative associations for this purpose, originated in this city, and was suggested by the success of our Board of Health." When painstakingly assembled vital statistics revealed in 1876 that deaths of children under five accounted for half the total death rate and that mortality among whites in the District was 19.34 per thousand but among Negroes was 48.95, a rate considerably higher than the colored birth rate, outspoken objections to the earlier increase of Board powers subsided somewhat. But latent hostility and obstructive indifference persisted, even, the health officer noted, among intelligent householders. Still more ominous, criticisms in Congress which wiped out free medical treatment for the poor threatened further curtailment of health officers' authority.

Owners of slaughter houses opposed the Board's repeated recommendation that abattoirs be prohibited within the cities' limits, just as landlords of dilapidated unsanitary tenements evaded, whenever possible, compliance with the sanitary code. And as the Commissioners decreased the Board's budget, inspections became less efficient. By 1877 economy was gravely impairing public health service, and some members of Congress were whetting their axes.19

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19 Comrs Rpt, 1874, pp. 290, 291-95, 1876, pp. 551-56, Rpt B of H, 1875, pp. 5-10, 13-14, 19, 22-25, 32, 1876, pp. 26, 201-15, 1877, pp. 8-9; Rpt Met Pol Brd in Rpt Sec/Int, 1871, p. 1220, Ser 1505; 5 Rpt 156, 150, 28, 3 Jun 78, Ser 1790; Sunday Chronicle, 27 Jun, 18 Jul, 14 Nov 75; Star, 23, 24 Mar, 7 Apr, 8, 21, 28 Jun 75, 22 Aug 76, 1, 2, 5 Aug 5 Sep 77, 27 Feb, 27 May 78;Record, 150, 28, 17 Dec 74, pp. 124-25.
Police and Fire Protection

In other areas, substitution of commissioners for territorial officials made relatively little difference. The sixty-one officers and men of the fire department, albeit handicapped by the worn condition of engines bought during the Civil War, kept fire losses reasonably low, though perhaps that result was due less to the Department's efficiency than to the extension of water mains, the building inspections inspired by the Board of Health, and the growing proportion of brick buildings - in 1875 only 12,177 frame out of 23,121 houses in Washington. Criticisms of the police were more frequent, some of them answered by a law of 1877 requiring every constable to post bond for good behavior, others directed at federal control over the Metropolitan Police Board. When a Congressional bill transferred authority to the commissioners, President Grant's veto labelled the change inadvisable as long as "the gross violations of law" were recurring. Examination of the list of misdemeanors that landed culprits in the Washington workhouse, however, suggests a rigid enforcement of a severe legal code: of the 1739 persons committed in one year, 731 were charged for disorderly conduct, 309 for profanity, 33 for indecent exposure - understandable in a Washington summer - six for "fast driving", four for obstructing sidewalks, three...

20 Patriot, 29 Sep 71; Star, 15 Oct 72, 11 Jan 76; Comrs Rpts, 1874, pp. 99-100, 1875, pp. 15, 309-10, 122, 131; Rpts Architect Capitol Extension, in Rpts Sec/Int, 1874, p. 735, Ser 1639, 1875, p. 684, Ser 1680.
for cruelty to animals and one for playing ball in the streets. Three fifths of the workhouse inmates were colored. As for years past, protests continued over conditions in the District jail and workhouse, particularly over the housing of juveniles with "hardened criminals", until Congress at last voted money for a new jail and authorized the courts to send any boy under 16 years of age convicted of law breaking to the Reform School where he was to stay till reformed or till he reached 21. 21

Public Works and Taxation

Nor did taxpayers at first show concern about the public works program. They realized that Lt. Hoxie, the Army Engineer in charge, had inherited a difficult task, for while the Commissioners were paring other expenditures, and accountants were examining the fiscal records of the Board of Public Works, the engineer must see to the completion of partly constructed sewers and the numberless other jobs left unfinished by Board contractors. And since he must undertake at the same time extensive repairs on faulty work, including the repaving of the entire stretch of Pennsylvania avenue from the Treasury to the Capitol, property-owners were ready to exercise patience. Eighteen months later they discovered that the Engineer's department in a single year had

21 Comrs Rpts. 1874, pp. 110-11, 1873, pp. 18, 112-115; Petition, ShA-18, 31 Jan 77; Star, 1 Feb, 7 Mar 77; Record, 14C, 15, 20 Mar, 19 Apr 76, pp. 1820-22, 2547, 7 Jun, 18, 19 Jul 76, pp. 3612, 1704, 1747, 1 Aug 76, p. 501, and 14C, 28, 6, 9, 10, 11, 30 Jan, 6 Feb 77, pp. 168, 493, 539, 584, 1111-12, 1289.
spent nearly a quarter million dollars on repairing pavements, planting trees and sweeping streets, although on some jobs use of convict labor of instead/the District's unemployed had cut the costs. Moreover, through a system known as "extension of Board contracts", $4,236,000 had gone to private firms, including some whose record under the Board of Public Works left their competence open to question. Another $419,000 was earmarked for these contracts in 1876. The Engineer explained that contract costs were 30 percent lower than they looked, inasmuch as payment was in the 3.65 bonds which Congress had authorized in June 1874 to fund the District debt, and the bonds were selling at 64 to 73 cents on the dollar. Even so, the total for public works in 1875 came to $3,211,000. The work appeared to be done well, but seemingly the commission created in the name of economy had saved taxpayers from the frying pan only to dump them into the fire. 22

The chart showing the distribution of money among public services during the three full years of the life of the temporary commission tells a curious story: in two of the three years less spent on schools than on improving the streets, in the year of peak unemployment nearly six times as much for street up-keep as for welfare, and, when the Board of Health budget was at its highest, seven times as much for

22 Chronicle, 18 Aug 74; Comrs Rpt, 1874, pp. 160, 166-74, 212, 1875, pp. 9, 15-16, 43-47, 233-38, 246-51, 361-64, 374-19; 1876, pp. 11-13; Star, 3 Jul, 1 Nov, 16 Dec 75, 16 Apr 78; Morning News, 11 May 76; ltr. A. M. Green, Chrm Republican Central Executive Committee of D.C., to Sargen J. Bowen, 19 Jan 76, Bowen Papers.
public works as for health protection. (See p. 93). Furthermore, comparison with Washington's municipal expenditures under Mayor Bowen is illuminating, if inexact because the 1868-69 data covered Washington alone and the 1875-77 entries, with the exception of schools, were for the entire District. Despite minor discrepancies, the figures suggest widely different ideas about what was important. The commissioners, non-residents of the District before they took office, put chief emphasis upon physical improvements, visible to the eyes of Congressmen, whereas elected city officials gave special weight to education and help for the needy.

Comparative Distribution of Expenditures*

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Washington 1868-69</th>
<th>District of Columbia 1875</th>
<th>District of Columbia 1876</th>
<th>District of Columbia 1877</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,490,616</td>
<td>$2,887,162</td>
<td>$2,528,888</td>
<td>$2,539,139</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of total for:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest and Reduction of Debt</td>
<td>50.75</td>
<td>40.15</td>
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<td>Public Works</td>
<td>18.70</td>
<td>20.38</td>
<td>28.77</td>
<td>31.20</td>
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<td>Poor Relief</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>3.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>16.19</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td>10.74</td>
</tr>
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* Computed from figures given in charts p. of Ch VIII and p. 93.
D.C. Expenditures

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<th></th>
<th>1875</th>
<th>1876</th>
<th>1877</th>
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<td><strong>ADMINISTRATION:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FINANCE:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Interest on D.C. Bonds</td>
<td>152,450</td>
<td>118,421</td>
<td>101,122</td>
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<td>2. Sinking Fund for D.C. Bonds, Tax Scrip, etc.</td>
<td>1,159,356</td>
<td>796,977</td>
<td>773,275</td>
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<td>3. Interest and Sinking Fund for Bonds of the late city corporations</td>
<td>501,274</td>
<td>638,750</td>
<td>449,913</td>
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<td>4. Interest and Redemption of Water Certificates</td>
<td>301,622</td>
<td>65,178</td>
<td>49,506</td>
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<td><strong>FIRE PROTECTION:</strong></td>
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<td>1. Metropolitan Police</td>
<td>172,915</td>
<td>126,312</td>
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<td>2. Judiciary</td>
<td>125,821</td>
<td>162,105</td>
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<td><strong>HEALTH SERVICES:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Removal of Garbage</td>
<td>65,777</td>
<td>15,160</td>
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<td>2. Other Sanitary Services</td>
<td>21,140</td>
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<td><strong>WELFARE:</strong></td>
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<td>1. Washington Asylum</td>
<td>11,058</td>
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<td>2. Georgetown Almshouse</td>
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<td>3. Charitable Organizations</td>
<td>15,759</td>
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<td>4. Insane Asylum</td>
<td>4,374</td>
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<td>5. Miscellaneous Contributions</td>
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<td>1,786</td>
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<td><strong>PUBLIC EDUCATION:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. White Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Washington</td>
<td>274,324</td>
<td>262,181</td>
<td>237,636</td>
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<td>b. Georgetown</td>
<td>208,524</td>
<td>206,769</td>
<td>185,884</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. County</td>
<td>22,705</td>
<td>19,963</td>
<td>17,246</td>
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<td>2. Negro Schools</td>
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<td>111,170</td>
<td>97,573</td>
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D. C. Expenditures (cont)

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<th>Description</th>
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<th>1877</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC WORKS: MAINTENANCE AND NEW CONSTRUCTION:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Streets</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. General Improvements and Repairs</td>
<td>455,433</td>
<td>512,322</td>
<td>690,617</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Lighting, Cleaning and Misc</td>
<td>276,019</td>
<td>347,130</td>
<td>539,112</td>
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<td>c. Extended BPW Contracts**</td>
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<td>194,892</td>
<td>151,175</td>
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<td>2. Water Department</td>
<td>118,966</td>
<td>128,661</td>
<td>82,337</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Markets</td>
<td>13,981</td>
<td>56,585</td>
<td>19,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISCELLANEOUS:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2,887,162</td>
<td>2,526,880</td>
<td>2,539,139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Computed from figures given in Comrs' Rpt, 1875, pp. 1, 64-47, 185, 254; 1876, pp. 7, 19-23; and 1877, pp. 49, 51, 55-56.

** Paid in 3.65 bonds and not counted in the total spent on public works; the interest of course raised the interest figure for 1876.

\( \text{1,232,281} \) appropriated by Congress. \( \text{320,736} \) expended in 1875, \( \text{911,545} \) in 1876.

\( \text{25,000} \) appropriated by Congress.

\( \text{775,895} \) appropriated by Congress, \( \text{94,000} \) of which was reimbursable.
When the commissioners submitted their annual report at the end of 1875, Congress voiced more indignation over their extravagance than did the impotent local public. They had issued many more $3,656 bonds than their creators had expected to be necessary, and, according to one computation, had added $5,203,000 to the District debt, $1,100,000 of it spent on sewers without legal authorization. Outraged members of the House took tentative and ultimately useless steps to bring suit against the commissioners but eased their wrath in the meantime by forbidding further bond issues in payment for public works—in effect a prohibition of further work on the streets. An appropriation to meet the interest on the $3,656 bonds already issued also passed Congress and five months later an act permitting the commissioners to anticipate taxes. But long before then responsible local citizens were growing extremely anxious.

Citizens had cause at once for anxiety and gratitude. With a funded debt of $8,441,000 and nearly $13,500,000 of indebtedness not yet funded, they could welcome the limitation imposed by Congress, but if, as seemed more than possible, taxes were to rise to meet unavoidable current expenses, satisfaction must be short-lived. Taxes were already higher than in other American cities. After 1872 the District assessors had abandoned the custom recognized elsewhere of assessing property at one-half to one-third its market value; adhering strictly to first

territorial and then to Congressional instructions, they put full valuation upon all taxable property. Thus, though the tax rate set for Washington by Congress in 1874 was but $3.00 on $100, and in 1875 but $1.50, actual payments required came to twice or thrice the figure cities with identical tax rates collected. Property values had dropped sharply since 1873, assessments far less or not at all. In 1874 the comptroller labelled assessments "greatly in excess of prices at which property is sold." A year later, with the $97,875,000 valuation on all privately owned real estate reduced by nearly four and a half million dollars, the District still held tax-delinquent real estate valued at $1,218,000.24

In stripping local citizens of all self-government, Congress had not only underwritten the bonds to liquidate the District debt but had promised that the federal government would assume a "just proportion" of ordinary District expenses. Two years had passed, and by an explicit Congressional statement of June 1876 federal property in the District was still tax-exempt and help on the District budget still a matter of uncertain Congressional largesse. "The taxpayers of this District," one of them wrote, "certainly get rough treatment at the hands of Congress. That body assumes sole control over the District, and in the exercise of that control, and through officers of its own appointment, incurs an enormous indebtedness for District improvements. Then it turns around and repudiates the assumption of any portion of this indebtedness, and

24 Investigation, 1874, vol 2, p. 26; Comrs Rpt, 1874, p. 31, 1875, 6-8, 12-14, 26, 29; Record, 3/3, 13, 17 Jun 74, pp. 5116-17, 43C, 28, 1, 15, 22 Feb; 2 Mar 75, pp. 883-84, 129L, 1296, 1608, 2077-80.
declares that the government shall pay no tax on the sixty-six millions of real and personal property...it owns in this District."  
An economy-minded administration, repeating the old saw about the community's standing on its own feet, might refuse so much as to pay the interest on bonds guaranteed by an earlier Congress, and voteless District residents could not effectively protest. As the horrid possibilities of the situation emerged fully, taxpayers became obsessed with the importance of persuading the federal government to act on its financial responsibilities to the federal District.

Federal Fiscal Obligations and Federal Rule

Neither the 43rd, nor the 44th, nor the 45th Congress was unaware of those responsibilities. Each recognized the fact that government business was Washington's one industry and Georgetown's mainstay. Before the 43rd Congress demolished the District's elected offices, the House Judiciary Committee headed by Luke Poland of Maine had prepared a thoughtful report on "the legal relations between the federal government and the local government of the District of Columbia and the extent and character of the mutual obligations in regard to municipal expenses."

In recommending that the federal government pay 50 percent of the District's annual costs, the committee had reiterated the thesis of the Southard report of 1832; the national capital, created for federal use,

must be regarded as a national city to be maintained in part by national funds. But acceptance of that principle forty-odd years after its first enunciation created no consensus about how to govern the District. Until members reached agreement on that score, each Congress in turn, while contributing to the District's yearly budget, saw fit to appropriate the money on no exact predetermined basis, a disconcerting arrangement for taxpayers because it made the federal contribution unpredictable. Meanwhile plan after plan for a permanent form of government took shape on paper, only one after the other to be shoved to one side without discussion in House or Senate, or to be picked apart, amended and then tabled. The one feature common to all bills was the provision for federal sharing of the District expenses.

To account fully for the factors that produced and then sidetracked or defeated the succession of proposals in each of the Congresses concerned would demand an exhaustive analysis of national political history as Reconstruction drew to an end. During the four years of temporary commission rule only two bills on District government reached the stage of debate; but the amendments introduced were countless, and some of them aimed at so altering the character of the original bill as to constitute virtually new legislation. Changing attitudes in the country at large

26 H Rpt 627, 43C, 18, 1 Jun 74, Ser 1626.

27 Comrs Rpt, 1875, p. 4; Record, 43C, 28, 15 Feb 75, pp. 1294, 1296, 1603; Comrs Rpt, 1877, p.
shifted the emphasis in Congress on the issues at stake and left the 
fate of the District unsettled until June 1878. Negro suffrage, an 
important consideration in the 43rd Congress, did not openly enter the 
discussions three years later, when, despite the anger of Republican 
"Stalwarts", conciliation of the South had become official doctrine. The 
question of whether, under the Constitution, Congress could delegate to 
local citizens authority to elect their own officials stirred less 
interest in the 45th Congress than whether to vest in the President 
power to appoint all three commissioners, or to have Senate, House and 
President each appoint one. Moreover, after four and a half years of 
economic depression, the division of the costs of running the District 
loomed as a more vital decision than creation of a locally elected 
city council or a District delegate in Congress.

In December 1874 when Senator Morrill of Maine presented the first 
joint bill for a permanent government for the District, the party in 
power had just suffered a blow; in the November election, popular dis­
approval of harsh Republican rule in the South had combined with economic 
dissatisfactions to return a Democratic majority to the House. Con­
sequently the outgoing 43rd Congress had to choose between bowing to the 
storm and striving to weather it by clinging to the principles that had 
guided Republican policies since 1862. Washington newspapers believed no 
proposal could pass that wiped out all suffrage in the District, for the 
country would interpret that as a repudiation of Negro suffrage, entailing 
further weakening of party prestige and probably loss of colored votes in 
the South. In its original form the Morrill bill limited local voting to
election of three of eight public school trustees; it left indefinite, subject to yearly adjustment, the proportion of over-all District costs to be borne by the government; and it offered a cumbersome system of interlocking boards under appointed "regents" organized as a separate federal department. Morrill, admitting the unfortunate monarchical connotation of the term "regents," suggested substituting "Selectmen," or better still, in the light of District financial troubles, "Overseers of the Poor." Rewording and a series of amendments, including provision for an elected delegate to Congress, failed, however, to win over a group in the Senate headed by Oliver Morton of Indiana who insisted upon popular election of every local official. Conversely, opposition came from men professedly fearful of the "danger" of any regarded as a child of the French municipal voting. The Paris commune of 1871, was still fresh in men's minds. "We have seen", proclaimed the Democratic Senator Thurman, "the municipality of Paris bring a king to the scaffold and dictate the government . . . this District belongs to the people of the entire country." By which the Ohioan probably meant it belonged to Democrats as well as to Republicans supported by Negro votes. Still a third group of senators and representatives objected to the expense of paying so many salaries whether office holders were appointed or not, a line of argument that inspired an attack on the "extravagances" of the existing Board of Health. The bill died in mid-February 1875 without coming to a final vote.28

The 44th Congress, contrary to all hopes and expectations, contributed even less than the 43rd to settlement of the troublesome question. In the spring of 1876 Congressman George Hendee of Vermont introduced a warmed-over Morrill bill, while the Senate adopted Oliver Morton's resolution instructing the Senate District Committee to report a bill restoring the elective franchise to the District. But urgent national problems and the financial mismanagement of the District commissioners occupied the entire attention of both houses until the end of the session, and by the time a special joint committee belatedly appointed by the Republican Senate and Democratic House had its plan ready for the Lame Duck session in December, the disputed Hayes-Tilden election was shelving all other business. For four months, historians used to declare, the country teetered on the verge of fresh civil war, but if Americans elsewhere were frightened, Washingtonians betrayed faint anxiety. In late November when President Grant ordered 450 Army regulars to the capital, the Star pooh-poohed the "false and exaggerated reports" dispatched by New York newspaper correspondents describing Washington as "in a state of excitement unparalleled since Sumter was fired on in '61." Nevertheless Congress obviously would not concern itself with District affairs before knowing who was to be the next President. Not till March 2nd did the electoral commission announce Hayes' victory by a seven to six vote, and by then the expiring Congress had time only to join in hasty preparations for the presidential inauguration or an
The District bill that thus fell by the wayside reflected the changed views of a nation unwilling to protract controversy in order to protect colored men's votes and anxious for currency acts and an administrative economy that would encourage a business revival. The committee majority had recommended no elective offices whatsoever in the District, appointed commissioners controlling every municipal function from police and fire protection to health supervision and public school education, and the fixing of the government's share of District costs at 40 percent of the annual whole. Senator George Spencer of Alabama, a Northerner who had moved South after the war, alone had signed a vigorous minority report, and he had not mentioned the Negro as such. His anger at the majority plan grew out of his conviction that it imposed a tyranny upon the District: "The people retire from legal consideration, but not from legal responsibility ... The commissioners constitute the municipality, less its obligations."30

"Old 7 to 6", as Democrats dubbed President Hayes, took office committed to a policy of conciliating the South; though outwardly pledged also to protection of colored men, his intimates knew he looked upon that

29 Ibid., HJC, 18, 3, 8 Feb 76, pp. 818, 937, H, 15 Aug 76, pp. 5559, 5599, 5665, 5667; Star, 15 Apr 22 Nov 76, 2, 5 Mar 77. For the old thesis, now largely discarded, that a new civil war was imminent, see H. G. Eckenrode, Rutherford B. Hayes, Statesman of Reunion, and Paul Haworth, The Hayes-Tilden Disputed Presidential Election of 1876.

30 H Rpt 61, HJC, 28, Dec 76, Ser 1769; S Rpt 572, HJC, 28, 11 Jan 77, Ser 1732.
as a lesser matter.\textsuperscript{31} Under those circumstances few informed Washingtonians expected a return of government by elected officials in a community one-third Negro in makeup. Yet the bill submitted by the House District Committee early in 1878 provided for an elected twenty-four-man council which, though lacking power to initiate action, could veto the acts of the appointed commissioners; every candidate for the council must have had ten years of local residence and—doubtless as insurance against Senator Thurman's bogey of mob rule—$3000 of taxable property in the District. To this extent sentiment favoring representation for men who paid taxes prevailed in Congress—for a time. But the heated debates in both houses spawned amendments daily and sent emasculated versions of the original bill back and forth, at last to end up with a complete denial of any local franchise.\textsuperscript{32} Oddly enough, whereas before 1877 it was the Senate that had held out for some form of suffrage, in 1878 the battle for that cause took place in the House. There a dozen able men took much the position of Senator Spencer two years before.

One theory has attributed the change of front in the Senate to memory of the autumn of 1876 when the President ordered troops to the capital; if senators interpreted that order as an indication that Grant, backed by


Army regulars and District militia, planned to play the "Man on Horseback" and reestablish himself in the White House, anti-Grant politicians might have thought discretion demanded denial of political power to the District. More probably the truth is simpler. The "Stalwarts", the rump of Radical Republicanism which once had so successfully used the Negro vote as a political tool no longer controlled the party. Some of the Old Guard had died, others had failed of reelection and the remnant, prone to regard the local franchise as now unimportant, chose to accept any measure otherwise satisfactory. The Organic Act passed the Senate without a roll call and the House by a vote 129 to 70. 33

The Organic Act of 1878

As if to compensate for approving "taxation without representation", Congress pledged that the United States government would pay yearly half the District's bills, including interest on the 3,65 bonds. The reason for putting the federal share at 50 percent was the general acceptance of Shepherd's earlier figures computed on a basis of counting in the square footage of all streets and fortified by a more recent appraisal which placed the value of government-owned property at $95,000,000 and of private real estate at $96,000,000. Congressman Hendee of Vermont made clear that the financial provision and the wiping out of local suffrage represented a bargain struck: "Hence, when any appropriation is made or

any tax levied, the citizens of the District have no voice in the matter; and so long as they have no voice in these expenditures, it seems very proper that now . . . the United States should come forward and agree . . . that it will pay its equal share of the expenses of this government and the interest upon this debt." 34

The law as enacted on 11 June 1878 improved upon the act of 1874 in several respects. Apart from federal aid, the clause most reassuring to the local community was that limiting the President's choice of two of the three commissioners to civilian residents of the District; the requirement of three years of unbroken local residence would greatly lessen, if not stop entirely, the President's use of those offices solely to pay off political debts; patronage would not enter into the selection of the third commissioner since he must be an officer of the Army Engineer Corps. Furthermore, clearer definition of the commissioners' powers and mode of exercising them promised more orderly government by reducing the confusions which, under the earlier law, had led to arbitrary action of doubtful legality, such as the issue of $5,000,000 in new bonds. 35

The new act forbade an increase in the District debt, decreed so much as the inspiring of an attempt to increase it a crime, and set the tax rate at its existing level, $1.50 on both real and personal property. Other restrictions upon the commissioners' financial powers were equally explicit, for example, Congressional approval of every entry in a detailed

34 Record, L5C, 2s, 20 Mar 78, p. 1922.

35 Star, 9 Mar, 20 Apr 77.
annual budget, express Congressional sanction of every contract of more than $1000 for public works, with a web of strings attached to ensure contractors' performance, and itemized vouchers, certified by the commissioners and the auditor, of all bills presented to the United States Treasury for payment. Responsibility for the sinking fund, formerly handled by special commissioners, went to the Treasurer of the United States. The law left the judicial system as before, the President naming the justices of the District Supreme Court, the Chief Justice all lesser court officials. At the next congressional session the District commissioners were to recommend any needed change in the law or new legislation, and yearly they were to submit a full report to Congress. If any statute could guarantee honest economical administration, that law was the new Organic Act of 1878.

But the act also gave three men autocratic power over many phases of municipal life. Elimination of the Metropolitan Police Board and the School Board put the commissioners in direct control of police protection and public education. In neither case was the new scheme revolutionary; the former was a long-wanted revision and the latter merely a legal affirmation of the existing arrangement whereby nineteen appointed school trustees served without pay in a purely advisory capacity. If a commission must govern the District, these changes seemed sensible both to members of Congress and to most local citizens. But replacement of the Board of

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36 20/Stat, 102, ch 180.
Health by a single health officer with wings clipped short was another matter. That provision was hotly contested before it became law. In 1875 when several senators first attacked the Board of Health, they had directed their criticisms at the costliness of the system. In 1878 its critics added two other complaints: the unsuitable character of the individuals composing the Board and the excessive authority vested in them which enabled them summarily to condemn property without "due process of law." The Board's most able defender, Senator Windom of Minnesota, silenced the talk of extravagance by comparing the results obtained in Washington with those in Baltimore, where far less efficient service for a city only twice the size of the capital cost four times as much. He pointed out also that weaknesses in the personnel of Washington's board constituted no valid reason for destroying an agency whose work had proved invaluable; appointment of more qualified men was a far better answer. But Windom's reasoning was unable to sway senators convinced that the Board of Health exercised an "inquisitorial" power of inspection which invaded the privacy of the home and that authority to label anything a nuisance and order its condemnation ran counter to the Constitutional guarantee of private property rights under the "due process" clause. The health officer, under the new law substituted for the Board, was to be a physician appointed by the commissioners, strictly limited in his staff and the size of his budget, and authorized to enforce health regulations, collect vital statistics and carry out the commissioners' instructions. Thus thereafter the efficacy of the sanitary code would
depend largely upon the degree of concern or indifference the commissioners exhibited.  

Community Attitudes toward Home Rule

During four years of waiting for Congress to settle their fate, District citizens resorted periodically to petitions, some of them asking for one kind of government, others begging for the diametric opposite. Whether the pleas of Washington businessmen influenced the final decision may be doubtful, but certainly in the Congressional debates speaker after speaker fortified his position by declaring it in harmony with the wishes of the local community. And the voice that sounded loudest to Congress spoke first for an equal division of District expenses between the federal government and local taxpayers and, second, for commission rule with no elective offices. The desire of well-to-do citizens to perpetuate disfranchisement stemmed obviously from their fear that a return of suffrage would put them at the mercy of a propertyless majority, supported by ignorant irresponsible Negroes. Only a franchise limited to property-owners would extinguish that fear, and it was inconceivable that Congress would pass such a measure.  

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38 Petitions, S H3A-H6, B 85, 1 Jun, 12 Dec 77, 8 Feb 75, S H3A-H3, u.d. and 2 Oct 76, H.R. H3A-D1, B12, 13 Nov 76 and H.R. H5A-D1, B14, u.d; Petition of Committee of 100, 9 Oct 77, Folder, Bowen Papers, Star, 23 Nov 77, 6 Feb 75; Record, 45C, 18, 25 Oct 77, p. 165.  

39 Star, 25, 26 Jan 75, 29, 30 Jan, 25 Feb, 2 Mar 78; Sun Chronicle, 10 Apr 76.
Therefore, as the Star put the case, "we must either manage to dispense with the luxury of suffrage, or take it pure and undiluted, with all the burdens associated with its exercise." Because a large fixed federal contribution to District expenses was important to every taxpayer, in the minds of a good many business and professional men a satisfactory settlement of the financial problem, including guarantees of economy of administration, appeared to outweigh all other considerations.

But beneath the question of finances lay the matter of Negro suffrage. After 1875 Congressional debates rarely or never touched on the status of colored men in the District. Within this predominantly Southern community, on the other hand, people rarely forgot it. Few talked openly of the perils of reestablishing a partly Negro electorate; thinly veiled allusion sufficed among hostile whites. To cite but one of many instances, in April 1876 when Senator Morton proposed a District referendum to ascertain local sentiment on the restoration of suffrage, the Star dismissed the plan disdainfully: "So surfeited is the peaceable, law-abiding portion of our citizens with the disgraceful scenes attending 'Elections' regulated by 'Murder Bay', that we doubt whether many of them would turn out even to vote on Mr. Morton's proposition in the negative... The only persons desiring suffrage are the office-seekers... who hope to... attain positions of honor and trust which they are

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40 Star, 28 Nov 74.
41 Ibid., 2 Jul, 21 Nov 71, 18, 26 Jan, 3 Feb 75, 8 May, 25 Nov 76, 7 Sep 77, 1 Mar, 9 May 78.
utterly unfit to occupy. The Star, to be sure, from 1869 onward had advocated commission government for all municipalities, but why a paper not pronouncedly anti-Negro during the Civil War was so sure in the late seventies that colored voters would contrive to put only scalawags into office was never entirely clear.

Nevertheless, the fact that the editor of the Star, its like-minded readers, and a number of influential members of Washington's business community eventually had their way does not mean that contrary views were half-hearted or confined to an insignificant few. Only a referendum such as Senator Morton suggested could have given a true tally of the citizens who looked upon the terms Congressman Hendee offered as an unequal bargain, a selling of their birthright for a mess of potage. The probabilities are that the bulk of the population, hard-working humble people who knew right from wrong, stood solidly against the permanent loss of any say in their government. White or black, owners of their own homes or men without taxable property, they could believe that three Presidential appointees, however well-intentioned, would be unlikely to comprehend the cities' needs as fully as would officials elected by the working classes. Thoughtful colored people may well have seen in an act denying them votes not the means of safeguarding their rights by putting them under Congressional protection, as some Congressmen had

\[h2 \text{Ibid., 13 Apr 76.}\]
\[h3 \text{Ibid., 2 Apr 72, 29 Jul 73, 6 Sep 75.}\]
averred, but rather an instrument for dislodging them from the position
they had won under the municipal and territorial governments. Unhappily,
evidence of how educated Negroes felt is tenuous. And the opinions of
inarticulate people seldom found written expression. Other than one
published protest against the renewed discrimination colored laborers
encountered in seeking jobs and a few petitions signed by "Workingmen"
requesting the restoration of the ballot, no clue to their feelings
survives.\textsuperscript{44}

By no means all proponents of "Home Rule" lacked powers of
expression. John Forney, a hardheaded business man, once owner of both
the \textit{Daily} and the \textit{Sunday Chronicle}, and still owner of Washington's one
Sunday paper, used his press to point out the ultimate costs to the
community of losing control of its own affairs. "The experience of the
Board of Public Works and the present commissioners", he wrote in 1876,
"has proven very conclusively that any form of government in which the
voice of the governed is excluded will, more or less, become ... indifferent
to the wishes of the people." Forney, whose belief in racial equality
led him to say "we want to see the terms white and colored omitted as
applicable to men," and to deplore, because likely to perpetuate prejudices,
a plan to start a journal exclusively for colored readers, lashed out
at Washingtonians who ascribed the city's troubles to Negro voting:
"whatever corruption the 'Feather Dusters' and 'Murder Bay slums'"

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 10, 11, 17 Jun 78; see n. 38.
perpetrated in those days ... was not as much of their origination as the Executive-appointed power behind, and had the taxpayers been allowed a voice in its selection the territorial form of government might probably still be in existence. 15 Other well-informed people joined in reminding their fellow citizens that since 1874 as before, appointed officials not responsible to an electorate had shown themselves no more competent, and at times less trustworthy, than those popularly elected. 16

Further evidence that the opponents of disenfranchisement and racism in any form included men of standing in the community lies in the make-up of the Republican Central Executive Committee of the District of Columbia and in the party platform members drafted in 1876: "That taxation without representation is tyranny and that the unjust disenfranchisement of the inhabitants of this District is contrary to the spirit of Republican Institutions ... an unpardonable violation of the Constitution; and we demand ... the immediate restoration ... of the ballot upon the principles of the law in force in 1868." The next plank is more extraordinary because it was sure to alienate many whites willing to endorse votes for Negroes. It proclaimed the wickedness of letting the public schools serve as "the receptacle of caste prejudice through any

15 Chronicle, 1 Dec 74; Sunday Chronicle, 28 Feb, 18 Jul 75, 3 Sep, 19 Nov, 31 Dec 76, 3 Feb 78.

16 Sunday Chronicle, 18 Mar 77; ltrs, Addison Dent to S. J. Bowen, 19 Mar 77, Bowen to George Holmes, Chrm Republican Central Comm, D.C., 20 Mar 77, Robt Christy to S. J. Bowen, 16 Apr 77, and Enclosure "The Comrs of the Dis of Col", Bowen Papers; Sentinel, 7 Apr 77.
discrimination as to color or condition; ... we deem the present system of unmixed schools ... a wrong, and pledge our forceful and moral influence against such an unjust, arbitrary and unconstitutional arrangement." The other sections were routine demands for "a reduction of expenses and the strictest economy" in the management of District affairs, along with the abolition of "all arbitrary boards, including the District Commissioners", legislation "to promote the best interests of labor" and declarations of undeviating loyalty to the party whose record "is as brilliant and sublime as it is generous and humane." The national party platform read differently.

Manifestly between 1874 and 1878 unanimity within the community - Washington, Georgetown and the county - extended to only two points: the desirability of a commitment from the federal government to pay half the District's expenses and the need of efficiency and economy in local government. But whereas the sacrifice of "the most fundamental principles of American liberty" seemed to some men too high a price to pay, others regarded immediate economic salvation and assurance for the future the true substance, the "rights" of free men only the shadow. Yet the chief advocates of grasping that substance were well-to-do men whose salvation was not at stake. Some of them may have thought, like the Star,48

47 Ltr, A. M. Green, Pres Republican Central Exec Comee, D.C., to S. J. Bowen, 19 Jan 76 and Enclosure signed by A. M. Green, Pres., Allen Coffin, Vice Pres, and J. H. B. Smallwood, Bowen Papers.

48 Star, 3 Feb 75.
that they could recapture the shadow whenever improved business conditions made the time more propitious, and some of them, ever-fearful of colored voters, perhaps thought the rights of free men, when governed partly by Negroes, a chimera. Undoubtedly, none of these business leaders dreamed that forty-odd years later their descendants would have neither the shadow nor more than a shred of the substance when the United States government reduced its share in District expenses to a flat $9,000,000.

In view of the multiple pressures of national politics of the late seventies, it is true, a united community stand for home rule might well have had no effect on the "Hill", but the division of local opinion exonerated Congress from a charge of purely despotic action.

The passage of the Organic Act of 1878 marked the end of an era for the capital. The change cut deeper than residents themselves realized at the time. Washington, with Georgetown appended, was hereafter to be a national city, the responsibility of American voters throughout the United States, a city that would nourish their pride without troubling their conscience unduly about ordering the lives of 150,000 fellow Americans, not all of whom welcomed the arrangement. Time would show that the consequences for those 150,000, and for the hundred thousands more to come, were both good and bad, good in providing a beautiful, efficiently run city free of the graft that disgraced many American municipalities, bad in fostering irresponsible attitudes. After 1878, a community in the sense of a conscious, independent, self-focused entity, held together by common aspirations and efforts, ceased to exist.
Civil war and reconstruction reshaped all of America. The eradication of slavery and the addition of some seven million Negroes to the ranks of American citizens in itself constituted a revolution. A second revolutionary change felt throughout the nation but most quickly in her cities was the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few men. In the District of Columbia, the physical improvements in Washington presented the most immediately striking difference between the city of 1860 and the capital of 1876, but the altered character of the population, the emergence of an unfamiliar power structure and a totally new political order marked more significant changes.

In spite of the financial upheavals occasioned by the recklessness of the Board of Public Works and then by the depression, at the end of the 1870’s the District’s economic position was stronger than before the war. The community still had little manufacturing and, except for national political news, nothing to sell in the markets of the rest of the country, but the seasonal crop of congressmen and visitors ready to spend freely for services while in Washington kept considerable money in circulation.

Furthermore, the enlargement of national power at the expense of the states’ heightened both the political and the social importance of the capital. The men who controlled the railroad interests, the wool-growers, the heads of New England’s expanding textile industry, the steel manufacturers and the machinery makers maintained highly paid lobbyists in Washington and now and again came themselves to see that congressional legislation did not interfere with American business. While official society was relatively sober...
as long as "Lemonade Lucy" was mistress of the White House, the presence of foreign diplomats and influential people of all sorts and kinds from the entire United States lent a piquancy to the season in Washington which New York's Four Hundred itself could not invariably better. Houses and hotel accommodations in the capital were expensive and proportionately sought after even before the upswing of business activity in 1879 launched the United States upon a second gilded age. Poverty was no less extreme in some parts of Washington than in America's big industrial cities, but here it was probably less widespread and certainly less evident to the casual observer. Although the gain since 1860 in the city's per capita wealth did not eradicate the miseries of her destitute families, other people could look upon it as proof of material progress and a hopeful sign for the future.

The proportion of foreign-born to native Americans in Washington had dropped since 1860 from a sixth to less than a tenth of the population. In all growing American cities the ratio had declined, but in 1880 it stood at 39.7 percent in New York, 28 percent in Cincinnati and 16.9 percent in Baltimore. European immigrants avoided Washington, where domestic service and unskilled jobs in the building trades offered almost the only chances to make a living. While immigrants unable to speak English poured into the North, the capital had only 4100 German-born inhabitants and some 1500 other persons born in non-English-speaking countries, and the Irish-born were fewer than the 6300 of eighteen years before. Whatever cosmopolitanism Washington had attained she owed to diplomats and visitors rather than to permanent residents.

Although the District of Columbia thus contained a larger proportion
of native Americans than at any time since the early years of the century, the percentage of American-born Negroes had risen sharply. Instead of a fifth of the total population, a third was now colored, and of that third perhaps half lived at a bare subsistence level. But far more dramatic than numbers was the changed character of the colored community, for although white people still thought it one, it had become two; one group made up of blacks native to the District and the ex-field hands who had migrated to Washington during and after the war, and a second relatively small group of aristocratic old Washington families and newcomers with more white than colored blood. While the black masses greatly predominated, Washington included more upper class Negroes than any one other place in the country. Educated colored men, attracted by the exceptional professional opportunities open to them here, had flocked into the capital and turned the city into the center of American Negro civilization. Their hopes of rapidly reducing race prejudice had dwindled during the seventies, but faith remained that its overt expression in discriminatory practices could be kept in check until experience taught white men that darker-skinned Americans were capable of responsible citizenship.

An equally significant albeit more subtle difference between 1860 and 1878 lay in the changed power structure of the community. Congress and the President had always had the final say on important political and economic matters in the District, but local men in ante-bellum Washington had played some part in guiding policies. John P. Van Ness, W. W. Corcoran, George Riggs and two or three other bankers and brokers pulled the strings, which, while not controlling Congress, influenced some of its far-reaching
decisions. Newspaper editors, notably "Joe" Gales and William Seaton, and the heads of Washington's one real industry, printing, all had commanded prestige and some power in local affairs. Seven of Washington's thirteen mayors elected before 1861 were printers or publishers. Lawyers had occupied a strategic position in a city where national politics was the principal business, for lawyers preponderated in Congress and leading members of the District of Columbia bar had had professional links with men on the Hill.

When war came, Washingtonians whose standing derived from their business connections with the South ceased to count. Northerners, with New Yorkers and Philadelphians in the lead, captured the franchise for the principal street railway, opened new national banks, invested heavily in Washington real estate and, in the process, superseded the city's former "economic dominants." A few local opportunists, like Alexander Shepherd and Solomon Brown, succeeded for a time in entrenching themselves within the new circle of power but these men, for the most part building contractors and real estate speculators, made no pretense of having close ties with the city's earlier leaders. Perhaps the election of Mayor Mathew Eddy in 1870 represented old Washingtonians' last attempt to reestablish their past position.

The 1870s brought a steady enhancement of the power of outsiders. From 1800 onward, it is true, influence with Congress, money and family connections had formed the keystones of the District's hierarchy, but whereas they had once been the assets of Washingtonians and Georgetowners, during the 1870s family no longer mattered and most of the influence and money belonged to non-residents or people who spent at most a few months of each
year in the capital. The presence of senators who, if not commanding the $500,000 income ascribed in 1878 to Senator Fair of Nevada, still had fabulous fortunes, reduced the stature of local men. By the end of the century other American cities would begin to experience a superficially similar transfer of power to absentees as big corporations dominating country-wide markets overshadowed purely local businesses developed at a time when inadequate transport encouraged local geographic monopolies. In the District of Columbia the unique features of the phenomenon were its early occurrence and its appearance in a non-industrial, non-commercial community. The result of this relegation of the native Washingtonian to a secondary role in the city's economic and social life was to plant the seeds that produced the "cliff-dwellers" in the 20th century. In the interim the congenial climate of the community would turn many a temporary into a permanent resident.

Finally, the loss of all local voting rights brought about a novel situation. Internal bickering had subsided somewhat during the interregnum as the United States Treasury audits lessened anxieties over irresponsible dissipation of the District's resources. But few citizens realized that rule by an appointed commission was not a scheme they could discard whenever they felt the time ripe; and probably still fewer perceived that in a community without political machinery public opinion would be hard to organise. Impassioned discussion of the suffrage question would cease only when permanent residents, discovering that appeals to the sanctity of democratic principles were futile, decided to make the best of the bargain struck in 1878.

1 Frank Carpenter in article signed "Carp," Cleveland Leader, 5 Apr 84.
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As the United States recovered from the long depression at the end of the 1870's, American business embarked upon a phenomenal expansion. Immigrants poured in from Europe to crowd into the big cities of the eastern seaboard and the Midwest or, lured by advertisements of railroad land in the unsettled West, to try farming the semi-arid stretches of the Great Plains. Combinations of business interests concentrated wealth in the hands of "robber barons", while poverty spread among the working classes. When labor attempted to organize, cries of "anarchy" rose from employers, and in the upper ranks of society fear of social revolution created a kind of hysteria that reached a peak in 1893 and 1894 when panic and depression again swept the country. Strikes and use of armed force to suppress them shook the nation's industrial centers, forcing Americans to reexamine the premises upon which they had built their civilization. Political bosses in the cities pocketed taxpayers' money, while ward heelers won the votes of the poor. Dissatisfied farmers joining with city workmen in endeavor to shift the balance of power within the nation went down in political defeat in 1897 with the collapse of William Jennings Bryan's presidential campaign. Then business recovery abetted by the brief war with Spain seemed again to entrench "the money power" in control until an assassin's bullet ended McKinley's life and put Theodore Roosevelt into the White House. And during these decades
of violence and change, the United States moved irresistibly toward the position of a great world power.

The District of Columbia shared in the business boom of the eighties but, lacking industry and large-scale commerce, escaped acute conflicts between labor and capital and the worst effects of the five-year depression of the nineties. When the appearance of "General Coxey's Army of the Unemployed" in 1894 gave Washingtonians an unwanted glimpse of other Americans' miseries, that short exposure confirmed the belief that residents of the capital were singularly blessed. Since 1878 large taxpayers had edged away from every proposal to modify the form of local government, but the question was under constant discussion during the 1880's. The economic catastrophes of the 1890's fortified the contention that anyone so brash as to suggest a change in the existing arrangement was a fool or a self-seeking knave. A new Board of Trade, a seeming anomaly in a non-commercial city, took the lead in directing attention to civic needs and persuading Congress to act upon measures which citizens themselves were powerless to effect. By the end of the century residents of other American cities looked with admiration and envy at the capital where the tax rate was reasonable, employment steady and graft in local government non-existent.

**Industry and Commerce**

Washington's economic focus shifted after 1878, for the long depression preceding had the effect of convincing local promoters that the diversification of business that had once seemed so desirable was a bruised reed on which to lean. Manufacturing cities had suffered more acutely than the capital during and after the panic; when factories closed down, thousands of
unemployed hands had had to rely upon public charity. The stagnation of trade had produced similar results in commercial centers. If no Washingtonian publicly gave thanks that the District had had neither industry nor commerce to collapse, the business revival at the end of the seventies brought with it a tacit acquiescence in Washington's remaining outside America's commercial and industrial orbit. Even the dismantling of the government's ordnance workshops at Arsenal Point occasioned little protest.

The campaign of 1870 and 1871 to exploit the water power of the Potomac Great Falls had no counterpart in the 1880s; the one half-hearted attempt to whip up fresh interest soon petered out, discouraged by troubles in getting clear title to the water rights and then starved out by the greater attractions of investment in residential property in Washington. Similarly men ceased to talk of a great commercial future for the city. Among articulate people the consensus ran that service to the federal government, to individual consumers and to the host of yearly visitors offered "the national city" a sound basis for her economy. Rooted in so fertile a soil, it needed nothing more to ensure a sturdy growth. When hard times following the panic of 1893 checked real estate and building activities in Washington, a committee of business men spoke of the eligible factory sites in the District and of the unemployed workmen available as mill hands, but the committee was at pains to insist that Washington must remain first of all a residential city, a center of "learning and culture." Certainly only industry of an "inoffensive" kind would be welcome and rather than seeking to

1 Star, 27, 29 Mar, 19 Apr, 17 May 79, 24 May 81; ltrs, Andrew J. Rogers to Sayles J. Bowen, 8, 16 Jan 78 and Memorial of Great Falls Manufacturing Co., 1882, Bowen ms$. 
attract private industrial enterprise, the District would do better to persuade the federal government to do its manufacturing of government supplied here.²

Manufacturing, to be sure, expanded within a narrow range. (See Table I). Building materials, illuminating gas, flour, beer, printing and men's clothing were the principal products, and various small items were still turned out without benefit of power-driven machinery. After the Potomac Electric Power Company obtained land and water rights at the Great Falls in 1898, wider use of power seemed likely, but as late as 1900 all manufacturing concerns together used less than 9600 horse power, the equivalent potential of about 70 family automobiles of mid-20th century.³ In the meantime, the production of consumer goods for a local public suited a community whose business leaders rather feared heavy industry because of "the possible unrest developed in the population whenever an unsatisfactory relation between labor and capital might arise." Although growth was more pronounced between 1880 and 1890 than in the depression-ridden next decade, the 1890's brought the District more establishments with more money invested, more employees, more paid out in wages and a larger dollar value of product.

Brick making, fell behind both lumber dressing and stone cutting. Flour milling, on the decline since 1870, dropped off sharply after 1889 when a devastating flood so damaged the C & O canal that for seven or eight years

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³ Twelfth U.S. Census, 1900, VIII, Manufactures, Pt II, p. 115; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1898, p. 145, 1899, p. 52.
### MANUFACTURING AND ALLIED

#### 1880-

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
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2/ Mostly handicrafts.

3/ Government printing.

4/ Government engraving.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Salaries 1890</th>
<th>Salaries 1900</th>
<th>Capital Investment 1890</th>
<th>Capital Investment 1890</th>
<th>Capital Investment 1890</th>
<th>Capital Investment 1890</th>
<th>Value of Product 1890</th>
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<td>155,505</td>
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<td>7,125,372</td>
<td>7,125,372</td>
<td>7,125,372</td>
<td>7,125,372</td>
<td>314,298</td>
<td>816,950</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7,125,372</td>
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<td>314,298</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
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<td>21,602,692</td>
<td>7,125,372</td>
<td>7,125,372</td>
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<td>314,298</td>
<td>816,950</td>
<td>314,298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thereafter canal traffic ceased altogether. Baking, on the other hand, increased as householders substituted bakers' bread for homemade. In twenty years brewing grew from a $275,000 to a $1,300,000 business and, unlike most manufacturers, Christian Henrich unquestionably sold outside the District a large part of the output of his imposing brick brewery near the mouth of Rock creek. After 1890 private book publishing and job printing yielded in importance to newspaper and magazine publishing, but the Government Printing Office kept the balance about as before.

For stockholders probably the most profitable enterprise was the Washington Gas Light Company; its monopoly, unchallenged until electricity offered a glimmer of competition in the 1890's, enabled the company to pay yearly a minimum of 10 percent in dividends, though, compared to the 65 percent in the depression year of 1876, the return was small. A swelling population which included 350 bankers, about 9,000 well-to-do professional people, and a number of men listed in the City Directory merely as "capitalist" meant a constantly mounting demand for all commodities. Indeed in 1899 the Washington Board of Trade declared: "The unprecedented growth of demand on the part of consumers of every kind has taxed the facilities and ingenuity of merchants and manufacturers, absorbing their attention so completely as to leave little time or room for thoughts or theories of further expansion of industries."

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4 Star, 1 Jan 90.

5 S Mis Doc 91, 53C, 28, 19 Feb 94, Ser 3167; Cleveland Leader, 19 Apr 83.


7 Annual Report of the D.C. Board of Trade, 1899, p. 51.
Long before the final collapse of the C & O canal, citizens had abandoned their old ambition to see the District a great commercial "emporium." Shoppers were delighted to have Isadore Saks open his fine clothing store and Samuel Woodward and Alvin Lothrop a department store modeled upon Wanamakers of Philadelphia and Marshall Fields of Chicago, but local advertisements of the latest pelisse imported from Paris did not make Washington, as one disappointed young woman noted, "a brag shopping place"; Baltimore was more satisfactory. Frank Hume ran a large wholesale grocery business, but most of Washington's merchants stuck to retailing. The city's chief commercial aim in the last years of the century was to be the convention center of the country. Organized sight-seeing tours would be a development of the 20th century, but as early as 1878 some three hundred business men, pursuing the idea that the capital should be the show place of the nation, obtained from Congress a charter for a National Fair Association. Renewal of the thirty-year-old campaign to obtain a large public auditorium in the city failed to win congressional support, but exhibitions held in 1879 and 1880 at Ivy City near the Kendall Green school for the deaf were modest financial successes; a fair of 1882 dedicated to raising money for a memorial to the martyred President Garfield attracted rather less attention. When plans formed in the late eighties for a world's fair in 1892 to celebrate Columbus' discovery of the New World ended in Washington's losing the coveted plum to Chicago, crestfallen citizens could only take comfort in the steady rise of Washington's tourist and convention trade, and in being "a favorite place of residence for people of talent, culture and fortune." 

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8 Ltr, Virginia Grigsby to Hart Grigsby, Jul 83, Gibson-Humphreys ms (SHC); Star, 22 Aug, 21, 23 Oct 79, 8, 16 Oct 80, 20 May, 18, 23 Nov 82, 17 Mar 83, Th Jan 89, 13 Sep, 10 Oct 87; Sun Chronicle, 21 Aug 81, 4 Jun 82; Sentinel, 12 Oct, 13 Nov 89; Washington Post, 2, 4, 11 Oct 89; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1891, p. 18.

9 S Miss Doc 222, 520, 18, 3 Aug 92, Ser 2907.
Real Estate and Building

Nearly universal acceptance of the ideal of making and keeping the city "a favorite place of residence" was at once the cause and the result of widespread interest in local real estate. In the 1880's it became a fashion to purchase lots in Washington or buy tracts of suburban land for division into home sites. To people of small income as well as the well-to-do, investment in Washington real estate looked practically fool-proof.

Mrs. Susan Grigsby, an impoverished Southern gentlewoman who in 1883 had just obtained a $900 a year clerkship in the government Land Office, wrote to her sister: "There are still big fortunes to be made in this city on very small real estate investments and I hope you and I will be amongst the fortunate ones." That Mrs. Grigsby's venture did not pay off in no way discouraged others. A boom in building accompanied the expansion of the market for unimproved property. Purchasers of land in the heart of the city put up office buildings or stores, but most of the new buildings were houses, some of them separate individually designed dwellings, more of them contractor-built red brick rows.

Greatly impressed by a prosperity that had produced nine hundred new houses in less than six months, a young newspaper correspondent questioned a leading citizen about its source. "Washington," came the answer, "is more of a business town than most people think. Washingtonians have some wholesale groceries here which do a business up into

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10 Ltrs, Susan Grigsby to Sarah G. Humphreys, 5 Aug 83, 8 Aug 84; Virginia Grigsby to Harl. Grigsby, Jul 63, Gibson Humphreys mss (SHC).

11 Star, 18 Jun 81, 30 Sep 82, 26 Apr 83; 27 Mar 84; Sun Chronicle, 21 Nov 80, 24 Sep 82.
millions." As the city was growing as fast as any in the country, "real estate values have been making regular jumps upward for the past two years. . . . the day will come—I ought to say it has already come—when it will be as fashionable to have a winter house at Washington as it is to have a summer one at Newport or at Saratoga. . . . Washington in the winter is the gayest of the gay."12

Washington, however, had always been known for the gaiety of her season and yet, except for the war years, had never before enjoyed such a boom. Formerly most public officials and people come to join in the winter's social whirl had rented houses or lived in hotels and boarding houses; now virtually all men holding important public office made a point of owning their own houses, and scores of other temporary residents hastened to build or buy.13 The explanation is probably two-fold: first, Washington's new physical attractions and her increasingly diverse society, second and equally important, the federal government's commitment of 1873 to share District expenses, forbid ruinous public borrowing and thus keep taxes reasonable. Evidence that taxes did not fall with great weight upon the rich appears in the assessment records; in 1893 the property of only 4,119 of the 31,700 District taxpayers was valued at over $10,000 and, despite frequent allusions to the city's large array of costly "mansions," the holdings of only 1300 people were assessed at more than $25,000.14

12 Frank Carpenter in an article signed Carp, Cleveland Leader, 30 Sep 83.

13 Ibid., 17 Mar 85.

14 Anl Rpt D of Tr, 1893, p. 33; Comrs Rpt, 1893, p. 17.
New Yorker," the merchant prince like Levi Leiter of Chicago, or a 
Pittsburgher like George Westinghouse grown rich on his inventions, could 
build or buy his own residence in Washington, occupy it a few months of 
the year and, when he wanted to dispose of it, count on making money on the 
transaction. What the very wealthy chose to do seemed desirable to people 
not so wealthy.

Permanent residents of the city, in turn, began to build houses to 
sell or to furnish and rent. A house had to be very ill-equipped or badly 
located not to lease for the winter at a price that would bring the owner 
a handsome annual return. Rentals of furnished houses ranged in the mid­
eighties from $75 to $3733 a month; the average was $200.15 As land values 
rose, high-priced flats began to appear, a sign of urban growth both 
gratifying and slightly alarming to old residents.16 One businessman, 
miravelling at the changes he had witnessed since the war, noted that in 1865 
Washington had had no brokers dealing exclusively in real estate, and agents 
handled it along with claims insurance and stocks; fifteen years later the 
realtor had come into being. Men who had begun as government clerks 
in Washington turned into real estate dealers. So fifteen-year-old Brainard 
Warner in 1863 came from a small town in Pennsylvania, got a clerical job in 
the Judiciary Square Hospital and other clerkships in the next several years 
and, after reading law with the famous Thaddeus Stevens and graduating from 
the Columbian Law School in 1869, founded a highly successful real estate

15 Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan 83, 1 Nov 83; ltr. S. J. Bowen to Phebe 
Barker, 8 Nov 81, Bowen mss; Post, Oct 89; Star, 1 Jan 90.

16 Star, 10 Feb, 10 Mar 83, 8 Oct 87.
business; George Truesdell, a New Yorker trained as a civil engineer, began his Washington career in 1872 as a clerk in the Treasury and then opened his own real estate office; and a dozen other ambitious young men followed the same path from government clerkships to heads of real estate companies. By 1885 there were a hundred-odd firms. "The real estate men occupy the best offices, and along F street where they are mostly found, their carriages line the street curbs during business hours." More than 2450 buildings went up in Washington in 1887 alone, and ground that had sold for 5 cents a foot five years before sold for 43.

Abetted by a new generation of astute young bankers, real estate syndicates embarked in the mid-1880's upon large-scale operations in the suburbs. One group bought Kalorama Heights, once part of Joel Barlow's estate lying between Boundary street and Rock creek; another acquired 240 acres along Massachusetts avenue extended from the creek to the Tenleytown road, the Wisconsin avenue of today; and in 1887 still a third purchased Chevy Chase, the old Joseph Bradley farm on the District's northwestern line. Chevy Chase was to be the site of Washington's first country club. Apparently some of these deals aimed at a wealthy clientele which would build magnificent houses; several purchasers eventually did. The profits on these transactions were frequently quick and reportedly enormous. Less sophisticated residential areas beyond the city limits also rose sharply in value, although

17 Ibid., 17 Jun 85.
18 Ibid., 27 Oct 88.
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More than 2,000 buildings went up in Washington in 1887 alone, and ground that had sold for 8 cents a foot five years before sold for $3.

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17 Ibid., 17 Jun 85.
18 Ibid., 27 Oct 88.
the appreciation was slower. A section to the east of 19th street south of Columbia road increased in seventeen years from an assessed value of $112,000 to $1,137,100. Cleveland Heights, so named because the President's fifteen-room summer "cottage" was located on Woodley road near the Tenleytown electric street railway, boomed in the late eighties; and a few years later when the Naval Observatory was built on a hilltop in the vicinity, Cleveland Park came into existence.19

As Washington became "a city for the rich," people of modest means found the cost of housing an acute problem. "It is strange," remarked John Forney's Sunday Chronicle "that the capitalists and moneyed men of Washington seeking good opportunities for investment never think of building blocks of small houses within the reach of poor men and government clerks."20

Le Droit Park, begun in the late 1870's as a model apartment building venture, quickly became too expensive for many householders. Multiplying building and loan associations helped the indigent finance new homes, but mounting costs of labor and building materials were constant impediments.21 Some families solved the problem by building or buying a house, occupying only a part and renting out rooms; others had to find quarters in inaccessible localities beyond the reach of the street railways, in Uniontown or Hillside across the Eastern Branch or in areas northeast such as Eckington, once

19 Directory, 1890; Star, 28 Jul 83, 24 May 85, 27 May 85, 7 May, 18 Jun, 9 Jul, 26 Nov, 3 Dec 87, 16 Jun 88; Post, 27 Oct 89; Sentinel, 16 Jul 92.

20 Sun Chronicle, 11 Jul 81.

21 Star, 8 Nov 79, 14 Feb 85; Comrs Rpts, 1899, p. 16, Ser 3930, 1900, pp. 28-29, Ser 4118.
Joseph Gales' summer place, or in Brightwood. Government clerks without children to consider generally lived in Washington boarding houses; single women in fact had little choice. Timid widows and younger women reduced to poverty after the Civil War who then got clerkships in Washington were fearful of the remoteness of the suburbs and the expense of daily carfare. The real estate boom, if sauce for the gander, was certainly not sauce for the goose.

What the 20th century would call "suburban sprawl" had a twenty-year start before Congress took steps to ensure some order in the future outward thrust of the city. By 1888 a belt of "inharmonious subdivisions" where streets had no relation to those of the city ringed Washington's northern bounds. Recognizing for the first time a "metropolitan area" problem, Congress enacted a law requiring suburban developers to lay out their subdivisions in conformity with the street plan of the city. The act checked the mushrooming of relatively inexpensive settlements on Washington's periphery but later simplified the extension of sewers, water mains and street lights into the county. Even without these urban conveniences, county real estate increased in value nearly 500 percent during the eighties.

Until street railway lines ran over the Aqueduct bridge into Virginia,

22 Sun Chronicle, 21 Aug 81; Star, 20 Jul 80, 15 Mar 82, 7 Jan 88; Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan 83; Virginia Grigsby to her brother, Jul 83; Gibson-Humphreys ms (SHC).

23 Comrs' Rpts, 1886, pp. 40-43, Ser 2471, 1890, p. 43, Ser 2646; S Rpt 623, 530, 28, 20 Jul 91, Ser 3192; ptm, H531-566.1, 21 Feb 95; S Doc 23h, 51C, 15, 26 Apr 96, Ser 3351; Star, 1 Jan 90, 1 Jan 91.
Washington's suburbia, to the dismay of Alexandrians, included none of the area beyond the Potomac. In 1890 a newspaper article waxed rhapsodic over recent improvements in the District's outlying areas: "In time the District will be one vast city, the most beautiful, uniform and attractive of any to be found, the centre of learning, thought, wealth and station, the pride of our Republican empire and the envy of the world." 

The slowing of all business after 1893 retarded real estate and building operations in both city and suburbs, but recovery, beginning in 1898, was so rapid that the District building inspectors were swamped with work. While a group of civic-minded men intent on ending alley-dwelling in Washington organised the Sanitary Improvement Company and built a number of row houses suited to the purses of workingmen, extension of the street railway lines into the county west of the Anacostia river hastened the peopling of that entire area "to the proportion of a city." 

Carrol D. Wright, former head of the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, wrote in 1899:

These movements for the improvement of the city have given some wag the opportunity to say that the population of Washington is divided into two classes—real estate agents and those who are not—but the usual facetious remark about real estate agents is offset, and more than offset, by the fact that they have been instrumental in a very large degree in carrying on the improvements that make the present city... On the whole... it is not too much to say that Washington...

24 Ptn, S51A-J15, 22 Jul 90; Washington Bee, 7 Jan 93.

25 Chronicle, 14 Sep 90.

26 Comrs' Rpts, 1896, p. 17, Ser 3/97, 1899, pp. 12-14, Ser 3930, 1900, p. 28, Ser 1/18; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1896, pp. 31-35, 1897, p. 5, 1899, 21-22, 1900, p. 40; Star, 1 Jan 90, 2 Jan 99, 1 Jan 00, 1 Jan 01.
owes a debt to what it likes to call sometimes the "speculators in real estate." 27

Role of the Federal Government

Citizens in general and real estate companies in particular, however, owed much of their prosperity to the widening scope of the federal government's undertakings and the accompanying growth of the civil service. The wealth of members of Congress was itself an asset to Washington, since free-spending senators and representatives spilled money about the city. In 1882 a knowledgeable newspaper man estimated the personal fortunes of seventeen senators at over $600,000,000, and the salaries railroad magnates and powerful industrialists paid lobbyists in the capital swelled the sums spent on high living. 28 The lengthening rosters of clerks in the Executive Department also increased the demand for commodities, services, and housing. The 23,000 government employees of 1890 constituted a larger population than all Washington had had in 1810, and some 26,000 in 1901 needed more of everything than did the 7800 employees of 1880. Salaries, though small to the point of penuriousness, meant a regular monthly income worth fighting to get. 29 After as well as before the inauguration in 1883 of competitive civil service examinations, every month about twenty newspaper advertisements appeared, reading typically: "Will give $100 for a place as clerk or


28 Cleveland Leader, 21 Dec 82, 24 Mar 86.

29 U.S. Register, 1881 and 1901.
messenger in any of the departments: first class references. To a degree unequalled in earlier years, Americans throughout the United States looked to the federal government for their livelihood. When the new Library of Congress was finished in 1893, an expanding library staff created new openings. Jobs in the Government Printing Office, the Bureau of Engraving and at the Navy Yard multiplied during the entire period, while the declaration of war with Spain in 1898 opened up new posts in both the War and Navy Departments. And adding to the advantages of living in the capital, "We have at Washington, in all departments of the Government, nearly a thousand experts in a great number of classes or branches of service... the whole body of them constituting the most important cluster of men of genius and rare attainments in the world."

Federal public works, while less important to the city than those of the 1850's, were another source of prosperity, if only because they provided jobs for common laborers and skilled artisans—for workmen to excavate the foundations of the National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution on the Mall, the new Library of Congress on Capitol Hill, and the new city Post Office on Pennsylvania, for craftsmen putting the finishing touches on the State, War and Navy building west of the White House, for bricklayers erecting the walls and the squat towers of the Museum, the tile-setters engaged in emplacing its frieze of red and blue tile medallions, the

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30 Cleveland Leader, 2 Jul 83 quoting a dozen examples.
31 Bee, 28 Aug 86.
32 See n. 9; 3 Rpt 825, 520, 13, 20 Jun 92, Ser 2914.
carpenters needed for interior work, and for masons entrusted with completing the Washington Monument or laying the stone of the Library and Post Office. Dredgers and carters had several years' work when Congress in 1882 at long last appropriated funds for redemption of the "Potomac Flats" by dredging the river channel and filling the tidal marsh that had stretched since the 1830's from the National Observatory beyond the White House to the Long Bridge. Jobs laying water mains and sewers, work sponsored by the District commissioners for which the federal government paid only half, further increased employment during the 1880's. Wages, moreover, were slightly higher here than elsewhere. Though labor had grievances and strikes aimed at an eight-hour day occurred in 1886, the District had by then a few "eight-hour bosses," and the local unions, alarmed by public attitudes toward the Haymarket Riot in Chicago on May Day, saw fit to condemn any recourse to violence. Four years later a fresh round of strikes began, but labor organization here as elsewhere was too feeble to win any major concession.

The curtailment of building during the five-year depression of the next decade struck workingmen a severe blow. Except for men employed in the bakeries and breweries, wage rates fell sharply. (See Table I.) Still Washington seemed to offer more chances than other big cities. In the spring of 1894, when "General" Coxey led his "Army of the Unemployed" to the capital to seek the help of the federal government, the local unions remained very quiet, their sympathies doubtless diluted by belief that the District was their special preserve. Apparently, however, they welcomed the idea of making Washington a center of organized labor. In 1895 the Knights of Labor moved its headquarters from Philadelphia to a building...
"within the very shadow of the Capitol," while the American Federation of Labor, with some 2,000 new members and a newly organized labor bureau, found jobs for about 150 men. The resumption of private building activities two or three years later restored some of the confidence of the workingmen.33

Proofs of a congressional interest in the capital such as Washington had never before enjoyed further stimulated the economy. Most Washingtonians would doubtless have agreed that reclamation of the Potomac Flats, because a vital sanitary measure, was the most needed public project, but the founding of the Zoo, the opening of Rock Creek Park and, when litigation over ownership of the made land on the waterfront ended in vesting title in the United States, the creation of Potomac Park probably gave quite as much general satisfaction. Far-sighted citizens, above all young Charles Glover of the Riggs & Company banking firm, perceived that plans for the "City Beautiful" might be ultimately more important than a proliferation of public buildings. From 1867 onward, Congress, prodded by the petitions of District residents and the occasional urgings of federal officials, had talked of acquiring the Rock creek valley for a park, but until 1889 each successive bill had failed. That year fears lest sewage from nearby dwellings contaminate the creek irretrievably induced Congress to include in the District appropriation $200,000 for the purchase of land for a National Zoological Park a mile north of the city limits. Eighteen months later Congress authorized the purchase of a much larger stretch of the

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33 Star, 1 Oct 91, 11 Feb 85, 21 Jun 86, 3 Nov 87, 1 Jan 91, 1 Jan 95, 1 Jan 96; pttn, 850A-J12, 1 Jun 88; S Rpt 174, L82, 28, 20 Jan 85; Ser 226; S Rpt 174, 56C, 15, 1 Feb 96, Ser 3362; Sentinel, 28 Apr 94, 29 Apr 99; Chronicle, 12 Aug 94.
upper valley for "a pleasing ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States." That the Zoo came first was probably due to the recommendation of Samuel Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, who wanted a proper home for the live animals then kept on the Smithsonian grounds to serve as models for the Institution's taxidermists. That the Zoo came first was probably due to the recommendation of Samuel Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, who wanted a proper home for the live animals then kept on the Smithsonian grounds to serve as models for the Institution's taxidermists.

Under the direction of the Smithsonian regents, the Zoo containing some 225 specimens of wild creatures opened in 1890 with a former Barnum and Bailey man as head keeper. Two years later purchase of the land for Rock Creek Park was completed. A critical minority contended that Congress exploited the District by imposing upon it heavy expenses for national purposes such as "monkey parks," that the money might have been better spent on improving the Mall, and that only speculators in the real estate adjoining the creek would benefit from the proposed "embellishments." In actuality, perhaps because of "the extremely economical ideas of the House committee on appropriations" of the 52nd and succeeding Congresses, the stretch above the "Zoological Gardens" was largely left in its natural state and even at the end of the century only a few roads wound through the woodlands. But the new parks formed a point of departure upon a course that would eventually restore salient features of L'Enfant's plan of the city. In response to the pleas of the Park committee of the Board of Trade and a committee in charge of the city's centennial celebration, in January 1901 Senator James Macmillan

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34 Comrs Rpt, 1886, p. 114; Ser 2471; H Rpt 3820, 490, 28, 31 Jan 87, Ser 2501; H Rpt 3866, 5OC, 23, 26 Jan 89, Ser 2673; ptsas, H50A-D1, 19 Feb 89 and H50A-D1, n.d.; H Mis Doc 72, 510, 18, 18 Jan 90, Ser 2760; S Ex Doc 127, 510, 18, Ser 2668.
proposed that the government appoint a commission to plan a complete park system linking the Capitol grounds, which Frederick Law Olmstead had landscaped in the seventies, the Mall and Potomac Park with the Zoo and Rock Creek Park. From that beginning would spring a much larger plan for beautifying the city. 35

Relations of Congress and Community

The relations of Congress with the local community, while now and again touched by controversy, eventually achieved a serenity that contrasted markedly with the earlier atmosphere of anger and frustration. Not all Congresses, it is true, gave the District much attention, and even those that produced the most constructive legislation shelved some bills important to Washingtonians. On the other hand, particularly during the 1890's, a number of senators and representatives displayed an astonishing readiness to devote thought to District problems. Congressmen occasionally complained about the time spent on local affairs, for, as Senator Morgan of Alabama noted, "Whenever a proposition comes up in reference to the disposition of the rights of property of any person whatsoever in this city, the Senate of the United States is converted ••• into a mere town council, and the wrangles that go on here resemble very much the interesting debates that occur in such bodies." 36 Yet congressional impatience tended to yield to

35 Sentinel, 20 Mar 90; Star, 2 Jan 93; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1898, p. 55, 1899, pp. 65–66, 1901, pp. 20, 64–66; S Rpt 1919, 56C, 29, 18 Jan 01, Ser 106A.

36 Rec, 163, 28, 6 May 80, p. 3063.
pride in what Americans were coming increasingly to regard as a national city. The reports of committees investigating such questions as the organization of charities, the public school system or the District tax structure often revealed considerable understanding of the local situation and an intelligent interest in bettering it, and, despite some short-sighted obstructionism, congressional debates on local bills generally ended in accepting committee recommendations. Newcomers on the Hill, to be sure, not infrequently exploded about the impropriety of forcing their constituents to contribute to the District expenses. But appropriations went through yearly with at most minor deviations from the principle of equal sharing set forth in the Organic Act, and a bill to cancel the arrangement in 1896 got very short shrift indeed after figures showed that taxable property in the District came to about $191,418,000 whereas federal property, exclusive of the streets and alleys, totalled over $198,000,000.37

District taxpayers, for their part, understood clearly the importance of the annual federal appropriation. Although they thought it unjust to have to pay half the costs of the Zoo, an explicitly National Park under the direction of a federal agency, they knew that without federal money the park could not have come into being. When the extension of streets and public utilities into the county became urgent, suburban residents not unnaturally were indignant at congressional refusal to apply the fifty-fifty principle to the county as well as the city; in actuality, after

37 E. g., ibid., l7c, 28, 5 Jan 83, pp. 890-93, 520, 18, 2 Mar 92, pp. 1636-58, 54c, 18, 31 Jan 96, p. 1178, 23 May 96, p. 5599; H Rpt 1978, 54c, 18, 22 May 96, Ser 3148.
approval of a District highway system in 1899 and 1900, only the assessments on private property for public improvements marked off county from city by an invisible line. Whether city-dweller or county, everyone felt the weight of congressional authority, and, when House or Senate dismissed a grievance summarily, citizens' sense of helplessness was acute. They realized that disagreements among themselves often hampered Congress in deciding what would best suit the community, but even when public opinion was virtually unanimous, a congressional whim could block a measure. For example, in the face of city-wide uneasiness about the paucity of charitable institutions for colored children, Congress haggled over the offer of a civic-minded Negro to give his farm as a home for "the poor colored waifs of the city." Congressional inaction on codification of District law became so intolerable that private citizens finally engaged a lawyer at their own expense to draft a code. Congress then accepted the first part of the two-part draft. Every new Congress, moreover, presented a fresh hazard, since men serving their first term were likely to be assigned to House or Senate District Committee where their unfamiliarity with the needs of a politically impotent city could impede or stop badly wanted legislation.39

Attitudes toward Suffrage

Rebellion against that impotence alternately waxed and waned in

38 S Rpt 1150, 55C, 25, 25 May 98; Comrs Rpts, 1899, pp. 33-34, Ser 3930, 1900, p. 31, Ser lll8; ptn, H52A-Dl, 30 Mar 92, Anl Rpt B of Tr, 01, p. 29.

39 Star, 5 Apr 79, 1 Sep 81, 5 Mar 87, 18, 25 Feb, 3, 10 Mar 88, 2 Jan 99; Capitol, 1 Jan 88; Sun Chronicle, 23 Jan, 6 Feb 81, 5 Mar 82; Chronicle, 18 Sep 90; ptns, H66A-Dl, 8 Mar 80, S50A-Jll2, 9 Jan 88; S Mis Doc 161, 53C, 25, 23 Apr 91, Ser 3171; S Ex Doc 107, 51C, 18, 7 Feb 96, Ser 3350; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1897, p. 65.
strength during the 1880's. Ambivalence marked the thinking of a great many people; while District representation in Congress looked desirable, could a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives serve any useful purpose, and could his election offset the possible disadvantages of unlimited manhood suffrage in local affairs? Could the community obtain a voice in Congress without accepting a popularly elected local government? Reopening the question settled by the Organic Act might merely result in scrapping the provision for federal appropriations without altering the District's non-voting status or, worse in the view of some Washingtonians, might end in the return of a city regime dominated by Negro and propertyless voters. Fear of prying the lid off a Pandora's box apparently kept some men silent except when provoked into speech by some flagrant congressional sin of omission or commission.\(^{40}\)

The local press generally opposed restoration of a popularly elected District government. The Star invariably warned of the perils of a return of the "feather dusters" and insisted that all intelligent citizens stood solidly against such folly; the faults of the existing local administration lay in the men appointed, not in the system. The Post and the Sentinel, a paper directed mainly to Washington's German population, were far less pleased with government by appointed federal officials. For several years after 1876 both papers held limited suffrage better than none but later veered away from unqualified endorsement of an elected city government.\(^{41}\)

\(^{40}\) Star, 25 Jan, 16, 23, 30 Dec 79, 13, 24 Jan 80, 5 Mar 87, 16 Feb 88; Capitol, 26 Jan 79, 1 Jan 88.

\(^{41}\) Star, 4, 6, 11 Feb 79, 3, 7, 8 Feb, 1 Mar 80, 27 Mar, 8 Apr 81, 22 May, 1 Jun 85, 27 Nov 86, 28 Jan 88; Capitol, 14 Jan 83, 1 Jan 88; Post, 22, 23, 30 Jan 79; Sentinel, 27 Mar, 4, 18 Dec 86, 21 Sep 89, 11 Mar 93, 7 Apr 94.
The People's Advocate, a short-lived Negro newspaper, declared "Universal suffrage is wrong in policy not in principle when applied to cities." A literacy and a property qualification for voting should be part of any plan for elections in Washington. The Bee, a second Negro paper, wavered back and forth but usually argued that colored people were better off under the protection of Congress than they would be under city officials elected by Negro riff raff. Only the Chronicle and John Forney's Sunday Chronicle, speaking for that tempestuous old radical, consistently took the line that a local electorate including colored men could no worse for itself than did federal appointees. The opinion of workingmen rarely found its way into print, but some handwritten petitions from labor groups repeated their earlier appeals for District self-government. White workingmen, however fanatically dedicated to the doctrine of white supremacy, obviously believed two white men could always outvote one Negro, and, unlike wealthier citizens, the working classes were only incidentally concerned with perpetuation of the financial provisions of the Organic Act.

In 1888 Theodore Noyes, son of the editor of the Star, published a series of articles reviewing the eighty-eight years of what he termed congressional "neglect" of Washington. Coming on the heels of a congressional session that had seen no action on important local bills, the analysis struck
home with peculiar force. Popularly elected municipal officers he thought
would be useless. "Without representation," he argued, "suffrage is of no
value; and, shut out from the bodies which make its laws and imposes taxes
upon it, representation of the District under the Constitution in its
present shape can only be a sham." The one measure that could give District
citizens any power over their own destiny was a constitutional amendment
enabling qualified voters to elect representatives to Congress and a cor-
responding number of members to the presidential electoral college.\textsuperscript{144}

Later that year a recently organized Citizens' Committee of 100, reminiscent
of the Committee of 1878, set itself to examine Noyes' proposal and possible
alternatives.\textsuperscript{145} While Appleton Clark, a Washington notary, assembled a
sheaf of letters expressing the views of well-known Washingtonians and
figures comparing the District's population, wealth and contributions to
the nation with those of a half dozen states, the committee drafted a
memorial to Congress requesting a constitutional amendment. "They are
unable to see why they should be excluded from participation in the General
Government any more than the people of State capitals should be excluded
from participation in State governments." Two or three of the accompanying
letters favored something less radical than a constitutional amendment; the
rest supported the plan and several asked for an elected local government
as well as national representation.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} Star, 5 Mar 87, 18, 25 Feb, 3, 10 Mar 88; Rec, 39C, 28, 29 Jan
87, p. 1172.

\textsuperscript{145} Star, 15 Jun 87, 15, 18 Feb 88; S Mis Doc, 126, 50C, 15, 11 Jun
88, Ser 2517.

\textsuperscript{146} S Mis Doc 237, 51C, 15, 17 Sep 90, Ser 2700; ptms, 851A-315, 17
May 90, H51A-D1, 19 Aug 90.
Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire presented the plea in the form of a resolution. In May 1890 the Senate committee on elections to whom the matter was referred reported it back adversely. Blair, incensed at the committee's holding no hearings on a measure wanted by the "great mass" of District citizens, protested the summary dismissal. He spoke of the evil effects of civic irresponsibility upon young men growing up in Washington where business monopolies exercised control through "combinations and rings and syndicates which derive their strength from unholy or indifferent relations to and with the representatives of national power." A constitutional amendment would take time to pass and ratify. All the more reason for Congress promptly to take steps to free the District from the prevailing "absolute political despotism, all the more alarming because so many are in love with it."47 The speech, published in the Congressional Record, began and ended the Senate discussion. Two years later the Democratic national party platform included a District suffrage plank; it remained purely decorative woodwork.

Thin hopes for success apparently lessened the petitioners disappointment. If they had won nothing and, in Theodore Noyes' phrase, were still "political slaves," neither had they become "bankrupt freemen" by loss of the federal sharing of District expenses. During the 1890's the suffrage question in one form or another cropped up occasionally but without arousing citizens to new efforts. The suffering to be seen in other cities after the panic weakened the community's interest in political reorganization, since poverty and unemployment, bad enough in the District, could

47 Rec, 51c, 15, 17 Sep 90, pp. 10119-23.
easily become worse. Furthermore, toward the end of the decade exceptionally
generous appropriations made congressional rule relatively painless, and
growing faith in citizens' associations and the new Washington Board of
Trade persuaded taxpayers that, voteless though they were, they could make
their wants known on the Hill and expect an eventual response.\textsuperscript{18}

The Role of Citizens Associations and the Board of Trade

The citizens associations were initially neighborhood groups con­
each
cerned/with its own section of city or county. The East Washington Citizens
Association launched by property-owners on Capitol Hill in 1871 was the
first, but others appeared after 1871, and the number multiplied rapidly in
the mid-eighties. Inasmuch as law forbade the District's borrowing and
appropriations for public works were expressly tabbed for particular projects,
each area had to compete with its neighbors to get the largest possible sum
for itself. Hence every association ordinarily discussed only its own
special needs. But now and again topics such as possible changes in the
school system or methods of assessing property had city-wide interest. In
December 1886 several hundred men, spurred on by the wish to have a voice
in determining how taxes should be spent, attempted to set up a new Committee
of 100 comparable to that of 1878. As all but a very few of the nominees
were residents of northwest Washington, objections arose from property-
owners of other areas. Six months later, eight citizens associations in
Washington and the Mt. Pleasant association in the county formed a central
Committee of 100. Its first proposal was to have the President appoint a

\textsuperscript{18} Chronicle, 7 Apr 95; ptn, H52A-DI, 30 Mar 92; Star, 1 Jan 00;
Sentinel, 8 Jan 01.
citizens council of fifteen men empowered to prepare the District's annual budget for submission to Congress. When that petition failed, a second asked for District representation by means of a constitutional amendment.\(^4^9\)

The Committee of 100 never had whole-hearted support, although people who for years had had no machinery for common action believed a central organization potentially useful in spite of frequent conflicts of aims among the member associations and particularly between the county and city units.

Dissension swiftly undermined the central committee; it fell apart in 1889 just as the Washington Board of Trade came into being. While the citizens associations never had any purely social function, they bore some resemblance to the farmers' Grange and served the same purpose of clarifying and giving form to members' ideas. "Difficult questions," remarked a detached observer, "are expounded with a fullness of detail and of technical precision that would never be dared before the usual political audience."\(^5^0\)

The effort of Negroes excluded from white associations to form their own testified to the importance the community attached to these neighborhood pressure groups.\(^5^1\)

Because more homogeneous, better organized and possessed of clearer vision of community needs, the Washington Board of Trade founded in 1889 early proved of greater value to the city as a whole than were the citizens'

\(^{4^9}\) Star, 12 Jul 83, 11 Dec 86, 6, 19 Jan, 12, 26 Feb, 2 Mar, 1, 16 Apr, 7, 17 May, 15 Jun, 11 Aug, 12 Oct, 17 Nov 87, 1 May 88, 1 Jan 89; Bee, 14 May 87; ptn, 57A-H1, 18 Apr 90; see also n. 35; Post, 6, 12 Nov 89.

\(^{5^0}\) C. Meriwether, "Washington City Government," Political Science Quarterly, XII (Sep 1897) 418.

\(^{5^1}\) Star, 22 Jan 87, 1 Jan 88, 2 Jan 99, 1 Jan 00; ptn, H3u-A-H7.6, 30 Mar 96; Suburban Citizen, 29 Jan 86; Bee, 14 May, 1 Jun, 2 Jul, 12 Nov 87, 3 Mar 88, 28 Oct 99.
associations with their avowedly parochial interests. Many a 20th century Washingtonian would come to look upon the Board of Trade as an ultra-conservative body ruled by realtors for the sole benefit of real estate speculators and the bankers who gave them backing. In its youth its record contradicted any such charge. If, as the Sentinel contended, the Board was a front for the street railway executives, bankers, insurance agents and "sprinkling of real estate brokers, politicians and the like," who really governed the city, they served others than themselves. If they showed little comprehension of workingmen's problems, in the main ignored the Negro third of the population, and adopted a rather complacent attitude toward the public schools, most of the committee reports from 1889 to 1901 revealed painstaking unbiased investigation of civic wants and produced intelligent recommendations for meeting them. As the name Board of Trade implies, its first concern was to strengthen the District's economic position. The directors opposed local suffrage, but their goals reached to enlarging the scope and effectiveness of local charities, to bettering health conditions and to realizing a far-sighted plan for beautifying the city which Congress through the Fine Arts Commission later largely accepted.52

Beriah Wilkins, an owner and later editor of the Washington Post, sent out the letters of invitation to the meeting that gave birth to the Board of Trade. His four-line note went to some 200 men prominent in Washington's business and professional life. He himself had just completed a third term in the House of Representatives as a member from Ohio, but, finding

52 Sentinel, 16 Jul 1892, Anl Rpts, B of Tr, 1890-1901.
Washington at once congenial and challenging, he had chosen to settle here permanently and devote his energies to forwarding the city's interests. Twenty years later he would cease to be a prominent figure in Washington when, after losing financial control of the Post, he was ousted as editor, but in 1889 he wielded the influence of an independent newspaper with a growing circulation. He paved the way for the proposed Board of Trade by an editorial explaining that an organization of responsible businessmen could represent public opinion in the District more fully and carry more weight with Congress and the commissioners than citizens' associations and individual petitions ever could. The men who attended the meeting agreed.

Organization proceeded quickly. The charter members, presumably most if not all of them the men to whom Wilkins had sent his invitation, elected thirty-one directors; the next year the number was cut to thirty. The board of directors chose the president from its own ranks, engaged the paid secretary, selected the treasurer, fixed the annual dues—$5 for an individual, $10 for a partnership or corporation—appointed the standing committees and recommended or, as things worked out in practice, determined policies. The entire Board might vote upon the admission of new members and annually re-elected or replaced ten directors, but the by-laws enabled thirty men to run an organization that soon came to exercise greater power in Washington than any body except Congress and the presidentially appointed District commissioners. Within two years the District committees of Congress and the commissioners

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53 H. W. Crew, Centennial History of the City of Washington, pp. 160-61; Post, 12 Nov 89. A copy of Wilkins' letter hangs in the Board of Trade Directors' room today.
were turning to the Board of Trade for advice, and by the end of the century critics would assert that the commissioners themselves held office at the pleasure of the Board's directors. As long as the directors were men of vision and concerned for the well-being of the entire city, the community benefitted.

Not every influential Washingtonian became a director or even a member of the Board of Trade; for example, the widely, deeply, respected Charles Glover Finch, one-time District Attorney, never joined, and relatively few executives of the telephone, gas and street railway companies took part, whereas several men eminent in Masonry but without corresponding importance in Washington's business world were active members. Interestingly enough in view of later Board attitudes, James T. Wormley, son of the owner of the famous Wormley House, was a charter member, and three other Negroes were elected in the course of the nineties. So public-spirited and able a man as the banker Charles Glover, on the other hand, did yeoman service on the Board's ruling body; Glover, an imposing six-foot-tall endowed with a perennial youthfulness that would last into advanced old age, chose to expend his vast energies in other ways. Nevertheless, the fifty-seven men who served as Board directors between 1890 and 1901 represented the city's economic dominants. Lawyers like John Ross of the Georgetown University Law School, Alexander T. Britton, journalists and editors like Beriah Wilkins, Henry MacFarland, and Crosby and Theodore Noyes of the Star, the physician and writer, Dr. Samuel Busey, and General John M. Wilson of

54th 1st Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1890, 2nd Anl Rpt, 1891, pp. 9, 13 and By Laws in 4th Anl Rpt, 1893, pp. 54-57; Bee, 2 Feb 01.
the Army Engineer Corps added the professional man's point-of-view to that of bankers, merchants and real estate brokers. The two groups were not mutually exclusive. A number of the professional men were also directors of banks and other business enterprises. Both Ross and Macfarland became District commissioners. The Board's first president, handsome Vermont-born Myron M. Parker, was graduated from the Columbian University Law School in 1876 after holding clerical jobs in the War Department since 1865 and before becoming a successful real estate broker and a District commissioner. John Joy Edson, president of the Board in 1900 and head of the Washington Loan and Trust Company, was also a trained lawyer. Contrary to later popular belief, real estate men were no more in evidence than merchants and bankers.

Indeed a striking feature of the make-up of the directorate was the interlocking interests of its members. A great many realtors were also presidents or directors of Washington banks and officials in the street railway companies.

Most of these men had come to Washington in the 1860's and '70's and in 1889 were still in their early forties. Several were completely self-made. Brainard Warner, an unknown country boy upon his arrival in Washington during the Civil War, was head of the city's foremost real estate firm before he was thirty, at the age of forty-two in 1889 the founder and first president of the Washington Loan and Trust Company, and in the nineties president of the Board of Trade, and in the interim, while organizing a half-dozen other successful business enterprises, built and moved into a large red brick mansion in the millionaire section of Massachusetts Avenue beyond Dupont Circle. The dour-looking, witty Crosby Noyes, born in Maine, had walked into Washington on foot in 1848, and by his literary skills, his insights and his Yankee shrewdness, made his way up to a position of singular power not only
as editor of the *Evening Star* but as a citizen passionately devoted to
Washington's interests. The suave Theodore Noyes, a native Washingtonian,
继承 that devotion as well as the editorship of the *Star*.

Whether to the manor born or representing the rags to riches saga, the
leaders of the Board of Trade all had some social finesse and all played some
part in guiding local charities and reform institutions. Beriah Wilkins acted
for years as treasurer of the citizens' relief committee. The heavily-built,
round-faced, mustachioed Brainard Warner, outwardly the entrepreneur *par excellence*,
put his alert intelligence and his strong sense of public duty behind the work
of the Industrial Home School, the Central Free Dispensary, and Emergency
Hospital; in addition to serving repeatedly on the School Board he was president
of the National Philharmonic Society, a vice president of the National American
Red Cross later and a generous sponsor of the Washington Choral Society and
Georgetown Orchestra. Another Board of Trade president, Samuel Woodward, gave
himself unstintingly to the YMCA. Rather prim-looking behind his
rimless eyeglasses and carefully pointed beard, he had such firm religious convictions
that he forbade the sale of playing cards in Woodward and Lothrop's department
store, but he gave away thousands of dollars yearly to worthy causes and his
gentleness and kindly good judgment made him beloved and respected for more
than his Christian endeavors. If Crosby Noyes, Beriah Wilkins, Woodward and
Warner stand out with Charles Glover as preeminent in the 1890's, a score of
other men were only less dedicated and less influential. While some of their
associates showed more hard-boiled self-interest than altruism, men of that
kidney were astonishingly few.55 And Washingtonians by adoption were as ready as

55 *Anl Rpts E of Tr* and lists of officers and members, 1890-1901; City
Directories; *Chronicle*, 12 Dec 96; *Post*, 8, 9 Oct 89; *Washington Post Hist.*
native sons to work for the well-being of the community.

Although by 1901 out of 720 members of the Board of Trade only 33 lived outside northwest Washington, no one accused the organization of sectional bias. In encouraging the citizens' associations, President Edson remarked, "The spheres of activity of the associations and the Board, instead of colliding, are distinct and supplemental." The Board's sphere was the more comprehensive, not only geographically but substantively. It was the Board that organized the Washington Sanitary Improvement Company to build inexpensive model houses for workingmen, the Board that protested against taxing county dwellers differently from city property-owners for improvements, the Board that, with the collaboration of the District Bar Association, engaged Associate Justice Walter Cox of the District Supreme Court to codify District law, the Board that campaigned successfully for a public library and that led the fight to get the Pennsylvania railroad tracks and the depot off the Mall. The organization was intrinsically undemocratic.

When the committee on membership in 1897 acknowledged the force of complaints that the Board did the bidding of a few members and held too few general meetings, the remedies the directors sought to apply still left an autocracy. Yet in light of the abuses of municipal governments elsewhere in America, Washingtonians who shrank from the mere idea of popularly elected city officials had some justification for placing faith in the Board of Trade.

A political scientist writing for the Political Science Quarterly argued that this unofficial self-appointed "city council" provided an ideal form of local government through a "representative aristocracy." 56

The Washingtonians who acted as civilian commissioners of the District between 1878 and 1901 were on the whole more capable men than the politicians who preceded them. The stipulation of the Organic Act that they must be bona fide residents of the District meant that they were familiar with the local scene, while the tacit understanding that both major political parties were to be represented gave their administrations a non-partisan character, although the difference was not great between a "Cleveland Democrat" and an outright Republican. Four of the fourteen men held office under Grover Cleveland as well as a Republican President, and John Ross served from 1890 to 1902. Except perhaps Ross, a former professor of law at Georgetown University, and the journalist Henry MacFarland, both Board of Trade members, none of the commissioners possessed great personal distinction. All of them represented Washington's top business stratum and had a myopic inability to see the problem of the little fellow, but they took their official responsibilities seriously and, according to their lights, were governed by public spirit. Lawyers, real estate dealers and merchants, they were property-owners, several of them well-to-do and most of them with wide-ranging interests in the community's civic and business enterprises. Rather colorless as individuals, as public servants they ranked high in an era when municipal officials in America were by and large an unsavory lot. The charges of self-seeking or negligence which citizens occasionally levelled at one or another of the District commissioners rarely withstood the test of time. ¹

¹ E.g., Sentinel, 20 Jan 83, 2 Jul 85, 23 Oct 6, 27 Nov 86, 2 Mar 89, 22 Nov 90; Bee, 19, 26 Jul 84; Star, 3 Mar 83, 22 Sep 87, 9 Jan 89; ptu, S50A-JL2, 8 Oct 88; Chronicle, 7 Sep 90, 5 Feb 93, 13, 20 Mar 97; ltr, Henry Himber to S. J. Bowen, 11 Jun 60, and Salmon Richards to Bowen, 2 Jul 81, Bowen mss. See also Louis Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity, op. 8-10.
The Army Engineer assigned to the board of commissioners was in a somewhat different position. He was usually a newcomer ill-versed in the District's problems and, because his tour of duty was generally brief, had little time to learn the job; in twenty years ten different officers held it. Washingtonians often took exception to what seemed to be military high-handedness in the engineer's office. Since he had charge of all contracts for public works, he commanded considerable patronage and could exercise an arbitrary authority. But as outright graft did not darken the picture, the progress in public improvements eventually mollified taxpayers.  

Municipal Housekeeping Problems

Past disasters had bred wariness in residents of the District. However relieved to have the federal government committed to sharing expenses, they were not at once ready to place confidence in the new administrators. Although the Organic Act provided safeguards against irresponsible spending, taxpayers during most of the 1880's watched the commissioners' every move distrustfully. If no one expected a new form of government to resolve the perennial problems of municipal housekeeping, and if some mistakes were inevitable in the process of making a new system work, at least lack of public vigilance should not contribute to the errors. Complaints consequently sounded every year about inequities in property assessments and the incidence of taxes, about the police department, about the inadequacies of the water supply and the sewerage system, about favoritism shown fashionable Northwest at the expense of East

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2 Star, 1, 16 Feb, 28 Sep 88; Sentinel, 28 Feb 88, 16 Aug 90, 1 Sep 00.
Washington in making public improvements, about official truckling to the utility and railroad companies, and about the running of the public schools.

Dissatisfaction with school administration and anger at the railroad companies carried on through the 1890's, but most of the other frictions eased before the end of the 1880's as Congress or the commissioners took corrective action.

In 1878 the financial tangle left by the Board of Public Works was still a legacy of trouble for the District. The new commissioners believed it unjust to impose tax liens on property for assessments improperly levied and not yet paid because the street improvements had never been made. Three years of controversy ensued before modifications of the billing reduced the total still unpaid on the special assessments to about $800,000. The adjustments lost to the District about $2,000,000. But delinquency on all taxes continued to be a thorn in the commissioners' flesh. Citizens, in turn, objected to the assessors' haphazard methods of fixing real estate values, to the perpetuation of the tax on personal property, and to having the very men who made the assessments act as the Board of Equalization and Collection. Three-year intervals between appraisals piled up inequities of valuation in a rapidly growing community and fostered the rise of a movement advocating Henry George's single tax. The commissioners themselves thought

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4 Star, 11 Dec 79, 22 May 80, 1 Aug 88; Sun Chronicle, 11 Jan 80, Sentinel, 18 Dec 86, 25 May 89; Rec, 17C, 15, 20 Feb 82, pp. 1317-21; pins, N6A-61, 8 Mar 80 and dozens of similar pins to every Congress during the 1880's.
the personalty tax unsuitable and taxes on improvements to real estate an
encouragement to speculation. "So large a proportion of the population of
Washington are but temporary residents that the imposition of a personal
tax is manifestly unjust to those permanently established here, and compels
the latter to submit to an impost unfairly distributed, from which the few
bear the burden." Collections from that source decreased yearly and in 1887
were 60 percent below the figure for 1878. 5

During the early nineties Congress scrutinized the local tax laws.
Oddly enough, refusal to drop the personal property tax did not prevent con­sideration of the single tax on land. A report of 1892, highly critical of
the assessors' secretive and arbitrary procedures, certainly revealed single
tax leanings:

\[ \text{Since} \] land values are increasing at an enormous rate—on a conser­
ervative estimate to the amount of $1,000,000 annually... the assess­
ment of buildings and the under-assessment of land is operating to
discourage greatly the growth and improvement of the capital...

A fair assessment of land alone it would be easy to obtain by a
tax rate less than one-half of the present all the revenue required for
the needs of the District.

Still worse, the findings showed business property assessed frequently at less
than 14 percent its true value and land held for speculation at less than 10
percent, while residential property "especially where the small homes are
situated, is assessed at from 70 to 80 percent of its true value." 6

\[ \text{At the last minute the committee shed away from any radical innovation.} \]
A new law passed in 1891, merely required assessors and assistant assessors to conduct

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5 Comrs Rpts, 1879, p. 4, Ser 1913, 1881, pp. 4-6, Ser 2021, 1882, p.
5, Ser 2103, 1883. pp. 9, Ser 2193, 1887, p. 9, Ser 2547, 1890, pp. 11-12,
Ser 2948.

6 H Rpt 1469, 52d, 1st, 24 May 92, pp. 1-4, 10, Ser 3046.
open hearings on complaints, revise and equalize existing real estate
evaluations and systematize future assessments. Glaring inequities dis­
appeared thereafter. "Yet, as nearly every resident of the city of Washington
is a single taxer," a congressman remarked at the end of the century, a tax
on land alone would have better satisfied most of the local public. 7

In the meantime the $1,211,000 paid into the sinking fund annually
steadily pared down the District's long-term debt. As interest payments
shrunk and monies for reduction of the principal and for building up the
fire and police department pension funds dropped from 35.26 to 15.26 percent
of the over-all budget, taxpayers ceased to feel put upon. (See Table II).
They observed uneasily congressional departures from the "fifty-fifty
principle" in meeting District expenses, first in 1891 when the appropria­
tion act charged the District with the full $3000 cost of opening a public
bathing beach, and then over the next six years by refusals to share some
$357,000 of costs for various items. But these exceptions were disturbing
chiefly as warnings that not all members of Congress approved the 1873
commitment. Citizens, recognizing the commissioners' powerlessness to
prevent the cuts, rarely accused the local administrators of financial
mismanagement. 8

The determination to let no extravagance provide a pretext for con­
gressional repudiation of the "fifty-fifty" arrangement probably stifled many

7 S Bill, 2046, 53C, 2S, Feb 1894 (mf, L.C.); Star, 1 Jan 95; Rec,
56C, 2S, 7 Feb 01, App, p. 10; S Doc 351, 57C, 1S, 9 May 02, Ser 424B.

## District of Columbia Expenditures

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<th>Service</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1893</th>
<th>1894</th>
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<td>255,264</td>
<td>339,988</td>
<td>393,980</td>
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<td>Finance</td>
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<td>1,291,865</td>
<td>1,380,246</td>
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<td>1,459,776</td>
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<td>Interest Reduction of funded debt</td>
<td>1,317,813</td>
<td>1,213,947</td>
<td>1,213,947</td>
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<td>1,213,947</td>
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<td>Special funds</td>
<td>29,071</td>
<td>80,907</td>
<td>166,298</td>
<td>239,066</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire Protection</td>
<td>106,262</td>
<td>117,726</td>
<td>163,080</td>
<td>213,969</td>
<td>339,025</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<td><strong>Law Enforcement</strong></td>
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<td>Police</td>
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<td>756,496</td>
<td>989,994</td>
<td>1,004,746</td>
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<td>Judiciary</td>
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<td>388,861</td>
<td>514,901</td>
<td>720,287</td>
<td>792,472</td>
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<td>Reform School</td>
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<td>98,125</td>
<td>117,902</td>
<td>147,726</td>
<td>126,702</td>
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<td>Girls Reform School</td>
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<td>77,799</td>
<td>114,106</td>
<td>163,080</td>
<td>163,080</td>
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<td><strong>Health Services</strong></td>
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<td>General</td>
<td>60,251</td>
<td>112,992</td>
<td>116,980</td>
<td>287,857</td>
<td>453,673</td>
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<td>Medical Service to Poor</td>
<td>26,328</td>
<td>27,163</td>
<td>30,587</td>
<td>61,761</td>
<td>70,892</td>
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<td>Private hospitals</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>41,108</td>
<td>51,026</td>
<td>121,938</td>
<td>134,746</td>
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<td>Public hospitals</td>
<td>10,323</td>
<td>21,824</td>
<td>31,489</td>
<td>50,765</td>
<td>121,807</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<td>Garbage removal</td>
<td>16,209</td>
<td>20,048</td>
<td>31,489</td>
<td>50,765</td>
<td>121,807</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<td><strong>Welfare</strong></td>
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<td>Washington Asylum</td>
<td>117,630</td>
<td>231,449</td>
<td>228,265</td>
<td>327,112</td>
<td>323,352</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<td>Poor relief</td>
<td>48,157</td>
<td>72,971</td>
<td>61,306</td>
<td>71,013</td>
<td>78,163</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<td>St. Elisabeths</td>
<td>11,319</td>
<td>6,419</td>
<td>7,130</td>
<td>7,432</td>
<td>5,722</td>
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<td>Other public charities</td>
<td>11,538</td>
<td>14,876</td>
<td>25,680</td>
<td>36,095</td>
<td>60,355</td>
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<td>Private charities</td>
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<td>18,100</td>
<td>30,074</td>
<td>69,585</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>1876</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td><strong>PUBLIC EDUCATION</strong></td>
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<td>Salaries</td>
<td>330,343</td>
<td>600,919</td>
<td>708,802</td>
<td>867,351</td>
<td>939,280</td>
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<td>New schoolhouses</td>
<td>117,981</td>
<td>230,205</td>
<td>73,767</td>
<td>163,773</td>
<td>341,157</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance &amp; misc.</td>
<td>78,986</td>
<td>109,371</td>
<td>160,111</td>
<td>216,262</td>
<td>233,654</td>
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<td><strong>PUBLIC WORKS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PUBLIC WORKS: MAINTENANCE AND NEW CONSTRUCTION</strong></td>
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<td>City streets</td>
<td>623,712</td>
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<td>1,139,127</td>
<td>1,500,070</td>
<td>2,021,583</td>
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<td>Improvements and repairs</td>
<td>460,767</td>
<td>971,636</td>
<td>700,438</td>
<td>792,944</td>
<td>1,498,309</td>
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<td>Lighting, cleaning, &amp; misc.</td>
<td>162,745</td>
<td>272,601</td>
<td>344,956</td>
<td>394,793</td>
<td>401,466</td>
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<td>County roads &amp; suburban streets</td>
<td>170,314</td>
<td>93,732</td>
<td>313,132</td>
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<td>Sewers</td>
<td>121,648</td>
<td>221,965</td>
<td>395,925</td>
<td>325,704</td>
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<td>Water department</td>
<td>163,715</td>
<td>214,509</td>
<td>436,358</td>
<td>456,516</td>
<td>1,111,051</td>
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<td>Markets</td>
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<td>Parks and recreation</td>
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<td>201,370</td>
<td>66,416</td>
<td>156,694</td>
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<td><strong>MISCELLANEOUS</strong></td>
<td>32,243</td>
<td>126,522</td>
<td>35,422</td>
<td>214,326</td>
<td>109,582</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3,737,049</td>
<td>5,811,237</td>
<td>6,133,192</td>
<td>7,280,971</td>
<td>9,437,829</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1/ Mainly salaries and contingent expenses of the Health Department until 1879; thereafter the increased expenditure represents the cost of prevention and control of contagious diseases.

2/ Included below in Poor Relief.

3/ Freedmen's only till 1901 when $73,639 went for a site for a new municipal hospital. Till 1894 Congress appropriated for Freedmen's Hospital in the Sundry Civil bill and the U.S. Treasury bore the entire expense. Expenditures for the Asylum Hospital were lumped with those for the almshouse and workhouse.

4/ Including almshouse hospital and workhouse.

5/ Including yearly until 1901 $3,000 to $4,000 for "transportation of paupers and conveying prisoners to the workhouse." In 1901 the cost of conveying prisoners is excluded.

6/ Largely for the Industrial Home School and after 1892 for the Board of Children's Guardians.

7/ Two-thirds for children's charities.
complaints but did not shut off criticisms of the police. Although the
murderous shooting of President Garfield in the summer of 1881 called con­
gressional attention to the need of a larger police force, for years the
appropriation remained at a figure that precluded engaging more patrolmen. 9
(See Table II). Manifestly two hundred men, not all of them on duty at any
one time, were too few; the 365 of ten years later were still not enough for
so spread-out a city. In actuality, in relation to the increase in the
District’s population, neither violent crime nor less serious law-breaking
was as frequent in the eighties and nineties as in the fifties and the Civil
War era, but charges of police corruption and alternately police laxity or
brutality, filled the newspapers until the replacement of venal officers and
appointment of a new chief in 1886 restored some measure of public confidence.
Gambling, vagrancy and drunkenness were still the chief sources of trouble. 10
In a city like Washington, the Star suggested, “the general climate, the
charitable disposition of the people who have means, the easy hours of work
and the uncertain tenure of government employ, all contribute to help men
downward.” Every winter tramps and migrant seasonal laborers rolled in, and
as the commissioners reported gloomily, a national emergency like the war
with Spain, "brought many criminals and cranks to the city." Yet stricter

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9 Rec, L70, 18, 10 May 82, p. 3601; ltr, Joseph Kennedy to Anne Kennedy
Bidelw, 16 Jul 81, Bidwell ms (Bancroft Library, U of Calif).

10 Comrs Rpt, 1881, p. 101, Ser 2021, 1882, pp. 92-93, Ser 2103, 1887,
pp. 14-16, Ser 2547, 1890, pp. 66-67, Ser 2348, 1891, p. 70, Ser 2941, 1899,
pp. 12-15; Ser 3930; Star, 12 Jan, 1, 6, 17 Mar 80, 29 Nov 82, 27 Feb 83, 18
Aug 86, 16 Dec 87; Sentinel, 3 Nov 83, 20, 27 Nov, 1 Dec 86; Sun Chronicle,
18 Jun 82.

11 Star, 9 Oct 86.
anti-gambling and anti-vagrancy laws failed to have much effect. The enlargement of the police force to 585 men and the addition of a bicycle squad at the end of the century helped far more.12

Juvenile delinquency, as for years past, was a greater source of public anxiety than adult crime. Warfare between rival fire house gangs had ended when members of a paid fire department took up living quarters in the engine houses, but juvenile delinquents still roamed the streets. The suggestion that lack of playgrounds encouraged mischief-making in a city where law forbade children’s using the public reservations for ball grounds brought no response from Congress, just as the Reform School for Boys and the school for incorrigible girls which opened in 1893 offered no cure. As prohibition sentiment gained strength in the community, the newly organized Guardian League attempted to prove statistically the link between the growth of the liquor traffic and juvenile delinquency: between 1882 and 1887, while the District population increased 15 percent, the number of licensed saloons and wholesale liquor dealers increased 40 percent, billiard and pool tables 90 percent, and countless places operated without legal licenses; “youths in consequence of these diabolical snares... abandon school and workshop and become tipplers, gamblers, harlots, vagabonds and paupers.” In the District juvenile arrests averaged 20 percent of all arrests, whereas in New York City the average was under 11, in Boston under 14 and in Chicago 15.5

12 Rec, 16c, 38, 17 Dec 80, p. 211, 6 Jan 81, op. 371-73, 26 Feb 81, p. 2117, b7c, 1s, 26 Jun 82, p. 5352, b7c, 2s, 11 Dec 82, op. 188-89, 22 Jan 83, p. 1152, and 21 Jan 83, p. 1526; Comrs Rts, 1899, p. 15, Ser 3930, 1901, p. 183, Ser l302.
percent. The Star disputed those findings; well-informed travellers were "ready to pronounce Washington the most orderly city of its size extant." Nevertheless people throughout the United States felt called upon to petition Congress to free "the capital city of the nation . . . from the curse of rum," just as they urged for the District reforms they frequently did not enjoy at home, whether anti-vivisection, "Sunday Rest," or juster divorce laws or the forbidding of kinetoscope reproduction of prize fights.

This country-wide concern to have the capital an ideal municipality was at once gratifying and irritating to the local public, particularly to German-born citizens who wished to drink their Sunday beer in peace. The commissioners, after exploring a plan of raising the liquor license fee from $100 to $500, chose instead to enforce Sunday closing, increase fines for illegal selling and reduce the number of licenses granted, especially in the notorious "Division," the former Murder Bay area in the triangle southeast of the Treasury between Pennsylvania avenue and the old Washington canal bed.

Meanwhile the meagreness of the water supply distressed District

\[\text{References:}\]
- Star, 22 Jan 87.
- S Mis Doc 114, 51C, 1S, 27 Mar 90, Ser 2698.
- Sentinel, 11 Dec 86, 18 Oct 90, 28 Mar 91, 18 Jun 92, 9 Jun 94; Star, 12 Feb 87, 1 Jan 89; Comrs Rpts, 1890, p. 12, Ser 2648, 1899, p. 18, Ser 3930, 1901, p. 21, Ser 4302.
residents. Not only had population increased since 1863 when the receiving reservoir of the aqueduct opened, but, though a good many families relied for water on the pumps in the public squares, daily per capita consumption of water had risen yearly. The commissioners in 1879 put the figure at 185 gallons, a senate committee at 200 to 300, a quantity proving such wastefulness, the committee declared, that only the installation of water meters would stop it. The Chicagoan used 119 gallons daily, the Bostonian 75, the Philadelphian only 58; why should Washingtonians need more? Since Congress alone could authorize a higher dam at the Great Falls and a second reservoir, the Star retorted:

Every drop necessary for frequent bathing in hot weather—every drop that runs through the water closet—every drop that courses its way through filthy and noisome sewers—every drop that trickles down a gutter—every drop used for laying the dust of our streets—every drop poured about the roots of a tree, or shrub or flower, or sprinkled on the grass—every drop of pure water, in short, that enters in any way into the economy of a city life is not only a creator of beauty and a promoter of comfort but becomes also an agent of health whose value cannot be estimated, much less measured by a metre or represented in dollars and cents.

Amid some recriminations the water department raised water rentals and conducted house to house inspections to check waste, but the principal cause of the shortage was clearly the insufficiency of the reservoir above Georgetown to meet the needs of the growing cities. In the mid 1880's the suburbs from Mt. Pleasant on the north to Anacostia on the east had no piped water at all. St. Elizabeths Hospital pumped its supply from the turgid Eastern

18 S Misc Docs 33, 41, 43 and 48, 45C, 38, 15, 22, 23 and 27 Jan 79, Ser 1893; S Rpt 39, 46C, 28, 8 Dec 79, Ser 1893; Star, 10, 11, 17, 25 Jul, 1 Aug 79, 15 Jan 80; Capitol, 26 Jan 79; Sun Chronicle, 7 Jan 81.

19 Star, 16 Aug 79.
Branch. A new four-foot main to Capitol Hill was badly needed. The most economical answer to the problem, as Congress finally concluded, was to raise the height of the Great Falls dam and construct a second aqueduct feeding Potomac water into a second reservoir to be located between the Soldiers Home and Howard University. Surface drainage from the Rock creek basin would supplement the supply to the new Howard reservoir. But within two years of beginning, work on the new "Lydecker tunnel," named for the Army engineer in charge, came to an abrupt halt when investigation proved the masonry so faulty that only complete rebuilding at a cost of at least $2,000,000 would make it usable. Lack of funds delayed rebuilding and completion of the reservoir until the 20th century. Fortunately, new mains laid from the distributing reservoir above Georgetown enabled the water department in the 1890's to extend service to the most thickly settled of the suburbs.  

A still more urgent need was an adequate sewage and drainage system. In 1878 three outlets served the entire District. The sewers in Georgetown and northwesternmost Washington emptied into Rock creek, a thin trickle of a brook in summer; those in east and south Washington fed into the James creek and thence flowed through a slum area into the Eastern Branch near the Arsenal grounds; and the pipes from the central part of the city drained into the "B street main", the old Washington canal turned into a covered  

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20 Rec, 47C, 15, 8 Jun 82, p. 4665; Rpt Sec/Int, 1880, p. 470, Ser 1960; Star, 1 Aug 85, 1 Jan 90; Sentinel, 11 Dec 86, 20 Aug 87, 16 Nov 89, 22 Feb 90; Comrs Rpts, 1863, p. 272, Ser 2193, 1866, p. 25, Ser 2171, 1887, pp. 18-19, Ser 2547, 1890, pp. 292-93, Ser 2731, 1890, pp. 11, 115-17, Ser 2848, 1891, pp. 435-49, Ser 3311. The maps in Comrs rpts show the exact location of the mains.
culvert debouching into the tidal marshes beyond the White House.\textsuperscript{21} The effects upon the health of the community were abundantly clear.

The Commissioners are of the opinion that... all of the conditions of health will have been sufficiently observed when the discharge [of sewage] takes place in deep running water and the flats in front of the city are filled so as to prevent the lodgment of fecal matters upon grounds which are exposed during the intervals of low tide. . . .

Under present conditions... the narrow escape of the lower part of the city from a horrible inundation by the breaking of the Tiber arch during the past summer is a peremptory premonition of danger both to property and life.\textsuperscript{22}

The commissioners reminded Congress that during a freshet in 1877 the river had risen ten feet at 17th street and over eight feet at Arsenal Point. Their proposed remedy of dredging the Potomac channel, running the sewer mains out into deep water and filling the swamps along the shore line required a \$2,500,000 congressional appropriation. Senate objections to including a sanitary measure for the District in a general Rivers and Harbors bill delayed action until 1882. The undertaking then approved involved filling the marshes beyond the Monument grounds, building a tidal basin slightly downstream in order to control the flow of the tide into a new Washington channel, and dredging a deep waterway that would skirt the Washington shore from the Long Bridge to Arsenal Point.\textsuperscript{23}

As fill slowly reclaimed the swamps along the river front, Washingtonians

\textsuperscript{21} S Mic Docs 13, 19 and 25, h5C, 3S, 3, 17 and 20 Dec 78, Ser 1833.

\textsuperscript{22} S Misc Doc 17, h5C, 3S, 13 Dec 78, Ser 1833.

\textsuperscript{23} Comrs' Rpts, 1879, pp. 7-11, Ser 1913, 1885, p. 164, Ser 2883, 1889, p. 300, Ser 2731; Star, 16, 29 Jan, 4 Aug 79, 1 Jan 95; Rec, 47:1, 18, 8 Feb, p. 986, 10 Apr, pp. 2738-49, 10 May 82, p. 3301, 8 Jul, p. 5792, 10 Jul 82, pp. 5826-33.
began an ultimately successful campaign to have the new land turned into a permanent park. But hopes that elimination of the Potomac Flats would solve the sewage disposal problem were disappointed. In 1890 a temporary Board of Sanitary Engineers reported, "The territory now most in need of better sewage disposal, is situated north of the Eastern Branch." Swamps at its source and tidal backwash into the James Creek canal affected the eastern part of the District, while use of Rock creek as an outlet for the sewers of a thousand acres of northwest Washington and Georgetown was "a prolific source of complaints," and pollution of the Potomac from the sewage fed into it near the Monument grounds offended the nostrils and imperilled the health of residents in the heart of the city. The engineers recommended construction of huge trunk sewers into which intercepting lines covering every thickly settled section of the District should flow. A pumping station at the foot of New Jersey avenue should then pump the sewage from the trunk lines into conduits laid under the Eastern Branch and carried three miles down stream to empty into deep water where the tides would not wash pollution back into Washington. Congress accepted the plan but refused to sanction a bond issue to pay for the work. An empty federal Treasury during the mid-nineties shut off the other possible source of funds until the revival of the country's business in 1898 loosened the federal purse strings and enabled the commissioners and the Board of Trade to prevail upon Congress to make yearly appropriations to meet the costs. By 1901, although sewage disposal was still "the most vital question" facing the District, an expenditure of over

$2,000,000 saw the new system nearly half finished.

The District, however, needed more than new sewer mains to safeguard public health. Even at the end of the century hundreds of households lacked plumbing of any kind. A sanitary survey undertaken in 1881 revealed that of the 30,474 houses in Washington and Georgetown, less than a third had sewer connections. Hotels and boarding houses rarely had more than one water closet to a floor. Many families still pumped all their water from the wells in the public squares and still more householders relied on cistern water and pumps in their own kitchens. Every year, to be sure, added to the number of dwellings equipped with adequate sanitary facilities, and the health officer's endeavors to educate the public to the necessity of observing health regulations gradually had some effect. But it was uphill work. The cities' inhabited alleys contained a population estimated at 30,000 in 1890 and every effort to condemn and demolish the tenements crowded into the narrow passageways proved futile. Here tuberculosis which annually caused one out of every four deaths flourished. Inspections of markets failed to stop the sale of spoiled foodstuffs. Undulterated pure milk was unobtainable. Ignorant and careless people still dumped refuse into any convenient vacant lot, and seepage from the contaminated soil into wells spread typhoid fever and diarrhoeal diseases.

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25 Comrs Rpts, 1900, p. 27, Ser l118, 1901, p. 30; Ser 1302; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1896, pp. 91-99, 1899, 102-06, 1900, pp. 111-16.

In 1893 the appearance of cholera in the United States brought things to a head. A Sanitary League formed in Washington divided the city into districts and set up committees in each to report upon its sanitary condition. The health officer was then able to carry out his long-cherished plan of conducting a house-to-house sanitary inspection. This resulted in landlords and householders renovating run-down property, replacing defective drains, cleaning out yards and areaways and burning tons of rubbish and offal.

Exultantly the Star remarked that "never, perhaps, at any previous time was any large city placed in a more desirable and effective sanitary state."

That year there were 350 fewer deaths, about 5 percent, than the year before, and over the next five years the city's mortality rate declined steadily to 19.32 per thousand; in the county it stood at 35.82. Still typhoid and scarlet fever, diphtheria and tuberculosis took heavy toll; deaths among infants under one year of age accounted for a third of the whole. Of the 2000 inmates of St. Elizabeths Hospital, 1880 suffered from malarial diseases.

The health officer still lacked authority to demolish unsanitary tenements, but a stricter building code went into effect in 1895 to prevent speculators from putting up more ramshackle dwellings without installing plumbing. Two years later a congressional law decreed that all premises must be connected with sewers and, although not wholly enforceable, it led the owners of 1500 buildings to put in sewer connections that very year.

At the same time the District health department closed a number of

27 Star, 1 Jan 94, 1 Jan 95, 1 Jan 96; H Ms Doc 188, 530, 28, 14; Jun 94, Ser 3229; Comrs Rpt, 1897, p. 15, Ser 3650; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1899, pp. 8, 11.
of surface wells, placed all dairies under close surveillance, and for the first time experimented with using anti-toxin for diphtheria cases.

Threatened smallpox epidemics underscored the city's need of a contagious hospital and hastened the decision to erect a suitable building on the site of the old jail on the Anacostia; in the interim three existing hospitals opened isolation wards. Every new proposal, every innovating regulation, met with some opposition and, the health officer complained, too small a budget hampered execution of useful laws. Nevertheless the community was increasingly aware of the importance of his function, and as interest in the "City Beautiful" movement grew at the turn of the century, decent housing and clean well-kept streets would command wider public support. 28

Street paving, that never-ending chore in an expanding community, gave rise to new internal feuds at the end of the seventies. But until the street department in 1885 replaced the last stretches of the rotted wooden pavements laid by the Board of Public Works in fashionable "Northwest", every citizens' association in the rest of the city complained of neglect. 29

Meanwhile suburban expansion heightened the problem of distributing the appropriations for streets. The commissioners had to placate as best they could not only the contentious within the two cities but also property-owners who demanded improvements beyond Boundary street, along "Massachusetts Avenue...

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28 Comrs Rpts, 1890, p. 659, Ser 2888, 1895, p. 13, Ser 3391, 1898, pp. xix-xx, 1899, pp. 19-22, Ser 3930; S Doc 385, 56C, 28, 21 May 00, 1898, Ser 3875; Star, 1 Jan 98, 1 Jan 00; Anl Rpts Bd of Tr, 1900, pp. 10, 80, 1901, pp. 22-23; George M. Kober, The History and Development of the Housing Movement in the City of Washington, D.C., pp. 6-9 (hereafter cited as Kober, Housing Movement).

extended" to Rock creek and westward, along north 16th street to Meridian Hill, out to Columbia Heights and Mt. Pleasant and to the eastward to LeDroit Park. When the President or powerful members of Congress supported a proposal for extension of city facilities into a particular part of the county, the commissioners' lot was not a happy one. Widening and grading of 16th street north of the city limits marked the first official recognition that Washington was outgrowing her old bounds. The extension of Massachusetts avenue west to Rock creek came next. During 1888 the commissioners began to evolve a scheme of naming the streets beyond the old "Alphabet" streets: names of other cities were to form the second tier, names of lakes and rivers a third. In 1890 Boundary street became Florida avenue, in 1895 the name Georgetown officially disappeared as the capital swallowed the older city, and in 1900 plans for bridging Rock creek at both Massachusetts and Connecticut avenues looked to the moment when Washington's streets would thread the entire area from the heights of the Potomac beyond Georgetown University to the upper reaches of the Anacostia.30

In spite of sectional jealousies, residents generally agreed that most of the city streets were better kept than those in other American cities.

An observant newcomer in 1883 wrote for his newspaper in Cleveland: "Washington's streets are the best in the country. . . . They are kept clean by a patent twig brush run by horses. This sweeps them daily, and the thousands of fine carriages and hundreds of bicycles, which go spinning along them, are

30 Sentinel, 4 Jul 85, 23 Oct, 6, 13 Nov 86, 5 Mar 87; Star, 22, 26 Oct 86, 8 Oct 87; Comrs Rpts, 1889, pp. 260-62, Ser 2731, 1890, pp. 363, 370, 393; Ser 2848, 1900, p. 25, Ser 4118; Rec, 470, 13, 28 Jun 82, pp. 4619-32, 4663.
kept shining like black enamel and polished silver."\textsuperscript{31} Old Washingtonians and newcomers alike took pleasure in the 65,000 carefully tended trees bordering the streets and avenues. When in 1882, ten years after the city had first witnessed a demonstration of electric lighting, the commissioners contracted with the United States Electric Light Company to install a few arc lamps, considerations of public safety dictated a ruling that all wires must be laid underground, but an important by-product of the decision was the preservation of the trees. While the cost of underground wires prevented the rapid replacement of gas lamps, before 1890 Washington boasted 181 arc lights and added seventy-five to a hundred yearly thereafter.\textsuperscript{32}

The battle for underground wires soon involved other utilities. Overhead telegraph lines had strung along Washington's streets since 1843, and that "selfish octopus," the Western Union, continued to plant its "uninviting poles at will in front of any man's premises without his consent." After 1878 the new Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company also erected poles and wires, and in the 1890's when street railway companies began to replace horse-drawn cars with the trolleys, the traction interests entered the fight. Meanwhile Congress had complicated matters by taking from the commissioners the authority to grant permits for new underground installations. Yet public opinion eventually won the day. By 1900 Washington not only had telegraph and expanding telephone service, electric street lighting and electric street railways, but within the city limits most of the wires ran underground.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Star, 8 Oct 81; Sentinel, 22 Apr 82; Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan 83.

\textsuperscript{32} Patriot, 22 May 72; Star, 20 Oct 81; Comrs Rpts, 1882, pp. 10, 110-11, Ser 2103, 1885, p. 172, Ser 2383, 1889, pp. 260-62, 296, Ser 2731.

\textsuperscript{33} Star, 27 Jun 80, 22 Jan 83, 1 Jan 96, 1 Jan 98; Post, 1 Mar 87. For a further account of the street railway companies see, A History of the City of Washington, Its Men and Institutions, ed. by Allen Slauson, pp. 144-46.
The exceptions were the lines running into private houses from poles placed in alleyways at the rear. Fifty years later the foresight that kept Washington’s sky-line for trees, buildings and space would stir the admiration and envy of other municipalities.

The Struggle with the Street Railways and the Railroads

In scores of American cities of the 1880's and 1890's, utility and transportation companies, their franchises secured to them by local political bosses, were exploiting the public mercilessly. In the capital where Congress granted the franchises outright graft was not the issue, but, unless Congress intervened, companies could largely ignore local wishes. Because citizens believed the commissioners unduly subservient to these corporations, public indignation spilled over upon the District's ruling heads. "Do the commissioners," inquired the Star in 1881, "govern the District, or do the street railway companies govern the commissioners?" The sins of the "traction moguls" were everywhere evident: tracks projecting above the level of the pavements made the streets hazardous for horses and carriages; the space adjoining the rails was not kept clean, a particular affliction as long as the cars were horse-drawn; the cars were stuffy and cold in winter, dirty and overcrowded the year round; service was slow; tax evasion was frequent, and fifteen separate companies operating in the city and suburbs produced confusion rather than wholesome competition. With mounting wrath the commissioners protested at the abuses. When in 1895 the campaign against overhead trolley wires met with sudden success the commissioners were able

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34 Star, 16 Aug 81.
to exact other reforms. Ground rails flush with the pavements supplanted the projecting T rails, and express cars running at speeds up to ten miles an hour improved service.

Consolidation of competing lines provided the sounder financing essential to these changes. When the Rock Creek Company bought out the Washington and Georgetown in 1895 to form the Capitol Traction Company, $12,000,000 went into new equipment and a power house on 11th street below the Avenue. In 1900 thirteen other independent lines merged to become the Washington Traction and Electric Company. The merger, effected with congressional blessing and millions of dollars of new capital, included the United States Electric Light and the Potomac Electric Company. Alexander McDermott of Jersey City took charge. No one considered it improper for a member of the House of Representatives to direct a huge public utility business in Washington while he served his term in Congress. The local public derived immediate advantages. Transfers cut costs for passengers, better heated and ventilated cars added to their comfort and more frequent runs reduced waits. With relief the city thought the problems of internal transportation solved at last.

The city's struggle with the Baltimore and Ohio and Pennsylvania railroads followed a different and far less satisfactory course. Again public

35 Comrs Rpts, 1879, p. 7, Ser 1913, 1886, p. 35, Ser 2171, 1898, p. xxii, Ser 3769; Star, 27, 28 Oct 79, 3 May 83, 13 Jan 87, 1 Jan 96; Chronicle, 10 Mar 97, 10 Jul 97; ptns, Sh9A-H11, 1886, H5H-A7.3 and S5J-J21, 1894. Hundreds of petitions to Congress over the twenty-two-year period beg for relief from the street railway abuses. The examples given and the newspaper articles cited are but a small sampling.
safety and urban aesthetics were the main points at issue, but the question of what to do and how to do it was complicated by sharp differences of opinion in Congress and by the awe in which public officials held the great railroad corporations. The safety campaign centered around the elimination of grade crossings within the city. In southeast and southwest Washington the tracks of the Pennsylvania’s subsidiary, the Baltimore and Potomac railroad, and the B & O tracks in northeast Washington crossed the public ways at street level; statistics assembled by a Board of Trade committee proved that fatal accidents at these crossings averaged about ten a year and serious injuries more. One proposed remedy called for sinking the rails into cuts below street level, an alternative required elevating the tracks on embankments under which cross streets would tunnel, and a third plan, the one eventually adopted, combined cuts for part of the right of way and embankments for the rest. None of those schemes would obviate the hazards on the Long Bridge and the causeway leading to it, for the Baltimore and Potomac Company had never built a separate bridge, and trains puffing over the narrow causeway and the shaky spans of the bridge frightened horses, caused runaways and made it unsafe for pedestrians and horse-drawn vehicles. Citizens declared that the Baltimore and Potomac in South Washington illegally used the public streets for freight yards and car sidings while the B & O similarly exploited Northeast Washington; as a result large areas of the city no longer had residential value. Finally, inasmuch as Boss Shepherd, while removing the rails laid in the 1850s by the defunct Washington and Alexandria railroad at the foot of Capitol Hill, had not touched the Pennsylvania tracks

36 S Rpt 1398, 56C, 13, 21 May 00, Ser 3395; Anl Rpt E of Tr, 1898, p. 17; Washington Post History, pp. 216-19.
crossing the Mall at 6th street to the Gothic stone station on the present-day site of the National Gallery of Art, the Pennsylvania railroad dominated the public domain in the very heart of the national capital.

Seemingly more powerful than Congress itself, the railroad corporations expressed willingness to abolish grade crossings and build freight terminals provided the public pay most of the costs, but any proposal to move the Baltimore and Potomac depot from its commanding position on the Mall or to erect a union station for all railroads entering Washington met with strong opposition. Many citizens believed the District commissioners too ready to yield to the cavalier demands of railroad officials, but men concerned with Washington's business development feared to risk any reduction of rail service and rather hoped Congress would grant rights of way to additional common carriers. In 1882 the commissioners announced: "Since the settlement of the questions of the Potomac Flats and the water supply at the last session of Congress, there is nothing of so much importance to the interests of the city as the settlement of the railroad question."

Eighteen years later the question was still unsettled. The engineering problems were formidable at best. No plan found universal favor. Permanent residents opposed further railroad intrusions upon public property, but


38 Comrs Rpt, 1882, pp. 147, Ser 2103.
businessmen hesitated to support any scheme that would mean long wagon hauls
from freight terminals on Washington’s outskirts. Throughout the city
taxpayers objected to shouldering the costs of safety measures which they
believed the railroads could well afford to finance. 39

Year after year Congress, in turn, reached no consensus. Bills were
offered, debated and shelved. When a bill of 1893 required the B & O to
eliminate grade crossings, railroad officials stated that the measure would
force the road into receivership. Congress dropped the idea. The B & O
grew into receivership anyway. Seven years later the Senate District Com­
mittee and a majority of the District Committee of the House endorsed two
proposals, one dealing with the Pennsylvania, the other with the B & O rail­
road. The first and the more obnoxious to Washingtonians offered the
Pennsylvania as inducement to change its grade crossings a gift of fourteen
acres on the Mall and, for freight yards and sidings, twelve acres of Garfield
Park southeast of the Capitol. The United States government and the District
together were to pay the costs of all damages to private property and of
building approaches to the right of way where streets had to pass over or
under the tracks; the estimated cost to the public ran to about $1,644,500.
Congress would appropriate another $368,000 for a highway bridge over the
Potomac in order to leave the railroad in possession of the Long Bridge and
causeway. The Pennsylvania was to build a huge new $1,500,000 station on the
Mall, and public funds would create an imposing plaza opening out into B
street on the north to make a grand entrance into the city. The train sheds
would project southward into the Mall, and the tracks elevated on an embankment

39 See n. 35; Comrs Rpt, 1885, p. 2383.
would slice diagonally across the park toward the Long Bridge. A new thoroughfare, “West Capitol Street,” would pass under the embankment by means of a fifty-foot archway. Symbolically and bodily members of Congress would bow their heads to the railroad as they went to and from the Hill.

Senator Macmillan, whose name would later be associated with large plans for beautifying the capital, defended the scheme: “Indeed so far as sightliness is concerned, the proposed changes will add greatly to the beauty of that portion of the Mall.” The concessions tendered the B & O were less generous. Its yard tracks and round houses were to be moved beyond the city limits, the Metropolitan branch and the Washington-Baltimore branch lines were to be combined and rerouted within the city proper and the company was to receive a free gift of the square north of the present Senate office building on which to erect a new passenger depot; tracks elevated on an embankment across lower land to the northeast would enter the new station at ground level.

Thus one railroad would share the Hill with the Capitol; the second would occupy the central stretch of the park between Capitol and White House.

Vigorous protests sounded at once. Congressmen Samuel Cowherd of Missouri and Thetis Sims of Tennessee of the House District Committee labelled the entire scheme shortsighted and excessively generous to the railroads.

The Chief of Army Engineers, Brigadier General John Wilson, and Major Thomas Kingham, Commissioner of Public Buildings and Grounds, decried the folly of

\[10\] H Rpt 2026, 56C, 28, 11 Dec 1900, Ser h2.2.

\[11\] Ibid., p. 5.

\[12\] H Rpt 2036, 56C, 28, 17 Dec 00, Ser h212.
abandoning the very core of L'Enfant's original plan. Senator Vest of Missouri declared the two bills yoked together by "an interdependent mutuality of greed." Every citizens' association in the District, the Washington Businessmen's Association and the Single Tax Club voiced outrage, while the Board of Trade emphatically restated its ten-year opposition to any alienation of the city's public parks. Unfortunately the commissioners' statements that the plan was the best the District could hope for probably encouraged illusions in Congress. Congressional leaders pronounced the bills satisfactory to "ninety-nine out of one hundred" Washingtonians, a misinterpretation of local sentiment which, Representative Cowherd remarked, showed the handicaps under which unrepresented citizens labored in trying to make their wishes understood. In February 1901 Senate and House passed both bills and President McKinley signed them.43

The Public Schools and Higher Education

While the commissioners' seeming deference to the railroad corporations offended citizens, they objected even more strongly to threats of interference with the School Board. Admittedly the commissioners must appoint the board, but public feeling was that the trustees, once appointed, must have full authority over the school system. For, despite frequent squabbles about the disposition of funds and about appointments, particularly to teaching posts in the colored schools, the board generally functioned in keeping with citizens' wishes. The one insuperable problem was to get money

43 H Rpt 2026, Pt II, 56c, 25, 15 Dec 00; Rec, 56c, 23, 2 Feb 01, p. 1801, 7 Feb 01, pp. 2104-06, 8 Feb 01, p. 2180, and App. pp. 181-82.
enough to enable the schools to keep pace with the expanding population and with the demands created by temporary, non-taxpaying residents. Yearly, to taxpayers' wrath, the commissioners pared the figure the trustees estimated necessary, and yearly Congress, though voting less than the trustees requested, appropriated more than the commissioners asked for. Consequently a passionate outcry greeted the commissioners' announcement that they were taking over the duties of school board because quarrels had destroyed its usefulness. At a mass meeting angry citizens asserted that the change would strip them of "the last that was left to them of popular government." Congress, besought to intercede, debated a school reorganization bill only to drop it finally. But the commissioners, obviously startled by the storm they had stirred up, quietly backtracked; the school board carried on. In order to have women trustees, a change in 1895 enlarged its membership by two, one white and one colored woman.

Until 1900 the rest of the story repeated earlier history—too little space, underpaid, albeit conscientious, teachers, revisions and elaborations of the curriculum and always the necessity of choosing between expanding the primary schools and spending money and effort on providing more for older,

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**Notes:**


2. Star, 23 Jan, 27 Mar 86; S Mis Doc 72, H9C, 18, 15 Feb 86, Ser 2343.


advanced pupils. An arrangement with the trustees of the Myrtilla Miner Fund, a fund raised by private donors for Negro education, enabled the superintendent of the colored schools to open a colored high school in 1879, but before 1882 the nearest approach to a white high school was a scheme the white superintendent tried in 1881; he selected the best students in the eighth grades, put them in the third-floor rooms of one building and called the group a high school. The next year the white members of the board, in the face of some opposition from the Negro members, insisted upon using the principal of the school fund that had been accumulating since 1826 to build a white high school. For several years after 1887 unusually large appropriations for building schoolhouses lessened overcrowding in the lower grades, but scarcely was a new building opened than a new generation of school children overflowed it. The Board of Trade observed that Washington was the only city in the country which allowed non-residents to attend her schools free of charge. By 1899 lack of enough desks and school rooms necessitated holding morning sessions for sixty-eight white first grades and fourteen colored, and using the rooms in the afternoon for a like number of second grades. Parents who could afford to pay tuition naturally sent their children to private schools, but enrollment in the public schools rose to more than 36,000 pupils, a 50 percent increase in thirteen years. Moreover, popular demand for manual training, night schools for children who worked during the day, and a few summer "vacation schools" put further pressure upon limited budgets. The trustees felt obliged to open kindergartens in 1898, while clamor mounted for a high school course that would qualify graduates for college entrance. One group of citizens thought the schools provided too many
non-essentials and not enough grounding in fundamentals; another group thought the curriculum too narrow. Everyone agreed that the million and a quarter dollars spent on public education annually was not accomplishing what was needed.\textsuperscript{48}

The Senate undertook to investigate. Patiently a committee listened to parents and teachers, white and colored, principals and trustees, people with complaints and people with remedies to offer.\textsuperscript{49} The outcome was an administrative reorganization spelled out in the appropriation act passed in 1900. It provided for an immediate increase of a quarter million dollars in the school budget; otherwise the changes introduced were modest enough. In the last analysis, the commissioners retained their former authority, for they kept control of expenditures and the power to appoint the board that would have administrative jurisdiction over the school. Instead of the old board of school trustees, a new seven-member Board of Education came into being. If citizens were disappointed at not winning the right to elect it, they were pleased to have its powers defined, including the final say in hiring and firing teachers and other school officials. A single superintendent, with an assistant superintendent for the white schools and a second for the colored schools, promised to provide a unified direction which had not been possible as long as the white and colored superintendents functioned independently of each other. The new scheme met with general approval. The board

\textsuperscript{48} Comrs Rpts, 1887, pp. 5, 14, Ser 2547, 1890, pp. 642-43, Ser 2848, 1891, p. 8, Ser 2941, 1895, p. 8, Ser 3391, 1899, pp. 9-10, 40, 19-52, Ser 3930; Star, 1 Jan 90; Sentinel, 12 Mar 92; S Rpt 825, 52C, 13, 20 Jun 92, Ser 2941; S Rpt 174, 53C, 19, 4 Feb 96, Ser 3362; S Doc 107, 54C, 18, 7 Feb 96, Ser 3550; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1898, p. 80, 1899, p. 89; S Doc 260, 56C, 18, 24 Mar 00, Ser 3867.

\textsuperscript{49} S Rpt 711, 56C, 18, 23 Mar 00, Ser 3889.
of education immediately altered the curriculum "to make it more practical and to reduce the amount of home study," the larger appropriation and "improved business management" provided money for new schoolhouses, and before the summer of 1901 public agitation about the school system had largely evaporated. 50

Free public education ended in the schools, although Washingtonians continued to hope for a national university. Howard University received a small federal appropriation annually, but all other institutions of higher education derived their support from private sources, primarily religious bodies. Yet Washington counted five universities in her midst in 1869, when the Roman Catholic hierarchy opened a school of theology as a first unit of the new Catholic University of America. 51 Methodists also had long aspired to founding a great national institution of higher learning. It looked attainable in 1891. That year Bishop John Hurst and a number of influential Washingtonians formed a board of trustees, raised $100,000 and purchased a beautiful stretch of wooded land above Georgetown for a campus. The energetic Bishop early made overtures to the struggling little National University to merge with the projected Methodist university, since the name National might induce Congress to contribute to an institution such as George Washington had willed his shares of Potomac Canal Company stock to found. The proposed merger fell through, Congress appropriated no money and the Methodist trustees, then selecting the name American University, proceeded in 1898 to erect Hurst Hall on the new campus. Building and campus stood unused for nineteen years.

50 U.S. Stat at Large, 789, pp. 564-68; Comrs Rpt, 1900, p. 9, Ser H118.
51 Star, 21 May 88; Post, 13 Nov 89.
The small medical school and even smaller dental school that made up the National University continued into the 20th century, establishing a pattern that would later become standard in Washington: night classes enabling young men to get professional training while they earned a living in day-time government jobs. The failure of the three older universities, like the newer, to earn great scholarly prestige left Washington richer in quantity than quality of higher education, but the fact that powerful religious bodies envisaged the city as the future seat of American learning strengthened the feeling that Washington had indeed become a national city.

A touch of that feeling apparently entered into Charles Glover's proposal to fellow Episcopalians that they establish a national cathedral foundation in the District "for the promotion of religion and education and charity." Glover, then President of the Riggs National Bank, organized the campaign for funds and in 1893 obtained a charter from Congress, while Henry Satterlee, Bishop of Washington, selected Mt. St. Albans for the site on which the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul should stand. There within the close the National Cathedral School for Girls opened in 1894. Four years later the Foundation completed the purchase of the entire hilltop with its commanding view of river and city.

Long before the Cathedral walls began slowly to rise against the skyline in the 20th century, the Cathedral Foundation, the Corcoran Gallery, the universities and new learned societies and private philanthropies were contributing to Washington's stature as more than a political capital. They lay outside the realm of the commissioners' responsibility and beyond that of Congress. Yet they heightened Americans' belief that Washington must, and most respects did, represent the best in the United States. Of the form of her municipal government Commissioner Henry Mackerland in his address at the centennial celebration of 1906 expressed a widely held opinion: "Its greatest virtue is that it is conducted by a government by public opinion. The unusually high intelligence of the people of the District, and their reasonable interest and activity in the conduct of its affairs make them its real rulers, under the constitutional authority of the President and Congress."
Chapter XIII

Philanthropy and Welfare Services, 1878-1901

While religious feeling combined with civic pride and interest in education to produce an organization like the National Cathedral Foundation, the extraordinary upsurge of philanthropy in Washington during the last twenty years of the 19th century was largely a secular movement. A dozen charities, it is true, sprang up under denominational aegis, Washington's seven hundred Jewish families unobtrusively cared for their own, and, as for years past, the Roman Catholic church maintained an impressive array of institutions ranging from St. Ann's Infant Asylum to a Home for the Aged and the Providence Hospital. Yet the impelling spirit was humanitarian rather than narrowly religious, and the feeling of civic obligation ran stronger than duty to the church. A similar phenomenon occurred in other cities throughout the western world, but nowhere was it more visible than in Washington. Regardless of his church affiliation, the Washingtonian of any standing in the community expected as a matter of course to dedicate time and energy as well as money to some charity and usually to more than one. As enlightened self-interest heightened his sense of public duty, so duty, as most people saw it, forbade indiscriminate charity. Humanitarianism itself was corsetted by the concept that only the "worthy poor" should receive help, a Calvinistic attitude the more startling because little in evidence in Washington's earlier years. In the 1880's, if no Washingtonian publicly quoted Herbert Spencer, the Englishman's moralistic philosophy permeated the atmosphere here as fully as in the rest of America of the period.
Of the three significant features of Washington's philanthropy, the most immediately striking was the expansion of charitable institutions and relief agencies and the amount of money poured into them. Prosperity enabled people in the upper brackets of society to give large sums of money without great self-denial, but even in the hard times of the nineties voluntary contributions far exceeded those of the 1870s. For example, in the severe winter of 1878-79 a citizens' committee after great exertion managed to raise $3000 to supply fuel, food and clothing to the poor; in 1893-94, the year of the panic, a similar committee collected nearly $50,000. A growing population explains some of the proliferation of charities, but while population rose from about 175,000 to 277,000 souls between 1878 and 1901, the number of institutions doubled and tax money spent for their support and for direct relief increased almost five-fold. Before 1879, despite the recurrence of an emergency every winter, Congress had yearly resorted to emergency appropriations for direct or "outdoor" relief, that is, for persons not in institutions; thereafter the District budget yearly included from $13,000 to $20,000 for outdoor relief. Public officials like private citizens accepted gradually broadening responsibilities toward the city's needy.  

Children were, above all, the beneficiaries. Just as the Washington City Orphan Asylum had been the first organized charity in the city, so orphanages and "child saving" institutions enlisted wider interest than any

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1 Star, 30 Jan 79; Comm's Rpt, 1895, pp. 139-140, 153, Ser 3391; S Doc 185, 550, 15, 21 Jul 97, "Joint Select Committee to Investigate the Charities and Reformatory Institutions in the District of Columbia, Part I - Hearings, p. 157, Ser 3965 (hereafter cited as Ch. Rpts.).
other form of philanthropy; by 1899 they were receiving eight times as much money as in 1879. In addition to three Roman Catholic orphanages and St. Roses Industrial School for Girls, by 1888 citizens were supporting eight homes for children. At the end of the century when the refusal of most of these institutions to accept any colored child over six created an acute problem, two more appeared, the Hart Farm School for destitute and delinquent Negro boys and a temporary home for colored children opened by the Board of Children's Guardians. Under the direction of the Board of Children's Guardians, moreover, the number of children placed in private homes grew steadily after 1892. Legal adoption sometimes followed and in any case, as other cities were also discovering, the chance for a child to develop "a stalwart individual character" was better in a private family than in an institution.²

The Board of Children's Guardians itself was an outgrowth of the mounting concern for child welfare. The Guardian Society of the early sixties had faded away and, when active, had concentrated upon delinquents. A Children's Branch added to the Humane Society in 1885 then undertook to place neglected and abused children in any institution that would take them, but a body with larger and more clearly defined authority was plainly desirable. In 1892 Congress accordingly created the Board of Children's Guardians, vesting in it power to place out or itself to support any child whom the courts committed to its care. Under the selfless and public-spirited leadership of William Redin Woodward, a Washington attorney turned real estate broker and title

² Comrs Rpts, 1879, pp. 55-56, Ser 1913, 1895, pp. 139-40, Ser 3391, pp. 1-1, 290, Ser 3930, 1901, pp. 1485, 500-01, Ser 1302; S Rpt 700, 55C, 2S, 21 Mar 98, "Jt Slct Comtee on Charities and Reformatory Institutions, Part II-Report" (hereafter cited as Ch Rpt), pp. 200-02, Ser 3565; Ch Hrgs, pp. 196, 151, Ser 3565.
insurance company executive, the Board staunchly advocated the placing out system and achieved pronounced success with white children. Woodward, a man of exceptionally keen mind and deep humanity, carefully studied the findings of the National Conference on Charities and Corrections in order to give Washington the benefit of the experience of other communities. He was able to report in 1901 that of the 720 children, white and colored, permanently under the guardianship of the Board, 534 were living in private homes where they were "bound out," boarding or on probation. 3

Medical charities got only less support than those for children. Most of the District budget for poor relief went into medicines, fees for the physicians to the poor, free clinics and dispensaries, while private funds equipped and supplied the staff for a dozen new dispensaries before the end of the century. Hospitals, no longer considered purely eleemosynary, still had many more charity than pay patients, but the six institutions of 1880—the Washington Asylum, the Government Hospital for the Insane, Providence, Freedmen's, the Children's Hospital and the Columbia Lying-in Asylum—grew to fifteen in the 1890's. 4 Doubts arose about the wisdom of maintaining so many, but just as the Garfield Hospital chartered in 1882 as a memorial to the martyred President "made a stronger and more successful appeal to the charitable people of Washington than any other like institution has ever made," so citizens in advocating efficiency still believed medical charity should be

3 Comrs Rpts, 1892, pp. 194-97, Ser 3096, 1901, p. 185, Ser 1302; Ch Hrgs, pp. 101, 455, Ser 3565.

4 Comrs Rpts, 1896, p. 137, Ser 3497, 1901, pp. 500-01, Ser 1520; Ch Hrgs, pp. 113-14, 380, Ser 3565; Ch Rpt, p. 56, Ser 3565.
"the last to be denied or... deferred." When a well-informed public official stated in 1897 that no other city in the United States could match Washington in her provision for the sick and injured, he referred not only to the number of facilities but to the quality of service. By any standards, conditions were appalling at the Washington Asylum Hospital, that catch-all for the helpless without other recourse, and the service there was "little above that of the primitive country poorhouse of an earlier day," but most of the public hospitals offered effective care, and an eminent physician from the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore and an equally competent doctor from Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Hospital pronounced the nursing and medical care at Freedmen's Hospital excellent, despite primitive sanitary facilities and a general aspect of "suffering and squalor."  

For indigents stricken with contagious disease, alcoholics, drug addicts, the "mildly insane" and the chronically or incurably ill, on the other hand, provision was totally inadequate. Hospitals were unwilling to risk exposing patients to contagion and until congressional threats in 1899 to cut off appropriations persuaded the staffs at Freedmen's, Garfield and Providence to accept government subsidies and build isolation wards, all contagious cases had to be treated at home unless they landed in the small pox hospital at the Asylum. A Home for Incurables founded in 1889 took a few patients, and occasionally a private hospital accepted one or two, but all medical institutions preferred to concentrate upon curable cases of

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a routine nature. Before a newly organized Aid Association for the Blind opened a small home in 1910, the indigent blind could go only to the almshouse. The aged or chronically ill, the "inebriate," the "dope fiend" and the mentally disturbed, refused admission elsewhere, usually ended up at the Asylum Hospital where the physician in charge, because powerless to turn anyone away, had to make a place for them in the general wards.\footnote{Comrs Rpts, 1890, p. 188, Ser 2811, 1892, p. 180, Ser 3096, 1894, pp. 102-07, Ser 3311, 1899, pp. 104, 297, 303-04, Ser 3930, 1901, pp. 560-69, Ser 4302; Ch Hrgs, pp. 208-13, 376, Ser 3565; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1899, p. 49.}

It may be imagined, reported the Asylum Commissioner, the crowding, the bad air, and the consequent slow and poor progress towards recovery in many cases; when, besides, we take into consideration that all classes of patients, surgical cases before and after operation, chronic ulcers, syphilitic, acute and chronic diseases of all kinds, have to be treated in the same wards and in close proximity, it is a matter of surprise that the death rate is as low as it is.\footnote{Comrs Rpt, 1882, p. 267, Ser 2103.}

In view of the shocking gaps in the medical program, the fact is astonishing that in the areas it did cover Negroes got as good care as whites.\footnote{Comrs Rpts, 1882, p. 267, Ser 2103, 1892, p. 662, Ser 3096, 1896, pp. 150, 183-93, 227, 391, Ser 3497, 1899, Vol III, p. 20, Ser 3931, 1901, p. 414, Ser 4302.}

Help for women in distress, particularly if their troubles arose through no fault of their own, was a third form of charity to expand rapidly. Although it rarely extended to colored women, no matter how "worthy," it slowly reached out to include "fallen" white women despite lingering doubts about the wisdom of lightening the wages of sin. Before 1885 the Roman Catholic House of the Good Shepherd and the Episcopalian House of Mercy were accepting not only girls in need of "preservation" but also unmarried mothers, and in 1888 the Women's Christian Temperance Union set itself to join in salvaging that "most
undeserving" class, mostly girls under nineteen years of age. The WCTU Hope and Help Mission achieved some success in helping them to become self-supporting while keeping their children with them, but the number of applicants soon outran capacity. In 1897 the Mission came under the auspices of the National Board of Florence Crittenden Missions. Largely under the aegis of various Protestant churches, homes for aged women also began to multiply, a badly needed service in a community which had had in the 1870's only the almshouse, the Catholic Home for the Aged run by the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Louise Home for a small carefully selected group of "women of education and refinement." Furthermore, following the example of the Women's Christian Association which had begun in the 1870's systematic assistance to transient women stranded in Washington without friends or work, several other organizations opened homes, like the Young Women's Christian Home and the Bruen Home. Little or no tax money went into any of these women's institutions; private subscriptions supplied the bulk of the funds.10

If the tremendous growth of charities was the most dramatic aspect of Washington's philanthropy in the last decades of the century, the services the community ignored or slighted were equally significant. The special cases which the medical charities passed over were only one example. No agency, public or private, stood ready to assist able-bodied unemployed men except in the direct emergency of a severe winter, and as soon as the weather

derated that help ceased. The aged male got scarcely more consideration. The almshouse of necessity housed some, and the Catholic Home for the Aged a few, but men, irrespective of their handicaps, were expected to fend for themselves. Indeed the congressional committee investigating Washington's charities in 1897 recommended omitting all public appropriations for all homes for the aged since it seemed questionable policy to provide for the few "while the many are required to seek the Asylum." Whereas help was nevertheless exceptionally generous for white women and children, it was conspicuously meagre for colored women and children. The clinics and hospitals by means of segregated wards admitted Negroes as freely as whites and gave colored patients equally good care, but except for St. Ann's Infant Asylum, the Catholic Home for the Aged, the National Colored Home and before 1898 the Newsboys and Children's Aid Society, the institutions for children and needy women generally excluded Negroes. Yet Negroes made up a third of the population and a very much higher proportion of the city's poor.

The St. John's Parish Orphanage very occasionally took a Negro child, and in the early nineties the Newsboys and Children's Aid Society accepted some colored boys, only to reverse itself in 1898 when Congress refused to make a grant for a separate building for the colored. Catholics and Protestants shared the view of the Directress of St. Rose's Industrial School when she explained: "It would not be supposed we could mix them [Negro girls] with our young girls who are mostly orphans from good families." The

11 S Mis Doc 93, 500, 28, 2 Mar 89, Ser 2615; Comrs Rpts, 1896, pp. 347, 355, Ser 3197, 1901, p. 332, Ser 1302; Ch Rpt, p. 42, Ser 3565.

12 S Mis Doc 93, 500, 25, 2 Mar 89, Ser 2615.
difficulties of placing children in private homes led the Board of Children's Guardians in 1897 regretfully to request the courts to commit to it as few colored charges as possible, since it would have to crowd most of them into its temporary home. Similarly the restricted resources of the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children, supported as it was almost entirely by taxes, obliged its managers to limit the admission of children to those between the ages of three and ten. Although the secretary observed that "no householder will take into his family a colored child except as a servant and with the intention of getting a full equivalent for what he gives," the ten-year-old turned out of the Home could ordinarily hope for nothing better. Inevitably an endless stream of them wound up at the workhouse and the almshouse, and "because the world affords them no other place," the Commissioner of the Asylum noted, "at the end of their terms they constantly importune me to allow them to remain." The promise held out by the founding of the Home for Friendless Colored Girls in 1886 all but collapsed within a few years. Launched by a Negro woman when she discovered two little colored girls eating out of a garbage can, the Home was Washington's first Negro-sponsored charity. But the "band of worthy colored women" who originally attempted to finance it failed to elicit funds from well-to-do Negroes, and the prominent white women whom Mrs. Grover Cleveland interested in the Home were able to raise only $150 for it in two years of soliciting.

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13 Ch Hrgs, pp. 100-01, 197, Ser 3565.

14 Comrs Rpt, 1882, pp. 259-60, Ser 2103; Ch Hrgs, pp. 100-01, Ser 3565.

15 Ch Hrgs, pp. 310-13, 396-97, Ser 3565; Comrs Rpt, 1900, p. 290, Ser 3930.
The story of help for colored women was much the same. A few found a refuge in the National Colored Home, and nearly fifty, thanks to the kindliness of the Little Sisters of the Poor, became inmates of the Catholic Home for the Aged. Otherwise before 1900 there was nothing but the Asylum and the Reform School for Girls, an institution more nearly penal than charitable. In 1900, greatly daring, the Hope and Help Mission undertook in collaboration with its "colored mission" in Alexandria to extend its services to unmarried colored mothers. Incredulously the director reported that "it has been proved that these colored girls can be cared for more easily and at less expense than the average white girl. As a rule, they are better trained for work, and more capable of earning their own living in a shorter time."  

As William Redin Woodward of the Board of Children's Guardians saw the situation in 1897, Negroes were "a race not yet recovered from the effects of slavery, practically without resources for the private support of necessary institutions for the protection of its own dependents, and for whose benefit wealthy citizens of the District of Columbia neither left large bequests nor contributed any considerable sums." In implying that all Negroes were of one class and failing to note that a number of upper class Negroes had some means at their disposal, he revealed a point of view common among white people, but whites who observed the wealth of the upper stratum of Negro society tended to resent the apathy of its members toward the wants of the lower class. Large

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16 S Mis Doc 93, 500, 23, 2 Mar 89, Ser 2615; Comrs Rpt, 1894, p. 101, Ser 331; Ch Hrgs, pp. 402, 554, Ser 3565.  

17 Ch Hrgs, p. 155, Ser 3565.
gifts from wealthy individuals were, it is true, a mainstay of charity in most 19th century cities. W. W. Corcoran, for forty years the single most generous donor to good works in the District, endowed the Corcoran Gallery and the Louise Home and gave large sums to Columbian University and the local orphanages but upon his death in 1888 left no bequest to any colored institutions. Nor did the succeeding generation of generous charitable-minded Washingtonians. Yet the selectiveness of white philanthropy rested more than color prejudice. Since the philosophy that came to prevail stressed charity only for the "worthy poor" and most whites regarded Negroes as an inferior breed of human being, cold logic justified a minimum of help for colored people. Why that philosophy first appeared strongly in the eighties rather than earlier as it did in other American cities is another question.

That a moralistic attitude toward charity was little in evidence in the ante-bellum District was probably due both to the homogeneity of its permanent population and to a narrow view of public duty which limited obligations to caring for orphans and providing emergency relief for needy adults in winter. Before the war the derelicts produced by the industrial system and the commercial competitiveness of the North were a rarity in Washington, and, in spite of the inflow of transient paupers seeking government aid, the city had relatively few "deadbeats." Indeed the transients whose exigencies were for years a drain upon the community elicited some sympathy and ordinarily escaped the label "undeserving." Slaves were a responsibility of their masters and free Negroes concealed their needs as best they could lest the workings of the black code expel them from the District. Hence, because most of Washington's and Georgetown's visibly needy appeared to be worthy of help, the question
of charity for the unworthy did not arise.

When the wave of contrabands swept in during the war, the Army and northern abolitionists bore much of the burden, and Washingtonians could persuade themselves for a time that here was a temporary problem. The immediate post-war era gave birth to wrathful protest at Mayor Bowen's made-work scheme which seemed to his political enemies to pander to the undeserving, but since indignant taxpayers could not stop him as long as he was mayor, he saved them the necessity of evolving clear-cut standards about who was worthy of charity, who lacking in the moral qualities to merit it. Doubtless the Calvinistic concept of poverty and its attendant ills as a judgment from on high upon the undeserving had always been latent in Washington, but circumstances had submerged it until the 1870's and then the confusions of the territorial regime followed by the economic uncertainties of panic and depression further delayed a set formulation of principles. While migrant workers, attracted by the District's comparatively mild climate, flooded into the city every winter, the Night Lodging House and Mrs. Robert's Penny Lunch, partly subsidized by Congress, relieved Washingtonians of having to choose between seeing men starve and doing violence to their own consciences. It was apparently the enormous prosperity of the 1880's in the upper ranks of Washington society that brought into the open a philosophy of justification. Rooted perhaps in subconscious feelings of guilt and fed by the writings of Herbert Spencer, the Englishman who adapted the Darwinian theories to social evolution, the belief took hold that discrimination in giving was essential to human progress, certainly to community progress. The spread of that point of view and the resulting determination to establish standards by which to judge worthiness
was the third characteristic of the city's philanthropy.

The idea once well-sprouted flowered quickly and lasted longer in Washington than in cities where industrial strife ploughed deep and unsettled men's earlier premises. Conscientious civic-minded Washingtonians carried into the 20th century the conviction that poverty sprang from the flaws in the character of the individual rather than from weaknesses in the social structure. As the moral regeneration of the poor must be the first aim of charity, so public-spirited citizens, instead of giving in to sentimental sympathy for suffering, must bend every effort to teach the poor to develop habits of frugality, industry, honesty, temperance, cleanliness and chastity.

In 1882, a year after Washington, following the example of London and some sixteen American cities, organized an Associated Charities, a set of formal "Suggestions to Friendly Visitors" issued to volunteers included the following instructions:

1. Give no money...because your chief object is to lift the idle, ignorant and dependent, out of pauperism, to make them self-supporting and self-respecting and to prevent their children becoming beggars.

2. Inform the idle and squalid of the sanitary laws of the District and show them that misery and suffering are the inevitable results of idleness, filth and vice. Make kindly suggestions concerning ventilation, clothing, digestion and household cleanliness.

3. Take a gift of a plant or picture or some other tasteful suggestive object of beauty, to each wretched home.

4. Write out a wholesome economical bill of fare, and show how a little saving and constant thrift will provide against illness and misfortune.

5. Ascertain what each member of a family can do...and see that every one over 12 years of age is engaged in some useful occupation looking toward permanent self-support.

18 Star, 20 Dec 81, 8 June 81, 12 Apr 82.
Whatever the reception accorded the free advice and the gift of a "suggestive object of beauty," the volunteers assembled information about Washington's deserving poor which enabled the Associated Charities to establish a useful file of case histories. Otherwise the organization accomplished disappointingly little. It had envisaged itself as a clearing house which would eliminate duplicating services, halt "indiscriminate charity" and introduce efficient methods into relieving distress. But before 1897 its volunteer part-time staff undertook to solicit funds and disburse them itself and in so doing added one more agency to the several already engaged in direct relief. In these years of trial and error, competition between the Associated Charities and other organizations consequently ran strong over who was to distribute the money raised yearly by the commissioners' appointees to an official citizens relief committee. For more than a decade that committee continued the system used in the past of having the police undertake the disbursements but in 1894 released part of its funds to the Associated Charities and in 1897 determined to drop the police as agents, use the Associated Charities primarily for investigation and let other groups actually distribute the central fund.¹⁹

Efficiency and economy in administering philanthropy were constant goals. Since the Associated Charities was unable to bring order out of the confusion, in 1890 Congress acting upon the pleas of the District commissioners created the office of Superintendent of Charities to supervise the work of all charitable institutions and agencies in the city. By law a presidential

¹⁹ Star, 12 Jan 84; Comrs Rpts, 1892, p. 201, Ser 3096, 1894, p. 107, Ser 3311; Ch Hist, p. 171, Ser 3565.
appointee, the Superintendent was to be brought in from outside, obviously to enable him to look at the entire local picture without prejudice. Amos G. Warner, former head of Baltimore's Charity Organization Society, was the first incumbent and the first professional social worker to hold office in Washington. His high national standing heightened in 1894 by his textbook on social work, which for twenty-five years was the only one in the field, gave his words weight. His primary objective was to reverse the trend that had developed during the 1880's whereby private agencies obtained public money and used it as they saw fit. In 1892 medical charities drew 58 percent of their income from the public treasury, the Industrial Home School and reformatories nearly 90 percent, children's charities 65.5 percent and temporary homes over 70 percent. Amos Warner, his two successors and leading citizens believed private funds and public supervision a wiser arrangement; at least blanket subsidies to private institutions should cease and a central board of charities should set the standards for admitting applicants to all institutions and allot any public money on a basis of a certain sum per inmate. The outcome supposedly would be that only the deserving would receive institutional care. Similar standards in outdoor relief would end the waste of money and effort on imposters, paupers who drifted into the District from states which ought to support them, and people whose moral shortcomings left them beyond hope of redemption. At a time when well-to-do Virginians facetiously but with some truth called the District "Virginia's poorhouse," the argument for introducing rigid rules denying help to nonresidents had considerable force.20

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It was not shortage of funds that inspired the campaigns for efficiency and economy. Although every penny saved by intelligent management naturally meant more money for desirable objectives, stretching dollars in order to widen the reach of philanthropy was scarcely a consideration at all. Year after year the citizens relief committee limited the amount allotted to any one family to about $2 and came out every spring with an unexpended surplus of funds, in some years as large as the total spent for relief. But the committee felt to spend more lavishly would simply be to encourage pauperism.

In 1897 the committee secretary, a man trained in the new profession of social work, asserted that a large permanent relief fund would be dangerous once the poor, particularly indigent colored people, got wind of its existence. "You go to the house and see absolute destitution. The money is there for relief purposes and has to be granted. By having such a fund you take all the backbone out of these people." When asked whether they would not starve if not given help, he replied they would then go to work.

Herbert Lewis who became Superintendent of Charities in 1897 took a slightly different position. He opposed the subsidy system because it fostered sentimentality and permitted private agencies to devote themselves exclusively to "the hopeful, promising and pleasant, leaving without sufficient consideration the idiotic, defective and crippled for whose care it is increasingly difficult to procure sufficient funds." At the same time he put his finger on the crucial weakness of Washington's charities: the almost

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21 Star, 19 Apr 84; Comm Rpts, 1896, p. 115, Ser 3479, 1897, p. 277, Ser 3652, 1899, p. 513, Ser 3930; Ch Hrgs, p. 24, Ser 3565; Ch Rpt, pp. 172-74, Ser 3565.

22 Ch Hrgs, p. 25, Ser 3565.
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21 Star, 19 Apr 84; Comrs Rpts, 1896, p. 115, Ser 3497, 1897, p. 277, Ser 3652, 1899, p. 513, Ser 3930; Ch Hrgs, p. 21, Ser 3565; Ch Rpt, pp. 172-71, Ser 3565.

22 Ch Hrgs, p. 25, Ser 3565.
complete exclusion of colored children from institutions which provided excellent care for white children. While he was unable to alter that, he succeeded in substituting the so-called District supply system for the old arrangement of turning over lump sums of public money to charitable institutions; after 1897 payments were in goods. In 1900, after a long investigation of local procedures, Congress dropped a half dozen sectarian institutions from the list of the publicly subsidized, and, a greater victory for the proponents of efficiency and centralized control of expenditures, created a Board of Charities. The Board was to establish uniform rules for organizations which received any public money. By 1901, professionally trained social workers in charge of the Associated Charities' ten branch offices, and a new era of professionalism in welfare work was dawning in Washington.

Throughout the eighties and nineties the theories of professionals and laymen had coincided closely. But laymen found theory hard to put consistently into practice. In the mid-eighties three leading figures on the citizens relief committee, Reginald Fendall, R. Ross Perry and Simon Wolf, reported:

That some have been relieved who were not worthy of relief, in one sense, is probable. Abstractly considered, a man or woman who will not work ought to starve or freeze, but it will not do to enforce this abstract proposition. That such ought to be forced to work is evident, but until the law empowers us to enforce this work we must not let them starve or freeze. It hurts the community to have such deaths in our midst. The man who can comfortably eat a hearty dinner when he knows that another man is starving near him, and yet does nothing to relieve him, is at heart a murderer. Such men do not make good citizens, nor are

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23 Comrs Rpt, 1897, p. 280, Ser 3652.
24 Comrs Rpts, 1897, p. 267, Ser 3652, 1899, pp. 285, 300, Ser 3930, 1900, p. 85, Ser 1118; Ch Hrgs, pp. 1-2, 13, 21, 332, 459; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1897, p. 27, 1901, p. 46.
they safe guides to follow. . . But even should these chronic cases be left to their fate, what shall be done with their wives and children? . . We must help them. There is no other way out of it. By so doing we doubtless increase poverty, but by refusing to do so we hurt ourselves, our community, our nation.25

The sanitary officer of the police force shared that view. Irrespective of abstract principles, he felt obliged to provide for non-residents who arrived in Washington sick "without a penny in their pockets. . . . It would be inhuman to turn them away." In defiance of the tentative congressional stand that these people were no responsibility of the District, Officer Frank hospitalized sick and helpless strangers along with local cases, all told 3890 persons in 1896 alone. Many private citizens doubtless responded similarly when confronted with human misery. Charles Glover who repeatedly served on the citizens relief committee and presumably subscribed to its doctrines unhesitatingly gave what the colored press described as "large sums" to his butler to distribute to the poor daily during a blizzard in 1899.26

Furthermore, a group of hard-headed business men, perceiving that unwholesome living conditions might contribute to human depravity, organized in 1897 the Sanitary Improvement Company to build decent inexpensive houses which poor families could afford to rent. Enlightened self-interest, not charity in its restricted sense, gave rise to the plan, since its sponsors in the Board of Trade, the citizens relief committee and the newer Civic Center were primarily concerned with combatting the high overall death rate that had given the city a bad name. Yet implicit in the scheme was the idea that the

25 Comrs Rpt, 1884, p. 76, Ser 2290.
26 Ch Hrgs, pp. 231, 238; Bee, 1 Mar 99.
moral weaknesses of the poor might not be solely responsible for the disease and crime that flourished in Washington's noisome alleys. The project was a business proposition; stockholders were to receive 5 percent on their investment. By the autumn of 1898 the company had erected eight small double houses each of four rooms; equipped with a bath, gas, hot and cold water, a range and a cellar, all renting at from $9 to $12.50 a month. A month's rent was to be remitted to every tenant who kept his flat in good repair for a year. Three years later the company reported it had 162 dwellings occupied by workingmen's families, a large part of them Negro. Tenants appeared to observe company rules, repairs were kept to a minimum and company assets had risen to nearly $200,000. As a practical venture in instilling habits of cleanliness, thrift and industry the enterprise could be labelled a success.27

"Character-building" organizations, as a later generation would call the YMCA and the Women's Christian Association, were never regarded as full-fledged charities, although the WCA, in devoting itself to helping women adjust themselves to life in a strange city, was sometimes accused of acting as a relief agency. During the 1880's both associations lost much of their one-time religious character. The YMCA gradually relegated Bible classes and prayer meetings to a secondary place and built up its membership by emphasizing sociability and the opportunity to enjoy athletics in the gymnasium of the new building on G street. In 1884 when a group of women organized the Young Women's Association, the managers followed the same general course.

27 Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1897, pp. 28-29, 1898, pp. 18-23, 1899, p. 21,
insofar as the lack of a gymnasium permitted, 28

The charity organization movement in the latter part of the 19th century was a phenomenon common to rapidly growing cities in western Europe and the United States. Indeed interest in philanthropy might be called a by-product of urbanization. London and Berlin set the example which American cities followed, Washington slightly later than many others. While the humanitarianism that Washingtonians evinced and the limitations they imposed upon it were by no means unique, its universality among well-to-do permanent residents was exceptional. Call it enlightened self-interest or exaggerated civic pride in outshining other cities, the vigor with which white people on the upper social levels threw themselves into resolving the problems of poverty and want in the community was nevertheless a distinctive feature of Washington's life of the day.
Chapter XIV

Every-day Life and the Amenities of the White Community, 1878-1901

Proud as Washington was of her civic improvements and her charities, it was the orderliness of daily routines and the charm of her social life that endeared her to her white residents and to visitors. The larger the city grew and the wider the sweep of government activities, the more complex became social relationships, but the tensions that marred life in other American cities were relaxed in Washington. Personal anxieties endured at every social level from that of the underpaid school teacher and the government clerk without a civil service rating who was harried by "the uncertainty of office tenure which makes the young woman of twenty-five have the wrinkles of forty,"1 to that of a Henry Adams obliged to watch his gifted wife sink into a melancholia which ended in suicide. Yet English travelers critical of most things American were delighted and astonished at Washington’s engaging serenity.

Compared with New York or Chicago wrote the Dean of Rochester, Washington, although it is full of commotion and energy, is a city of rest and peace. The inhabitants do not rush onward as though they were late for the train or the post, or as though the dinner hour being past they were anxious to appease an irritable wife. . . . The ear is not deafened by the clanging of bells, the roll of the cars, and the tramping of feet which never seem to pause. It was a busy day. . . . on which we arrived, the first day of the meeting of Congress. . . . but though there was a great gathering of Representatives, there was no commotion or din.2

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1 Cleveland Leader, 3 Apr 81.
2 The Very Reverend S. Reynolds Hole, Dean of Rochester, A Little Tour of America, pp. 309-10.
Another Englishman spoke of the impression Washington gave "of comfort, of leisure, of space to spare, of statelines you hardly expected in America. It looks a sort of place where nobody has to work for his living, or, at any rate, not hard." 3

By mid-20th-century standards, people did not work hard, or at least not under high pressure. In reassuring her brother that her new job in the Dead Letter branch of the Post Office Department was not excessively onerous, Virginia Grigsby wrote in 1883:

We are fixed with every convenience, long desks, easy revolving chairs, footstools, plenty of servants and no specific amount of work to be done. . . . There are all ladies in this room, and therefore they do as they choose, most of them bring dressing sacques and put them on to work in. Some even take off their corsets. You know Mama never wears any at home, perhaps she may be able to do all this in the Land Office.4

The "servants", that is government messengers, seldom hurried. Government offices closed at four in the afternoon and only common laborers, artisans, clerks in stores, and domestic servants worked longer hours. Office workers breakfasted at eight or nine, had a cup of coffee, a "dairy lunch" or a sandwich at noon, and at four o'clock went home to a hearty dinner or dined in one of Washington's numerous restaurants. "The lunch rooms of Washington are a characteristic of the city," wrote Frank Carpenter, the observant young correspondent for the Cleveland Leader in the early 1880's. "I know of no place in the world that has their like. They are found in every block and usually keep excellent coffee and delicious rolls. . . . There are

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4 Ltr, Virginia Grigsby to Hart Grigsby, Jul 83, Gibson-Humphreys ms (SHC).
places where you get a common cup . . . with three rolls and butter for ten cents." A dairy lunch room opposite the Treasury much frequented by government clerks served coffee in "pint shaving mugs"; customers helped themselves to sugar from two "holy water basins chained to the wall" and then relaxed in the wicker chairs about the room while they ate the sandwiches they had brought with them.

The boardinghouses, however, remained a Washington institution, for "private board" at a minimum of $5 a week seemed high. Generals' and statesmen's widows ran many of the most select boardinghouses. Though these did not necessarily serve the best food, the seating arrangements followed protocol as carefully as the White House would at a state dinner. Young men and women on their way up in the world occupied lowlier places than the eminent "has been," and the head of the establishment exercised scrupulous judgment about who outranked whom in between top and bottom. As late as 1904 Louis Brownlow, then a little known young newspaperman but destined to become a District commissioner/later, felt himself privileged to be assigned to the bottom table at Mrs. Bocock’s boardinghouse on Q street; she accepted him only because he came properly recommended. Table mates, if frequently boring or slightly pompous, at least exposed the newcomer in Washington to a conic-sectioned view of the city's inhabitants ranging from salesmen to people "in office," the phrase government employees used to describe their status.

In the last decades of the 19th century an occasional congressman still

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5 Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan 83.

patronized a boardinghouse, but, with the disappearance of the congressional mess in the 1850's, representatives who found the capital too expensive to warrant moving their families to Washington generally lived in hotels and ate at restaurants, in spite of discovering that "thirty-five or fifty cents is the least for which one can get a passable breakfast or dinner." But there was a considerable choice of places to dine; some of the most famous of that day are still favorites—the huge dining room opening off Peacock Alley in the Willard Hotel, the Ebbitt House across from the Willard, Harvey's Fish House, and Hall's near the river front where a magnificent bar and behind it a huge painting of a nude Venus bathing added a special attraction. With some horror "Carp" informed his Cleveland readers "it would take the best part of a Congressman's salary $5,000 to pay his board and whiskey bills, if he did not take a high room [above the second story] and leave his family at home. One New York Congressman paid $600 a week for his rooms at one of the hotels." Every evening at the National or the Metropolitan or one of the hotels near the Capitol which served western representatives as headquarters, ten to fifteen billiard tables were in constant use with "a hundred men, many of them Congressmen, sitting in a line of chairs along the wall, watching the play as though they were Monte Carlo gamblers."7

Americans new to the ways of Congress in session were sometimes startled at congressmen's behavior in the House. "Members talk, laugh and joke as though they were in the office of a hotel or a bar-room." They sat feet on desk or moved about between the Speaker and the member who was

7 Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan, 30 Nov 83.
addressing him. Yet the Capitol, "a little city in itself" as "Carp" described it, was populated by the "busiest, wittiest and brainiest men from all parts of the United States."

The chief street of this miniature city is the main corridor leading from the House of Representatives to the Senate Chamber, a long street, perhaps twenty feet wide, through which continually pass and repass a hurrying throng of anxious people. Little shops for the sale of photographs, candies and newspapers are found here and there along this street. A telegraph office is kept continually busy ticking its messages, and at its end are always to be found a crowd of lobbyists, politicians and strangers.

Deadbeats and "bogus pension lawyers" who by shyster tricks fleeced clients out of their claims made up part of this throng, but whatever their morality, the denizens of this corridor were rarely dull company.

For the permanent resident with a family to consider life was likely to be less eventful than for the temporary Washingtonian. "We rarely go to the theatre or to concerts," regretfully remarked a government clerk with a wife and three children to support on his $1600 annual salary. As his rent was $30, wood and coal bill $8, the gas bill $1.50, milk $2.30, groceries $15, perishables bought at the market $25 and the servant's wages $8 a month, there was little left over for entertaining guests or for expensive amusements.

Thousands of families were in a comparable or worse position, since $1600 was a handsome salary and placed a man well up in the ranks of government service. On the other hand, the man who earned $2000 expected to give occasional formal dinner parties complete with soup, fish, game, roast,

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8 Ibid., 22 Dec 82.
9 Ibid., 29 Jun 83.
Regardless of income, a good many people spent something on outdoor diversion. Athletics and organized sports took on some importance as suburbs ate into the open country and cut off city-dwellers from the fields and streams that had once made hunting, fishing and picnicking universal pastimes. Bicycling on Washington's smooth asphalt pavements had an early and long-lasting vogue, among women as well as men. Bella Lockwood, the first woman lawyer to be admitted to practice before the Supreme Court, created a mild sensation in the early 1880's when, with an unconcerned showing of her bright red stockings, she pedalled down Pennsylvania avenue at ten miles an hour. But more conservative ladies arrayed in elaborate cycling costumes soon took up the sport. In the nineties when smaller circumference wheels replaced the high front-wheeled models, a male dare-devil made sporting history by riding down the long flight of stone steps from the Capitol to the Mall. While boating on the "silvery Potomac" lost none of its appeal, the Columbia Boat Club turned itself into the Athletic Club in 1887 and, in addition to its boathouse in Georgetown, opened tennis courts, a running track and a lacrosse field on Anacostan island. Young ladies, again in specially designed costume, occasionally played tennis or tried their hands at archery, and old and young of both sexes joined in playing croquet. After the commissioners opened a public bathing beach in 1891, swimming in the river drew thousands of people every summer. Golf, necessarily a sport

10 Star, 1 Dec 81; U.S. Register, 1886; Day Book of Carrie Angell Collier, ms in possession of the author. See also Brownlow, A Passion for Politics, p. 340.
confined to the well-to-do, became fashionable when links opened at the
country club in the late eighties. Amateur football, however, awakened
more general enthusiasm. Interest in professional sports divided almost
equally between baseball and prize fights until the National League cut its
teams down to eight in 1900, and the Senators, which for years had ended
the season at the bottom of the League, dropped out of sight. 11

Fortunately some forms of entertainment cost little or nothing beyond
the expense of suitable clothes. Custom had not staled Washingtonian's
pleasure in the Marine band concerts given on Saturday afternoons in the
White House grounds:

Then the lawn is filled with a well-dressed crowd as cosmopolitan
as you will find anywhere and the big Marine Band, one of the best in
the world, clad in their flaming suits of red and gold, give forth the
finest music... Among the crowd you will find the best dressed and
finest looking Negroes in the world; you may bump against a treasury
clerk or a cabinet officer, and you may discuss the toilet of Frau
Van Nirgends, the chief lady of foreign legation, or of pretty little
peachy Miss Smith whose father is a messenger in the Treasury, and
then the nature, the flowers, the trees and the long stretch of beautiful
scenery away on the Potomac beyond the big white monument make a com-
bination of which any country may be proud. 12

Moreover, "the great stream of current political and governmental events
which makes Washington the news center of this continent" included increasingly
elaborate inaugurations and special celebrations. For President Garfield's
inaugural parade grand stands for the first time lined the Avenue. The newly
finished National Museum, scene of the inaugural ball, resembled "a crystal.

11 Star, 30 May 79, 18 May 80, 1, 26 Jan 89, 1 Jan 90, 1 Jan 98, 2 Jan
99, 1 Jan 01, "Rambler," 27 Mar 21; Cleveland Leader, 11 Apr, 5 Sep 87; Comrs
Rpt, 1897, p. 10, Ser 3990.

12 Cleveland Leader, 30 Sep 83.
palace," its rotunda and dome sparkling with "the whiteness of electric lights" while the rest of the building glowed with "the yellowness of the thousands of gas burners." Four years later 100,000 people reportedly attended the ceremonial for the first Democratic President since Buchanan. Brilliant warm sun gave rise to the expression "Cleveland weather." Men climbed to the roof of the Capitol and into the lap of Horatio Greenough's statue of Washington, and afterward, as a 25,000-man parade marched up the Avenue, "even the flags and streamers seemed to be affected by the general contagion which filled the air." Still larger crowds welcomed the next two Republican Presidents. Although a downpour of cold rain obliged President Harrison to stand under a dripping umbrella as he gave his address, President McKinley in 1897 had the "Cleveland weather" which a snow storm had denied the Democrat at his second inaugural.

The unveiling of statues of Civil War generals were also occasions marked by colorful parades and only moderately long speeches. The dedication of the Washington Monument on February 21, 1885 was still more memorable, a day for which old inhabitants had waited thirty-six years. While children skated on Babcock Pond to the north of the Monument, Senator John Sherman's opening announcement that men should keep their hats on during the formal exercises drew cheers from shivering adults. The bitter cold weather shortened the ceremony and reduced the prayer of the rector of Christ Church to a mere

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13 Ibid., 1 Dec 82; Star, 28 Feb, 5 Mar 83.

14 Cleveland Leader, 1 Mar 85; Star, 1 Mar 85.

15 Post, 9 Oct 89, 1 Mar 97.
ten minutes, but that night fireworks made a spectacular showing over the snow-covered city.

Nor were all celebrations government-sponsored. As Washington became a "convention city," Masons, Colored Odd Fellows and other national organizations meeting in the capital staged magnificent parades. The city herself arranged an impressive display as a welcome to Alexander Shepherd in October 1887 when business brought him back briefly from Mexico. The demonstration had curious over-tones and was partly a huge advertisement of the new glories of "the city which he plucked from the mire and set as a jewel in the sight of men." Of the hundreds of people who contributed, many had been sharply critical of the Boss only fifteen years before, and though a few saw the "old ring" and the "old subsidized press" behind the celebration, most of his former enemies, their anger quenched by the prosperity of the immediate past, now accepted Shepherd as a symbol of "the new Washington." Three stations of fireworks on Pennsylvania avenue provided brilliant illumination for the hour-long evening parade. The entire District militia turned out to march. In the wake of "mounted marshals with white sashes charging about," came some five hundred workingmen in "overalls and muddy boots" representing the street department. Two hundred men on bicycles rigged with wire frames on which hund lighted Chinese lanterns formed another section of the procession. Every section carried "transparencies" with inscriptions such as "Population 1871,

16 Post, 4, 9, 17 Oct 89.
17 Star, 7 Oct 87.
18 Sentinel, 8 Oct 87, 25 Feb 88; Star, 10, 22 Sep 87.
Whether or not onlookers endorsed those sentiments, no one could deny the splendor of the parade. The city held another home-coming celebration at the end of the Spanish-American war when the District regiment returned from Cuba. "Windows, doors, and sashes and even chimney tops were decorated with flags and bunting," and people "went into hysterics," one man observed, to give the troops a "reception that surpassed anything of a similar character ever before known in the history of the District of Columbia." Two years later the city outdid herself in honor of her centennial. Carefully planned in advance to be solemn rather than boisterous, the celebration combined customary features with innovations. In the parade from the White House to the Capitol the governor of Rhode Island and his staff instead of driving in open carriages behind stove-pipe hatted coachmen rode in automobiles. Following the formal procession came "a number of real centennial-looking vehicles, manned by the inevitable darky, with 'Express for Hire' scrawled in white chalk over the sides of the forlorn wagons, and in them the weary found repose for 'Only 10 cents, lady. Come view de great cent'ry parade fo' 10 cents.'" At the Capitol, the "Avenue entrance to the gallery was lighted by a suspended device, bearing the words, 'Capital Celebration, 1900,' in blazing incandescent lamps. Beneath this was a mammoth American flag in colored lights, which was made by a mechanical..."
device to pale and brighten, to give the flag the appearance of waving." 21

Official society still followed its long-established routine, but as
the widening of government service brought an increasingly diverse array of
talent to the capital, more taste and less show became the rule. A good-
naturedly derisive definition of high society divided it into three, first
the official class, the President and executive officers, the Army, Navy and
Congress, "second the quasi-official class" and the diplomatic corps, and
"third the official class including residents of Washington, strangers and
visitors." In short, virtually any well-mannered white person in Washington
by meticulous observance of the "cast iron" rules about making calls, could
be a part of or hover on the fringes of Society. 22 Wealth was a boon but
not essential. When H. A. W. Tabor, the Vermont stone-cutter who late in
life struck it rich in Colorado silver mining, came as a senator, his osten-
tatious spending made scant impression upon Washington. President Arthur,
it is true, attended the wedding at the Willard Hotel when the Senator married
the blond little "Baby Doe," but the newspaper accounts, while playing up
the drama of Tabor's discarding a first wife in order to acquire a glamorous
young one, made abundantly clear that "HAW" was unable to cut a swathe in
Washington. Distinguished family connections helped open doors, but distinc-
tion tended to rest upon post Civil-War achievement; and whereas a cabinet
officer took precedence over his chief clerk, a politician's social status,

21 Post, 11, 12, 13 Dec 00.

22 Star, 13 Jan, 15 Dec 79, 12, 18 Nov 81, 16, 25 Feb, 15 Mar, 14
Nov 82, 26 Jan 89; Cleveland Leader, 5 Sep 81.
particularly after the Civil Service act and repeal of the last sections of the Tenure of Office act cut in upon his patronage, might depend almost as much on his wife's social skills as upon his own place in the governmental hierarchy.23

"Society women" remarked the acidulous Emily Briggs in 1881, "have politicians for husbands, but not all politicians have society wives." In the course of the next twenty years, if the character of politicians did not change, at least their wives learned to conduct themselves in Washington with more dignity than had hostesses of the flamboyant Grant era. Non-alcoholic state dinners did not endure after Mrs. Hayes left the White House, but heavy drinking was less prevalent thereafter, and the quiet tastes of succeeding first ladies more nearly set the tone of society than the ambitious Mrs. Lincoln or the sedate Mrs. Grant had ever succeeded in doing. The rise of the United States to a position of a world power at the end of the Spanish-American war quickened awareness of the place of protocol in Washington without entirely destroying adherence to a code of republican simplicity.

Guests at the "butterfly wedding" of a millionaire's daughter were delighted with the beauty of the thousands of brilliantly colored tropical butterflies released in the reception rooms but apparently regarded the performance as an aesthetic gesture rather than a form of "conspicuous consumption" which they must ape.24

23 Star, 31 Dec 81, 16 Mar 85, 11 Dec 88; Sentinel, 6 Mar 86, 29 Dec 88. See also Robert McFiey, Grover Cleveland, the Man and the Statesman, I, 188-83.

24 Olivia Letters, p. 113; Post, 1 Jan 79, 12 Oct 80, 2, 3, 4 Mar 97; Star, 9 Mar 82, 31 Dec 81, 11 Dec 88, 7 Jan 99; Marian Gouverneur, As I Remember, pp. 371-...
Old Washington families had inclined to disassociate themselves from the politicians who took over in the capital during the war and the post-war era of vulgarity and intense partisanship. Even their lines separating the permanent resident from the temporary had not been drawn sharply. In the course of the succeeding fifteen to twenty years they faded out almost entirely. Indeed as the make-up of the Board of Trade indicates, the dedicated Washingtonian of the 1880's and 1890's was as likely to be a native of a northern state as of the District of Columbia, and by 1900 whites in the District who were born in Maryland and Virginia only barely outnumbered natives of northern and western states. (See Table III). Before the end of the century the new Washingtonian and the older alike joined with officials and foreign diplomats in creating a cultivated society which Europeans found as agreeable as Americans. Georgetowners shared in it, but despite the commissioners' decree that the older city was to have no official existence separate from Washington's old Georgetown continued to feel herself somewhat apart. Yet the sense of dignified antiquity of family was not a divisive factor in the larger community and the residents of the city on one side of Rock creek felt no resentment over the slight air of detachment of those on the far side. If Georgetowners spent their Sunday afternoons visiting with each other instead of mingling with the elegant polyglot throng that strolled along Connecticut avenue, Washingtonians nonetheless took satisfaction in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the capital.

Although the leisure necessary to pursue an active social career was limited to people of means, many of the amenities of life in the capital were open to everyone who wished to enjoy them. Walks along the tree-lined streets
# Table III

**Population of the District of Columbia, 1870-1900**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>131,700</td>
<td>177,624</td>
<td>230,392</td>
<td>278,718</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WHITE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Native to D.C.</td>
<td>88,278</td>
<td>118,006</td>
<td>154,695</td>
<td>191,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Maryland</td>
<td>38,089</td>
<td>55,927</td>
<td>70,873</td>
<td>83,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Virginia</td>
<td>10,030</td>
<td>12,377</td>
<td>16,751</td>
<td>21,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To North and West</td>
<td>14,710</td>
<td>9,096</td>
<td>13,161</td>
<td>16,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOREIGN-BORN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>16,171</td>
<td>16,980</td>
<td>18,517</td>
<td>19,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>8,218</td>
<td>7,840</td>
<td>7,224</td>
<td>6,220</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>4,128</td>
<td>5,055</td>
<td>5,778</td>
<td>5,857</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NEGRO</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Native to D.C.</td>
<td>43,404</td>
<td>59,562</td>
<td>75,572</td>
<td>86,702</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native to Maryland</td>
<td>13,148</td>
<td>24,775</td>
<td>32,696</td>
<td>36,340</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native to Virginia</td>
<td>16,785</td>
<td>19,913</td>
<td>21,003</td>
<td>28,029</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native to North and West</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>1,589</td>
<td>1,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro of total pop.</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% foreign-born of total pop.</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% foreign-born whites of white pop.</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% whites native to D.C. of total white pop.</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro native to D.C. of total Negro pop.</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro native to Md. and Va. of total Negro pop.</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>50.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>% increase total pop. in 10 yrs.</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase white pop. in 10 yrs.</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase Negro pop. in 10 yrs.</td>
<td>203.2</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
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</table>


2/ Negroes only; Census subtotals on nativity include 5 Indians in 1880 and 24 Chinese, Japanese and civilized in 1890.
flanked by the long rows of red-brick pseudo-Queen Anne houses or, once the
new parks opened, drives through the woods bordering Rock creek and expedi-
tions to the Zoo were simple pleasures that the least educated person could
delight in. And in a city where the level of education among adults was
high and the hours of work short, a large number of people made the most of
their unique opportunities. Not only visitors but District residents took
interest in the additions to the Hall of Statuary in the Capitol and the busts
of the Vice Presidents which began to adorn the Senate chamber after 1886.
Within a decade of the opening of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, some 90,000
people were visiting it yearly. While lecturing in Washington in the mid-
eighties, William Wetmore Story, the American expatriate who supposedly was
Hawthorne's original for the sculptor in *The Marble Fawn*, remarked upon the
rapid improvement in Americans' aesthetic taste. Yet had he lived till the
end of the century, Story might have shared the astonishment of the Corcoran
trustees at the results of an experiment in opening the gallery to the public
on Sunday: a long queue of "wage-earners" formed at the entrance long before
the doors opened and few left before the closing bell sounded. Among the
paintings "Charlotte Corday" commanded most attention; of the sculpture,
Hiram Powers’ “Greek Slave.” Furthermore, the growing reputation of the
Corcoran Art School attracted talented students to the city.

Although an occasional opera troupe or instrumental soloist included
Washington on tour, and chamber music was sometimes a feature of a particularly

25 Charles Fairman, *Art and Artists of the National Capital*, pp. 251 ff;
*Star*, 8 Jan 79; *Cleveland Leader*, 23 Jan 81; *Post*, 1 Mar 97.
elegant soirée, brass bands and choral societies still provided most of Washington's music. Several Negro churches had trained choruses of exceptional quality whose performances attracted as many whites as colored people. The Marine Band reached new heights of popularity in 1890 when John Philip Sousa at a gathering of the Washington Authors' Association on the Smithsonian grounds conducted the first performance of the "Washington Post March" which he had composed for the occasion. Played with enormous success at the Chicago World's Fair and later at European courts and in the Far East, the March is still a favorite today. All musicians felt the lack of a suitable concert hall or opera house. As recordings to play upon an Edison phonograph were still an expensive novelty at the end of the 19th century, music occupied a smaller place than literature in most households.  

The newspapers made much of the city's literary lights, perhaps partly because a number of them were newspaper correspondents. With the exception of Frances Hodgson Burnett's, Little Lord Fauntleroy, John Hayes' The Breadwinners and Henry Adams' Democracy, few of the novels, sketches and verses turned out in Washington during these years are remembered today; and of the weightier works those that are still in occasional use, like Nicolay and Hayes' Abraham Lincoln, Ezra Stevens, History of the Underground Railroad, and George Bancroft's works, survive as much because of their bibliographical as for their literary value. Nevertheless, as a correspondent observed in 1871, "literature is fast becoming a feature of Washington life" to which

26 Star, 15 Dec 79, 12 Apr 82; Cleveland Leader, 2 May 88; Post, 3 Nov 89, 1 Mar 97; Washington Post History, pp. 339-40. See also Post and Times Herald, 3 Jul 98.
even congressmen contributed. "Literary exercises" and readings were a substantial part of the fare at social gatherings, whether of the Washington Literary Society, the Unity Club, the Shakespeare Club or the "Circle des Precieuses Ridicules."  

Newcomers were astonished at the number of Washington's literary women. "Their name is legion," wrote "Carp". Frances Hodgson Burnett, he noted, "is one of the lions of the capital." Though short, stout and "by no means a Venus," Abigail Dodge, writing under the pen name of Gail Hamilton, was scarcely less sought after, and far more because of her widely read columns about politics and politicians than because she was a sister-in-law of James G. Blaine. To younger contemporaries the tales of Mrs. Emma D. F. N. Southworth had come to seem "wiry-washy", but they continued to sell and kept the dumpy little widow within the ranks of Washington's acknowledged literati. Mary Clemmer Ames' sketches and stories, Emily Briggs' Olivia Letters, Kate Field's witty pieces appearing under the title Kate Field's Washington, and the writings of half a dozen other women commanded respect. If the somewhat dictatorial Marie Vinton Dahlgren was more famous as a hostess than as the biographer of her Admiral husband, she was nevertheless a power in cultivated society. Women artists also lent color to feminists' claims that Washington was "a special center for women." Not all were as well known as the sculptress Caroline Ransom whose busts of Vice President Giddings and

27 Helen Nicolay, Sixty Years of the Washington Literary Society; Star, 8 Jan, 30 Jun '81, 6 Feb, 12 Apr, 1 Nov '82, 9 Jan, 27 Feb '83; 20 Jan, 25 Nov '84; Post, 1 Nov '89. See especially the list of "literary works in progress," Cleveland Leader, 3 Mar '84.
Speaker of the House John Taylor still occupied niches in the Capitol, or as the Boston-born musician Mme. Lillie de Hegermann-Lindecrum whose exquisite voice had won her acclaim both abroad and at home, but the group of distinguished women was large.28

The originators of "Wimodaughsis," the appalling name chosen to represent the wives, mothers and daughters who believed the "Dawn of Woman's Era" at hand, were obviously feminists rather than artists, for the organization when launched in Washington in 1890 was dedicated to "the elevation of women." The society planned to open a building in which the National Woman Suffrage Association could convene or the WCTU, the Red Cross under Clara Barton, the Women's National Press Association, the Federation of Women's Clubs or others. Women employed in government offices perhaps welcomed the proposal, although the young and attractive undoubtedly preferred the society of the bachelors with whom their jobs or the "dairy lunches" brought them in contact, and many older women, like Virginia Grigsby's mother with or without her corsets at the Land Office, were too tired at the end of the day's work to care about elevation. The "career woman," in spite of Bella Lockwood and the lady newspaper correspondents, was still a novelty, but women of all sorts and kinds would lead a fuller life in Washington than in almost any other American city of the time.29

28 Cleveland Leader, 1 Aug 83; The Literary Society, 1927, pp. 5-16; Lillie de Hegermann-Lindecrum, Memoirs; CHS, Rec, III, Wimodaughsis, pamphlet in Bowen mss.

Among men it was perhaps the scientists and scholars above all who found Washington congenial and who added most to the variety of the city’s intellectual interests. At the Cosmos Club, in the house in which Dolley Madison spent her last years, notables in a dozen fields met casually or at lectures given by one member or another, for the government still sponsored much of America’s scientific research and brought to the capital men as remarkable as Clarence King, head of the United States Geological Survey, and Samuel Langley of the Smithsonian. King, an intimate of Henry Adams and John Hay, “was possibly the best conversationalist in the country, a scientist, explorer, public servant, and private speculator as well as a raconteur and wit.” Langley’s aeronautical experiments would end in disaster in 1903 with the sinking of his flying boat in the Potomac, but in the 1890’s his research, while opening him to the ridicule of doubting Thomases, stirred the imagination of people who followed his work carefully. New learned societies and five university faculties also broadened the city’s scholarly aura. If public lectures were fewer than in the 1850’s and 1860’s, and a free public library was still an unrealized promise, Washington at the turn of the century did not want for intellectual stimulus. While she lacked the swift-moving excitement of a New York or a Chicago, and ambitious young men sometimes felt their business opportunities limited, the slow pace of life in the capital was one of her great attractions. The white person who failed to find pleasure in living in the Washington of 1901 was a rarity.

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31 S Rpt 17th, 5th, 15th, 4 Feb 96, Ser 3362; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1901, p. 55.
Chapter XIII

Philanthropy and Welfare Services, 1878-1901

Although religious feeling combined with civic pride and interest in education to produce an organization like the National Cathedral Foundation, the extraordinary upsurge of philanthropy in Washington during the last twenty years of the 19th century was largely a secular movement. A dozen charities, it is true, sprang up under denominational aegis—Episcopal, Lutheran, Congregational and Baptist; Washington’s seven hundred Jewish families unobtrusively and efficiently cared for their own; and, as for years past, the Roman Catholic church maintained an impressive array of institutions ranging from St. Ann’s Infant Asylum to a Home for the Aged and the Providence Hospital. Yet the compelling spirit was not primarily religious; and the sense of civic obligation lingered after duty to the church. In other cities throughout the western world a similar phenomenon occurred, but nowhere was it more striking than in Washington. Regardless of his church standing in the community expected as a matter of course to dedicate time and energy as well as money to some charity and usually to more than one. As enlightened self-interest heightened his sense of public duty, so duty, as most people saw it, forbade indiscriminate charity. Humanitarianism was corseted by the concept that only the “worthy poor” should receive help, a Calvinistic attitude the more startling because little in evidence in the District’s earlier years. In the 1880’s, if a Washingtonian publicly quoted Herbert Spencer, the Englishman’s moralistic philosophy, permeated the atmosphere here as fully as in the rest of America, of the period.
CHAPTER II

THE "SEAT OF EMPIRE", 1800-1812

The Coming of Congress

Every free resident of the District of Columbia looked forward to 17 November 1800, the date set for the first meeting of Congress in the new capital. Six days before, voters of Washington journeyed to Bladensburg, Maryland, to cast their ballots in the national election. Polls in Georgetown and Alexandria served the other two cities. Evidently no one allowed himself to think this the last time citizens of the District of Columbia would vote for Presidential electors and representatives in Congress. When Congress convened, it might continue the existing arrangement or might redefine the political status of local residents, but their political stature, like their economic, should grow, not shrink, once the "Grand Council of the nation" assembled in Washington. Cheerfully leading men in Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria prepared to welcome the 106 representatives and 32 senators of the Sixth Congress.¹

Nothing went as planned. For lack of a quorum Congress had to postpone its opening till 2 November. The much talked-of procession of citizens to the Capitol did not take place at all, partly because of quarrels over who should be master of ceremonies, and partly because of a

¹ National Intelligencer, 12 Nov 00 (hereafter cited as Intelligencer); Washington Federalist, 16 Oct 00. Evidence about faith in the District's political future is negative rather than positive. Before December 1800 nothing suggests anxiety lest Congress cancel local voting rights.
three-inch snowfall the day before. Mrs. Adams reached Washington a fortnight after the President but found most of the Executive Mansion still unplastered, few furnishings in place, no bell pulls and a scarcity of firewood; she used the ceremonial East Room to hang the family washing in. Congressmen complained of their cramped lodgings and of the city's inconveniences and dreary appearance. Representative Griswold of Connecticut called it "both melancholy and ludicrous... a city in ruins." Repeated derogatory comment upon the new capital was not reassuring to its inhabitants. Only President Adams' message on the state of the Union seemed to hold out encouragement and endow Washington with dignity: "In this city may... self-government which adorned the great character whose name it bears be forever held in veneration.

"It is with you, gentlemen, to consider whether the local powers over the District of Columbia vested by the Constitution in the Congress of the United States, shall be immediately exercised." The Question of Local Government

Congress chose to act promptly. To wait would leave the decision on the District government in the hands of the recently victorious

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3 Annals, 6c, 25, 22 Nov 00, p. 723.
Republicans, opponents of a strong central government; Federalists in the
Lame Duck session of 1800-1801 had no time to lose if they were to make
the federal capital a bulwark of national power. Yet the bill presented
to the House in December had the support of some Republicans also, men who
considered the constitutional provision giving Congress exclusive legis­
lative authority in the District a mandate they dared not ignore. To
disregard it might reopen the thorny question of the location of the
capital and prove endlessly costly to everyone. Certainly that reasoning
would explain the readiness of some residents to relinquish their political
rights in exchange for assurance that the capital would remain on the
Potomac. But to other local citizens and to a number of Congressmen the
plan offered by a special committee of the House came as a shock. The
bill provided that the incumbents of state executive and judicial offices
within the District should continue in office until replaced by the
President with his own appointees; that the powers of all incorporated
bodies in the District, including the corporations of Alexandria and
Georgetown, remain unimpaired; and that the laws in force in Virginia on
1 December 1800 become the legal code for the trans-Potomac part of the
District, Maryland laws of that date the code for the rest of the ten-mile
square.\footnote{Ibid., 60, 28, pp. 731.}

Protests sounded from private citizens before the debate opened
in Congress. The most vigorous attack appeared in a series of articles
published in the National Intelligencer over the signature of "Epaminondas,"
the pen name of Augustus B. Woodward. Woodward, a Virginia-born lawyer, a resident of ambitious, politically liberal Alexandria from 1797 till he moved to Washington in 1800, took exception to every section of the bill and to one serious omission. He argued that the constitutional provision did not mean that District citizens ceased to be a part of the people of the United States entitled to the enjoyment of participation in their own government. Admitting a constitutional amendment necessary to permit local citizens to vote for the President and Vice President, elect a senator and, when the population had grown sufficiently, a representative, he urged the propriety of enacting the amendment as soon as possible and meanwhile of giving the "Territory of Columbia" its own local, elected legislature. "No policy can be worse than to mingle great and small concerns. The latter become absorbed in the former; are neglected and forgotten." A judgment in which later generations of District residents would concur. "It will impair," he added, "the dignity of the national legislative, executive, and judicial authorities to be occupied with all the local concerns of the Territory of Columbia." Woodward objected also to establishing two different systems of legislation and jurisprudence within the federal area and, prophetic of the complaints to be repeated for the next hundred years, pointed to the handicaps of fastening upon a

5 Museum, 24 Dec 00, 12 Jan 01; Intelligencer, 24, 26, 29, 31 Dec 00; Alexandria Advertiser, 6, 7, 9, 11 Jan 01; Charles Moore, "Augustus Brevort Woodward, Citizen of Two Cities," CHS Rec, IV, 114-18.

6 Intelligencer, 29 Dec 00.
new community unrevised 18th-century state laws. Finally, "Epaminondas" rebuked the committee reporting the bill for failing to specify what part of the expenses of the District should be borne by the federal government and what share by local taxpayers. "Is it that they [the committee members] imagine the affairs of this metropolis will fall into order by the mere diurnal and annual revolutions of the earth? Or do they intend that the resources of the Federal Government shall be lavished for the wants of this favorite child, the door of its Treasury kept open and its every wish gratified on request?.... We must consider...that we are legislating for posterity as well as for ourselves; and that the interest of millions unborn is confided to our hands."7

On the floor of the House of Representatives opposition to the bill derived from several mutually conflicting objections: the unsuitability of perpetuating state laws in an area where, by the terms of the Constitution, Congress must be supreme; conversely, the desirability of continuing the status quo, a workable arrangement in the past, needed now to protect citizens' political rights and entirely permissible since the Constitution allowed, but did not require, Congress to exercise its full authority; and, third, the unrighteousness of reducing men "in the very heart of the United States" to the condition of subjects whose rulers would be "independent and entirely above the control of the people." The House returned the bill to committee.8

7 Ibid., 31 Dec 00.
8 Annals, 6c, 28, 31 Dec 00, pp. 868-73, 2 Jan 01, p. 874.
Further consideration of the problem unhappily failed to bring agreement either in Congress or among local residents. A redrafted bill provided, to be sure, for an elected territorial legislature but vested in it no authority to levy taxes and limited suffrage to owners of District real estate. The proposal pleased neither proponents of full political rights for the District nor the men anxious at all costs to enhance the prestige and authority of the federal government. Public meetings held in Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria to crystalize public sentiment merely revealed the cleavage of opinion between citizens who abhorred the very thought of such restricted political status and the men who considered federal assumption of government for the District their strongest economic anchor to windward. And as multiplying uncertainties about the political fate of the District undermined confidence in its commercial future, rifts appeared between the advocates of some early decision, no matter what, and the people who preferred postponement to an unsatisfactory act that might prove hard to undo. When the congressional debate resumed in February 1801, Representative William Craik of Maryland declared the situation of residents "deplorable"; they did not know under what jurisdiction they came and "serious doubts exist with judicious men how far the grants and acceptances of lands, or their papers, afford them security for value received." Exhortation, however, could not reconcile Congressmen's differences; the upshot was a stalemate.9

9 Ibid., 2, 4 Feb 01, pp. 991-1004; Intelligencer, 30 Jan, 6, 9 Feb 01; Alexandria Advertiser, 2, 19, 24, 26 Feb, 2, 3, 4, 11 Mar 01.
As March and the inauguration of a Republican President drew near, the Federalists abandoned their efforts to present him with a fully organized, congressionally controlled District government. Only one inadequate measure was possible: in the very last days of the session the House hastily accepted two Senate bills establishing a judiciary for the area. The acts divided the territory into Washington County where Maryland law should run and Alexandria County across the Potomac where Virginia law should apply. A circuit court, consisting of a chief justice and two associates, was to hold four sessions yearly in each county, and procedures in each were to conform to the state's. Justices of the peace and a marshal selected by the President completed the judicial system. So far from unifying the federal District, the laws enacted formalized and widened the split into two jurisdictions.  

Economic Progress, 1801-1802

While Federalists nursed their disappointment and Republican partisans looked forward to having their own way in the 7th Congress, people in the District faced the prospect of paying heavily for the delay. Yet in the months following the March day when Thomas Jefferson walked from his New Jersey avenue boarding-house to the Capitol to be sworn in as the third President of the United States, Washington City began to taste a little of the prosperity investors had long anticipated. Anxiety lest

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Congress vote to move to another locality subsided as the federal Treasury poured money into completing public works—furnishing the Executive Mansion, adding the "Oven", an elliptical chamber at the south of the Capitol for the temporary accommodation of the House of Representatives, construction of barracks for the Marine Corps and readying the Navy Yard for outfitting ships. Surely no sane nation would throw so much money away. True, sale of public lots lagged; obliged to raise money to meet payments due on the government's debt to Maryland, the commissioners held two auctions during 1801 without netting for some of the land as much as the purchase price of 1791. But in spite of that ill omen and in spite of renewal of the controversy about what was public, and what private, property, business in Washington quickened. New dry goods, grocery, and jewelry shops appeared, and house building went forward. Additional boarding-houses opened to compete with those on New Jersey avenue and with Pontius D. Stelle's hotel on Capitol Square, Tunnicliffe's Tavern on Pennsylvania avenue and William O'Neale's near the "Seven Buildings." To men who did not "think themselves above a mechanic," Andrew MacDonald's Mechanic's Hall offered "several genteel rooms, with fireplaces" and a ready supply of beer and porter. Before the end of the year the city had 599 habitable houses, and rentals were bringing an annual 20 percent return on the investment. In September 1801 the Intelligencer asserted "no town in the Union has advanced so rapidly."

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11 See Ch I, n 21.

12 Intelligencer, 15, 26 Dec 00, 7 Sep, 16, 21, 28 Dec 01, 21 Jul 6 Oct 02; ASP Mis, I, 219, 243, 251, 256-57, 260; Comrs' Proceedings, 27 May, 20 Jun 01, VI, 158, 175-77.
In early 1802 when the Potomac Company, after seventeen years of work, completed the locks and canal around the Great Falls above Georgetown, extension of trade westward seemed to promise all three District cities an unparalleled commercial growth—an endless succession of boats and canal barges disgorging up-country produce at the cities’ wharves and, as soon as further improvement of Potomac navigation permitted the hauling of barges upstream, shipments of manufactured goods inland. Anxious to make the most of the new opportunities, Washingtonians petitioned Congress to charter a company to dig a canal through the heart of the city from the Tiber to the St. James creek, a tributary to the Eastern Branch. The scheme, which in 1792 the commissioners had attempted but abandoned for want of money, would cut cartage costs in Washington; up-country grain and flour landed at wharves near the mouth of Tiber creek could move cheaply across to the Eastern Branch, while cargoes from ocean-going vessels docked below the Navy Yard could be transported inland without risking the dangers of sailing around Greenleaf’s Point and beating upstream against the force of the current. Washington thus would be independent of Alexandria and Georgetown. Congress granted the charter, authorizing lotteries to finance the undertaking, and stipulating only that the company must have the canal in working order within five years.13

13 Sanderlin, Guernsey National Project, pp. 22, 29, 34; Annals, 7G, 18, 19 Jan 02, p. 126, and appendixes 11 Feb, 1 May 02, pp. 1300, 1351-55; “Thomas Law, Observations on the Intended Canal in Washington City,” CHS Rec, VIII, 162; ASP, Misc, 1, 258-59.
Questions of Local Government Again

However encouraged by the upswing in business, citizens of the capital knew their future must remain precarious as long as the political relationship of community and federal government was unsettled. Alexandria and Georgetown were also uneasy, although most of their local political rights were still theirs. Congress, in turn, saw the drawbacks of further temporizing. But in the early months of 1802 revival of the proposal for a single territorial government with an appointed governor and an elected legislature again showed the lack of unanimity among private citizens and the unwholesome rivalries between the three cities. Alexandrians not only protested over "taxation without representation," and over having Alexandria County play second fiddle to Washington County but objected to any consolidation: "The inhabitants of the two divisions have been long under the influence of different systems of laws, paying allegiance to different authorities...and competitors in commerce." So great was the diversity of views between Georgetown, Alexandria and Washington "that no subordinate legislature can be expected to give general satisfaction." At that moment Washingtonians petitioned for a municipal charter which would put them on an equal footing with residents of the other two cities. A third municipal corporation in the ten-mile square would not resolve the fundamental problem of District representation in

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11 Intelligencer, 22 Jan, 5, 16 Feb, 3, 21 Mar, 30 Apr 02; Annals, 70, 15, 26 Jan 02; p. 463.
Congress and local voting for President and Vice President, but a municipal charter would lighten some of the congressional tasks. Congress acceded to Washington's plea on 3 May 1802.

The act of incorporation granted a two-year charter. The President was yearly to appoint a mayor who must be a local resident. The mayor was to have a veto over the acts of the elected city council, though a majority in the upper chamber might override the veto. Free white male taxpayers who had resided in the city for a year might elect annually a twelve-man common council, four members from each of the three wards into which the city was divided; the council was to choose five men to serve as an upper house. The suffrage restrictions met no opposition even from Congressmen who had spoken passionately against "enslaving" the District.

The council was to provide for support of the poor, see to repair of the streets, build bridges, safeguard health and abate nuisances, regulate licenses, establish fire wards and night police patrols, and might levy a small tax on real estate. On the other hand, justices of the peace, appointed by the President, were to assess the taxes, a superintendent, also chosen by the President, was to replace the former commissioners, and control of the militia was vested in the President. The federal government thus held the reins; elected officials had duties but little authority. Still a limited charter was better than nothing, and citizens felt gratified. On 2 June 1802 President Jefferson appointed Robert Brent mayor and Thomas Munroe superintendent. Elections held soon after made the municipality a functioning entity.  

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15 Annals, 7C, 15, 5 May 02, Appendix, 1371-77; Intelligencer, 4 Jun 02.
The new city charter, however, provided only part of what Washingtonians hoped for and benefitted the rest of the District not at all. Some people wanted manhood suffrage, election of both council chambers and the right to open public schools. Within seven months of electing a city council, property-owners in the capital, joined by residents of Washington County, formulated another petition asking Congress to establish a territory of Columbia which would restore to them a voice in national affairs. Again Alexandria, in belief that she would lose more than she gained, took exception to the proposal. At that point Representative John Bacon of Massachusetts suggested retroceding the two segments of the District back to Maryland and Virginia. That plan in one form or another occupied the attention of Congress at intervals over the next four years, while the people most directly concerned watched the disrupting effects upon the District's economy. But important principles and private interests were both at stake, and no one on the Hill was willing to dismiss either lightly. The arguments favoring retrocession were twofold: it would restore to local citizens their rights as free men and save Congress the time and annoyance of handling purely local problems. The opposition pointed to the binding character of the constitutional provision, the advantages for the area of beneficent federal rule and citizens' avowed preferences for it. Behind the eloquent words of both attackers and defenders lay implicit the thought that retrocession was but a first step on a course that would end in moving the capital northward.

16 Intelligencer, 12 May 02, 24 Dec 04, 16 Oct 07.
In February 1803 the House defeated the Bacon resolution. A year later a modified retrocession bill leaving only Washington City under congressional control passed the House, 40 to 28; lack of a quorum invalidated the vote. District citizens had to rest content with renewal of the three city charters with wider corporate powers. The fight to return all the District outside Washington to state jurisdiction resumed in 1805, but protracted debate again failed to carry the measure. Local proponents tried another petition in 1806, while John Smilie of Pennsylvania, indefatigable advocate of their untrammeled political rights, introduced still another retrocession bill. His associates shelved it. When the question of the status of the capital next came before Congress, emphasis had shifted. To the horror of Washingtonians, in 1808 the debate revolved solely upon the desirability of transferring the government to Philadelphia. Washington, Congressmen declared, would never become a metropolis; living costs were excessive, inconveniences numberless and the "debasement" of citizens willing to sacrifice their political freedom for pecuniary gain left them with no claim to consideration. Washington breathed easier when the discussion ranged so far afield that the House dropped the subject altogether. 17

17 Ibid., 10 Jan, 23 May 03, 27 Feb 04, 8 Jan 06; Alexandria Advertiser, 20 Jan 02; Annals, 7C, 28, 27 Jan, 9 Feb 03, pp. 426-27, 493-506, 1C, 1S, 17 Mar 04, pp. 1199-1200, 8C, 28, 8, 9 Jan 05, pp. 877-81, 9C, 1S, 12 Feb, 4 Mar, 06, pp. 457-58, 532, 10C, 1S, 2-6, 8-9, Feb 06, pp. 1565-80, 1583-96.
Whether, in the interest of reclaiming full political rights, any the Washingtonian had ever stood ready to risk loss of capital is doubtful. Men had invested in property in the city because here was to be the seat of government. Stripped of that privilege, Washington would wither, unable to compete with the older, better established Potomac ports. Removal of the capital might cost Alexandria and Georgetown something also, but neither city would face obliteration. Alexandria, on the contrary, would soon seek to cut her ties to the federal government, and Georgetown would unsuccessfully try to return to Maryland. Washington could not afford to toy with such schemes. Alarmed by the talk of removing the capital, her citizens for some years after 1806 forewore their campaign to get a voice in national affairs. At the dinner celebrating Captain Meriwether Lewis's safe return from his 4002 mile journey to the headwaters of the Missouri, one of the twenty-seven toasts offered was to the District of Columbia: "Unrepresented in the national councils, may she never experience the want of national patronage." For the time being, such subtle reminders had to suffice. Regrettfully or willingly Washingtonians accepted federal domination and the advantages and handicaps attendant. Taxpayers welcomed the degree of self-government the city charter bestowed and rejoiced at getting more: by a new charter of 1804 the privilege of opening public schools and of electing members of both council chambers, and by an amendment of 1812 the right to have the councils choose the mayor. Suffrage, to be sure, was still limited to property-owners, but that restriction obtained
Economic Growth, 1802-1812

If Oliver Wolcott correctly described Washingtonians of 1800 as living “by eating each other,” in time a certain number obviously found other means of survival. Yet to reconstruct the pattern of every-day life in the District of the early 19th century is, as de Tocqueville prophesied in the 1830’s, “more difficult... than it is to find remains of the administration of France in the Middle Ages.” Material progress was never constant. Ups followed downs with some regularity, affected in part by the insecurity born of congressional flirtations with notions of moving the capital, in part by the cut-throat competition between the District’s three cities, and in part by business fluctuations in the rest of the country. But in spite of reverses, residents clung to belief that once investment capital flowed into the area the Potomac region would turn into the principal commercial and industrial center of the United States. The federal government would attract the necessary funds, and native resources would thereafter produce the miracle.

In a period before men understood the perils of navigating the upper Potomac or the full difficulty of developing manufactures, that faith appeared better founded than it would look later. The riches of the

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18 Intelligencer, 24 Dec 02, 23 May 03, 16 Jan 07; Annals, 7C, 28, 28 Jan 03, p. 181; 15, 21 Feb 04, p. 1258, 8C, 28, 3 Mar 05, pp. 1666-90; Petition, HR 12A-Pl. 7, 13 Dec 11.

19 Clark, Greenleaf and Law, p. 181.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>Georgetown</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% white children in publ School of total white children</td>
<td>26.</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro children in pub school of total Negro children</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>37.24</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, white pub schools</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, negro pub schools</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% illiteracy among whites over 20 yrs.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% illiteracy among Negroes over 20 yrs.</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Georgetown immediately paid over to the colored schools their share of the funds, while Washington paid eventually.\(^3^8\)

Of the startling facts the special census brought to light perhaps none was more surprising than the evidence that a larger percentage of colored children than of white were attending the public schools.\(^5^9\)

The figures on Negro education in the District had made remarkable progress. In 1867 illiteracy were somewhat suspect; in 1870, as the federal census taken three years later showed, 74.9 percent unable to write. In contrast, in 1867 the illiteracy among Negroes over fifteen years of age was astonishingly low, allowing for exaggeration in the local census, the record was astonishing as 60 percent or more of the colored population had come since 1861, most of the newcomers contrabands from Southern states where law forbade the education of slaves. Yet instead of 75 to 80 percent illiteracy, two

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* Unable to read. 51.9 % were unable to write.
years after the war only 16 percent of all Negro adults were unable to read. For this extraordinary achievement, the Freedmen's Aid societies and the federal Freedmen's Bureau could claim most of the credit; they had supplied most of the teachers and kept interest in the school crusade alive in the North. By January 1866, a hundred men and women were teaching about 5600 colored children in fifty-four day schools, twenty-five Sabbath schools had enrolled over 2300 pupils, and another 500 pupils were attending the "eight or ten self-supporting schools taught by colored teachers." Six months later the Freedmen's Bureau reported 10,000 Negroes receiving some instruction.39

But after 1868, when all but one group of Northern philanthropists withdrew their aid, the program bogged down. About 3,000 colored children regularly attended the public schools in Washington and Georgetown, but there were no longer adult classes and only sixty-six classes for children in the entire District. Trustees and superintendents had to contend not only with restricted budgets, inadequate equipment and the reluctance of white people to have Negro schoolhouses built in their neighborhoods, but also sometimes uncooperative Negro parents, incompetent, badly trained Negro teachers and bored, undisciplined children. George F. Cook, the first Negro to be made colored school superintendent, took charge in year 1868. That/the Secretary of the Interior appointed a Negro to the board

of trustees and in 1870 a second. White or black, the trustees all but
despaired. Tardiness was nearly universal, perhaps because most colored
families had no way of telling time. Pupils in private schools learned
nothing beyond the ABC's. Public school attendance averaged only 84
percent of enrollment. Worst of all, though attendance was compulsory
in 1870 the Negro schools were reaching few more than a third of the
colored children of school age. 

The Upper Class Negro Community

Since public schools for colored children were an innovation in
the District of the 1860's, Negro leaders, anticipating trouble in mixed
schools, at first made no move for integration. They welcomed the
founding of Howard University in 1866, the first south of the Mason-Dixon
line to be expressly dedicated to bi-racial education, but, though Congress
made an annual appropriation, the college was only a quasi-public insti-
tution, dependent in part on students' fees and on the gifts of its
founders, General C. C. Howard, head of the Freedmen's Bureau, and some
of his friends. Colored people well knew that Howard University, landmark
in Negro education though it was, would be unlikely to open the way to
mixed primary and grammar schools in the District. In Congress plans
for mixed schools were in the making some time before Negross voiced
their interest publicly. The men preparing the special census report of

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40 S Ex Doc 20, 118, 3S, 31 Dec 70, pp. 1-18, Ser 1440; S Rpt
153, 13C, 1S, 29 Jul 73, p. 545, Ser 1590.

41 Abstract of Circular Relative to Howard University, 1867,
In the late 19th century, as today, few people found anything intrinsically interesting in problems of sewage disposal, the water supply, street lighting and paving and the host of other matters upon which orderly, agreeable city living depend. Then, as now, citizens were concerned only when expected services were wanting or when the costs of providing them seemed to put an excessive burden on taxpayers. In 1870, in spite of efforts of the defunct Board of Public Works to modernize the city, large areas of Washington still lacked sanitary facilities and conveniences which under the pressures of population growth rapidly became virtual necessities. That two decades of constructive work at the end of the 19th century enabled Washingtonians largely to dismiss from their minds for the next forty years troublesome and dreary details of municipal housekeeping warrants an account of how District officials with congressional support brought the changes about. Nor can intangibles be ignored. The efficiency of the police force, the regulation of privately-owned public utilities, consideration of urban aesthetics, the quality of education provided by the school system, and always the nature and incidence of taxation were questions of vital importance to the city's future. The story, if boring to people not concerned with similar problems, perhaps takes on some interest because, unlike other American cities, Washington had to work out her plans without benefit of or direct interference from a local electorate.
The civilian commissioners of the District between 1878 and 1901 were on the whole more capable men than the politicians who preceded them. Since the Organic Act specified that they must be bona fide residents of the District, they were familiar with the local scene, and the tacit understanding was a Republican, the other a Democrat. That appointees were to be drawn from both major political parties ensured maximum party participation in local administration. Although the difference between a "Cleveland Democrat" and an outright Republican was slight, none of the commissioners possessed great personal distinction. Lawyers, real estate dealers, and merchants with wide-ranging interests in the community, they represented Washington's top business stratum; every man appointed after the Board of Trade organized, as a member of that body, and all but Ross and Macfarland were directors for a time. Blind as most of them were to the problem of the little fellow, in their official acts they followed the line they thought Congress expected of them. A story published fifteen years after the rumored event told of a Cleveland nominee to the commission who lost the appointment by refusing to promise to keep hands off certain powerful interests. But the charges of self-seeking or negligence which citizens occasionally leveled at one or another of the District commissioners rarely stuck. As public servants they ranked high in an era when municipal officials in America were by and large an unsavory lot.
The Army Engineer assigned to the board of commissioners was in a
somewhat different position. He was usually a newcomer ill-versed in the
District's problems and, because his tour of duty was brief, he had little
time to learn the job; in twenty years ten different officers held it.
Washingtonians took exception to what often seemed to be military high-
handedness in the engineer's office. Since he had charge of all contracts
for public works, he commanded considerable patronage and could exercise an
arbitrary authority. When Major Lydecke's incompetence or criminal care-
lessness in directing work on the extension of the aqueduct cost taxpayers
well over a million dollars and still left the city without an adequate water
supply, indignation rose to a high pitch. But ordinarily projects directed
was apparently executed, and much of it was finished with a vision
by the engineer commissioner were well done, and as outright graft seldom
that evaded the engineer commissioner were well done, and as outright graft seldom
darkened the picture, the progress in public improvements eventually
mollified taxpayers.2

Municipal Housekeeping Problems

Past disasters had bred wariness in residents of the District. Thank-
fullness for federal sharing of expenses did not automatically breed confidence
in the new administrators. Although the Organic Act provided safeguards
against irresponsible spending, taxpayers during most of the 1880's watched
the commissioners' every move distrustfully. If no one expected a new form
of government to resolve the perennial problems of municipal housekeeping, and
if some mistakes were inevitable in the process of making a new system work,
at least lack of public vigilance should not contribute to the errors. Com-
plaints sounded every year about inequities in property assessments and the
incidence of taxes, about the police department, about the inadequacies of the
water supply and the sewerage system, about favoritism shown fashionable
Northwest at the expense of East
In 1879 the financial tangle left by the Board of Public Works was still a legacy of trouble. The new commissioners balked at imposing tax liens on property for assessments improperly levied and not paid because the street improvements had never been made; adjustments cost the District about $2,000,000. But delinquency on all taxes continued. Citizens objected to the personal property tax and even more strongly to the haphazard methods of assessing real estate and handling appeals. Three-year intervals between appraisals piled up inequities of valuation in a rapidly growing community and fostered the rise of a movement, advocating Henry George's single tax. The commissioners themselves thought taxes on improvements encouraged speculation in real estate, and believed the personal property tax too easily evaded to be useful. During the early nineties a committee of Congress scrutinized the local tax laws, refusing to drop the personal property tax did not prevent careful consideration of the single tax on land. A report of 1892, highly critical of the assessors' secretive and arbitrary procedures, revealed strong single tax leanings:

\[ \text{Since land values are increasing at an enormous rate -- on a conservative estimate to the amount of } \$40,000,000 \text{ annually . . . -- the assessment of buildings and the under-assessment of land is operating to discourage greatly the growth and improvement of the capital. . . . A fair assessment of land alone it would be easy to obtain by a tax rate less than one-half of the present all the revenue required for the} \]
In 1878 the financial tangle left by the Board of Public Works was still a legacy of trouble. The new commissioners balked at imposing tax liens on property for assessments improperly levied and not paid because the street improvements had never been made; adjustments cost the District about $2,000,000. But delinquency on all taxes continued. Citizens objected to the personal property tax and even more strongly to the haphazard methods of assessing real estate and handling appeals. Three-year intervals between appraisals piled up inequities of valuation in a rapidly growing community and fostered the rise of a movement advocating Henry George's single tax. The commissioners themselves thought taxes on improvements encouraged speculation in real estate, and believed the personal property tax unjust and too easily evaded to be useful. During the early nineties a committee of Congress scrutinized the local tax laws. Refusal to drop the personal property tax did not prevent careful consideration of the single tax on land. A report of 1892, was highly critical of the assessors' secretive and arbitrary procedures, revealed strong single tax leanings:

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4. Star, 11 Dec 79, 22 May 80, 2 Aug 80; Sun Chronicle, 11 Jan 80, Sentinel, 18 Dec 84, 25 May 89; Rec, 170, 18, 20 Feb 82, pp. 1317-21; ptms, NL61-ML, 8 Mar 80 and dozens of similar ptms to every Congress during the 1880's.

5. Comrs Rpts, 1879, p. 1, Ser 1124, 1881, p. 1-6, Ser 2021, 1882, pp. 5-76, 5, Ser 2163, 1883, p. 5, Ser 2199, 1887, p. 9, Ser 2587, 1890, pp. 11-12; Collyer, Ser 2848.
Since land values are increasing at an enormous rate—on a conservative estimate to the amount of $2,000,000 annually— the assessment of buildings and the under-assessment of land is operating to discourage greatly the growth and improvement of the capital. On a fair assessment of land alone it would be easy to obtain by a tax rate less than one-half of the present all the revenue required for the needs of the District.

The findings showed business property assessed frequently at less than 1% percent its true value and land held for speculation at less than 10 percent, while residential property "especially where the small homes are situated, is assessed at from 70 to 80 percent of its true value." Reluctantly admitted Brainard Warner and other real estate dealers testified to the validity of these data, but at the last minute the committee shied away from any radical innovation. In 1894 a new law largely drafted by Warner and his associates merely required assessors and assistant assessors to conduct
open hearings on complaints, to revise and equalize existing real estate valuations and to systematize future assessments. The most glaring inequities disappeared thereafter. "Yet, as nearly every resident of the city of Washington is a single taxer," a congressman remarked at the end of the century, a tax on land alone would have better satisfied most of the local public.

In the meantime, the $1,214,000 paid into the sinking fund annually steadily pared down the District's long-term debt. As interest payments shrank and monies for reduction of the principal and for building up the fire and police department pension funds dropped from 35.26 to 15.26 percent of the over-all budget, taxpayers felt easier. (See Table II). They were dismayed at several congressional departures from the "half and half principle" in meeting District expenses, first in 1891 when the appropriation act charged the District with the full $3000 cost of opening a public bathing beach, and then over the next six years by refusals to share some $357,000 of costs for various items. But these exceptions were disturbing chiefly as warnings of restiveness in Congress over the 1878 commitment.

Citizens' determination to let no extravagance provide Congress with pretext for full repudiation of the financial arrangement probably stifled many

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S Bill, 20th, 53C, 28, Feb 1891 ( mf, L.C.); Star, 1 Jan'95; Rec. 56C, 28, 7 Feb 91, App. p. 181; S Doc 351, 57C, 18, 9 May 02, Ser H245; 4246

complaints but did not shut off criticism of the police. Although the
murderous shooting of President Garfield in the summer of 1881 called congressional attention to the need of a larger police force, for years the
appropriation remained at a figure that precluded engaging more patrolmen.
(See Table II). Manifestly two hundred men, not all of them on duty at any one time, were too few; the 365 ten years later were still not enough for so spread out a city. In actuality, in relation to the increase in the
District's population, neither violent crime nor less serious law-breaking
was as frequent in the eighties and nineties as in the fifties and the Civil
War era, but charges of police corruption, and alternately police laxity or brutality filled the newspapers until the replacement of venal officers and appointment of a new chief in 1886 restored some measure of public confidence.
Gambling, vagrancy and drunkenness were still the chief sources of trouble.
In a city like Washington, the Star suggested, "the general climate, the charitable disposition of the people who have means, the easy hours of work and the uncertain tenure of government employ, all contribute to help men downward." Every winter tramps and migrant seasonal laborers rolled in, and as the commissioners reported gloomily, a national emergency like the war with Spain, "brought many criminals and cranks to the city." Yet stricter
anti-gambling and anti-vagrancy laws failed to have much effect. The enlargement of the police force to 585 men and the addition of a bicycle squad at the end of the century helped far more.

Juvenile delinquency, as for years past, was a greater source of public anxiety than adult crime. Warfare between rival fire house gangs had ended when members of a paid fire department took up living quarters in the engine houses, but juvenile delinquents still roamed the streets. The Reform School for Boys and the school for incorrigible girls which opened in 1893 offered no cure, and the suggestion that lack of playgrounds encouraged mischief-making in a city where law forbade children's using the public reservations for ball grounds brought no response from Congress. As prohibition sentiment gained strength in the community, the newly organized Guardian League attempted to prove statistically the link between the growth of the liquor traffic and juvenile delinquency: between 1882 and 1887, a 15 percent increase in population but a 40 percent rise in the number of licensed saloons and liquor wholesalers, a 90 percent increase in licensed billiard and pool halls, and countless places operating illegally; "youths in consequence of these diabolical snares...abandon school and workshop and become tipplers, gamblers, harlots, vagabonds and paupers." In the District juvenile arrests averaged 20 percent of all arrests, whereas in New York City the average was under 11, in Boston under 14 and in Chicago 15.5

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percent. The Star disputed those findings; well-informed travellers were ready to pronounce Washington the most orderly city of its size extant.

Nevertheless people throughout the United States felt called upon to petition Congress to free the capital city of the nation...from the curse of rum, just as they urged for the District reforms they frequently did not enjoy at home, whether anti-vivisection, "Sunday Rest," or juster divorce laws or the forbidding of kinetoscope reproduction of prize fights. This country-wide concern to have the capital an ideal municipality was at once gratifying and irritating to the local public, particularly to German-born citizens who wished to drink their Sunday beer in peace. The commissioners, after exploring a plan of raising the liquor license fee from $100 to $500, chose instead to enforce Sunday closing, increase fines for illegal selling and reduce the number of licenses granted, especially in the notorious "Division," the former Murder Bay area in the triangle southeast of the Treasury between Pennsylvania avenue and the old Washington canal bed.

Meanwhile the meagreness of the water supply distressed District residents. 

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15. Capitol, 27 May 83; Comrs Rpt, 1890, p.18, Ser 3760; S Mis Doc 24, 1901, p.1, Ser 3918. See also S Rpt 1890, 551, 25, 7 Apr 97, pp. 33-100, Ser 3502.

residents. Not only had population increased since 1863, when the receiving reservoir of the aqueduct opened, but by 1879 daily per capita consumption of water had risen to over 155 gallons in 1879. Inasmuch as the Chicagoan used only 119 gallons daily, the Bostonian 75, and the Philadelphian 50, an investigating senate committee charged the Washingtonian with wasting water. Increases in water rental rates and house to house inspections to check on dripping faucets improved service but failed to resolve the basic problem arising from the insufficient head of water at the reservoir above Georgetown, leakages in the distributing system, and the inadequacy of a single three-foot distributing main to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population.

Georgetown, being nearer the reservoir, was better off than most of Washington. Gravity feed ensured proper pressure only in part of the downtown capital; the eastern half of the city and sections supplied by pumping stations suffered from a water famine, while many of the suburbs had no piped water at all.

St. Elizabeth's Hospital pumped its supply from the turbid Eastern Branch. The most economical answer, as Congress finally concluded, was to increase the capacity of the Georgetown reservoir by raising the height of the Great Falls dam and running it to the Virginia shore, and then to extend the aqueduct to a second reservoir to be located between the Soldiers Home and Howard University. The dam was finished in 1886, but cave-ins due to faulty...
In 1878 the sewers in Georgetown and northwesternmost Washington emptied into Rock Creek, a thin trickle of a brook in summer; those in east and south Washington fed into the James creek and thence flowed through a crowded slum area into the Eastern Branch near the Arsenal grounds; and the pipes from the central part of the city drained into the "B street main," the old Washington Canal turned into a covered culvert debouching into the tidal marshes beyond the White House. In heavy rainstorms, moreover, surface water pouring down from the hills into a single storm sewer threatened to flood the heart of the city. During a freshet in 1877 the river had risen ten feet at 17th street beyond the White House, and the next summer, when the Tiber arch broke, the lower part of the city had narrowly escaped "a horrible inundation." But the commissioners' proposed remedy required a $2,500,000 congressional appropriation, and Senate objections to including a sanitary measure for the District in a general Rivers and Harbors bill delayed action until 1882. The undertaking then approved involved filling the marshes beyond the Monument grounds, building a tidal basin slightly downstream in order to control the flow of the tide into a new Washington channel, and dredging a deep waterway that would skirt the Washington shore from the Long Bridge to Arsenal Point.

As fill slowly reclaimed the swamps along the Potomac river front, Washingtonians...
began an ultimately successful campaign to have the new land turned into a permanent park. But hopes that elimination of the Potomac Flats would solve the sewage disposal problem were disappointed. In 1890 a special Board of Sanitary Engineers reported the swamps at the source of the Anacostia and the tidal backwash into the James Creek canal still affecting the eastern part of the District, the flow of Rock creek too sluggish to carry off the sewage of northwest Washington and Georgetown, and the pollution of the Potomac near the Monument grounds still a danger to the public. Thanks to correct estimates of Washington's future growth, the sanitary board drafted a plan of such dimensions that it would serve the city adequately for the next sixty years; and enable nearby Maryland communities as well to feed sewage into the District's system; not until the late 1950's would sanitary experts find fault with a system that used the same mains for sewage and for the drainage of surface water. The engineers of 1890 recommended construction of huge trunk sewers into which intercepting lines covering every thickly settled section of the District should flow; a pumping station at the foot of New Jersey avenue should then force the sewage from the trunk lines into conduits laid under the Eastern Branch and carried three miles down stream to empty into deep water where the tides would not wash pollution back into Washington. Congress accepted the plan but refused to sanction a bond issue to pay for the work. An empty federal Treasury during the mid-nineties shut off the other possible source of funds until the revival of the country's business in 1898 enabled the commissioners and the Board of Trade to prevail upon Congress to make yearly appropriations to meet the costs. By 1901, although sewage disposal was still "the most vital question" facing the District, an expenditure of over
The District, however, needed more than new sewer mains to safeguard public health. In 1881 fewer than a third of the 30,471 houses in Washington and Georgetown had sewer connections. Hotels and boarding houses rarely had more than one water closet to a floor. Many families pumped all their water from cisterns or still carried it painful by pailful from the wells in the public squares, and where sanitation was primitive, seepage from the contaminated soil into wells spread typhoid fever and diarrhoeal diseases. Every year, to be sure, added to the number of dwellings equipped with plumbing, but in 1890 some 30,000 people, most of them Negroes, lived in squalid unsanitary alley tenements which congressional views on the sanctity of private property prevented the District health officer from demolition. Here tuberculosis flourished, annually the cause of one out of every four deaths. The one forward step was the enactment of two laws in 1892, one authorizing the elimination of blind alleys, the other prohibiting building of additional dwellings in alleys less than twenty feet wide and not equipped with sewage and water mains and lights. Meanwhile periodic inspections of the public markets failed to stop the sale of spoiled foodstuffs, and no dairy sold unadulterated milk.

In 1893 the appearance of cholera in the United States brought things to a head. A Sanitary League formed in Washington divided the city into districts and set up committees in each to report upon its sanitary condition. The health officer was then able to carry out his long-cherished plan.
of conducting a house-to-house sanitary inspection, and public opinion forced landlords and householders to renovate run-down property, replace defective drains, clean out yards and areaways, and burn tons of rubbish and offal. The result was 350 fewer deaths than in the previous year. Exultantly the Star remarked that "never, perhaps, at any previous time was any large city placed in a more desirable and effective sanitary state." Infant mortality still accounted for one death in three, but by 1898 the over-all death rate in the city had declined to 19.32 per thousand; in the county it stood at 35.82, a rate to which the high incidence of malaria at St. Elizabeths Hospital apparently contributed. In the meantime Congress approved a stricter building code to prevent speculators from putting up more ramshackle dwellings without installing plumbing, and a law of 1897 decreed that all premises must be connected with sewers. Although the law was not wholly enforceable, the owners of 1500 buildings promptly put in sewer connections. At the same time the District health department closed a number of surface wells, placed all dairies under close surveillance, and for the first time experimented with anti-toxin for diphtheria cases. When threatened smallpox epidemics emphasized the city's need of a contagious hospital, Congress voted to erect a suitable building on the site of the old jail and for the time being forced three existing hospitals to open isolation wards. Every new proposal, every innovating regulation, met with some opposition, and, as the health officer complained, small budgets...
constantly hampered the execution of useful laws. Nevertheless, the community was increasingly aware of the importance of his function, and, as interest in the "City Beautiful" movement grew at the turn of the century, decent housing and clean well-kept streets began to command wider public support.

Street paving meanwhile, that never-ending chore in an expanding community, continued to breed internal feuds. Rival citizens' associations resentfully saw the bulk of the funds spent in fashionable "Northwest" and in the suburbs beyond, where quick profits for speculators depended upon the early extension of paved streets and other urban conveniences. Taxpayers on Capitol Hill and in the Navy Yard section fumed over the success of the contenders for improvements along "Massachusetts Avenue extended" to Rock Creek and westward, along Connecticut Avenue above Boundary street, along north 16th street to Meridian Hill and out to Mt. Pleasant; by 1900 official tabulation showed twice as many miles of hard-surfaced streets in Northwest and its suburbs as in all the rest of the District. But when powerful members of Congress supported proposals for carrying city facilities into particular parts of the county, property-owners elsewhere were resentful; their accusations of connivance between unscrupulous congressmen and the commissioners, made no

That measure, followed by the extension of Massachusetts Avenue in the city limits, a measure sponsored by Senator John Sherman, marked the first official recognition that Washington was outgrowing her old bounds; the extension of Massachusetts Avenue from Dupont Circle to Rock
Greek sense next. During 1888 the commissioners strove to evolve a rational scheme of naming a second and third tier of streets beyond the old "alphabet" streets, but not until 1905 was the logical present-day system adopted—two-syllable names of eminent Americans arranged in alphabetical order, followed by three-syllable names for the streets of "the third alphabet." In 1890 Boundary street became Florida Avenue, in 1895 the name Georgetown officially disappeared as the capital by congressional mandate, swallowed the older city, and in 1900 plans for bridging Rock Creek at both Massachusetts and Connecticut Avenues looked to the moment when Washington's streets would thread the entire area from the heights of the Potomac beyond Georgetown University to the upper reaches of the Anacostia.

While the special interests of influential real estate firms undoubtedly affected the choice of maximix areas to get first attention, the spread of the city into the county did not proceed in purely hit-or-miss fashion. On the contrary, a plan of orderly metropolitan expansion, begun to emerge in 1888, and acquired more precise form upon passage of the highway act of 1893 and the creation of the National Capital Park Commission in 1901. These three measures mark the first conscious attempt to guide the suburban growth of an American community along lines that would ensure harmony between new developments and the parent city. The act of 1888 merely required the platting of subdivisions of land in the

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29 Sentinel, 4 Jul 85, 23 Oct 86, 13 Nov 86, 5 Mar 87; Star, 23 Dec 86, 13 Oct 87; Comus Inst. 1890, pp. 260-62; Ser 2731, 1890, pp. 368, 370, 393; Ser 2848, 1900, 325, Ser 1113; Rep. 2731, 18, 26 Jan 82, pp. 1619-25, 1663.
1882, ten years after the city first witnessed a demonstration of electric lighting, the commissioners contracted with the United States Electric Light Company to install a few arc lamps. Considerations of public safety dictated a ruling that all wires must be laid underground, but an important by-product of the decision was the preservation of the trees. During an experimental display on Pennsylvania Avenue in the fall of 1881 a dynamo belted to an engine in an old sawmill nearby had fed power to lamps suspended from guy wires strung from house to house at the click of a switch the sudden splutter of light from the Capitol to the Treasury had delighted the onlookers, but the danger of fire had been undeniable. While the cost of underground wires prevented the rapid replacement of gas lamps, before 1890 Washington boasted 181 arc lights and added seventy-five to a hundred yearly thereafter. 

The battle for underground wires soon involved other utilities. Overhead telegraph lines had strung along Washington's streets since 1843, and that "selfish octopus," the Western Union, a particularly powerful corporation in a city where newspaper correspondents kept wires busy, continued to plant its "uncouth poles at will in front of any man's premises without his consent." After 1878 the new Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company also erected poles and wires, and in the 1890s, when street railway companies began to replace horse-drawn cars with trolleys, the traction interests entered the fight. Meanwhile Congress had complicated matters by taking from the commissioners the authority to grant permits for new underground installations. Yet little by little public opinion won the day, though who brought the necessary pressures to bear upon the utility companies is uncertain. By 1900 not only did Washington enjoy telegraph and expanding telephone service, electric street lighting, and electric street railways, but within the city limits more than half the wires ran underground. 

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[1] Cleveland Ledger, 5 Jan 1883

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[32] Star, 23 Dec 32, 22 Jan 33, 1 Jan 36, 1 Jan 38; Post, 1 Mar 37.
The exceptions were the lines running into private houses from poles placed in alleyways at the rear. Fifty years later the foresight that kept Washington's sky-line for trees, buildings, and space would stir the admiration and envy of other municipalities.

The Struggle with the Street Railways and the Railroads

In scores of American cities of the 1880's and 1890's, utility and transportation companies, their franchises secured to them by local political bosses, were exploiting the public mercilessly. In the capital where Congress granted the franchises, the readiness of Congress to disregard of citizens' wishes. Because citizens believed the commissioners wholly subservient to these corporations, public indignation spilled over upon the District's ruling heads. "Do the commissioners," inquired a newspaperman, "govern the District, or do the street railway companies govern the commissioners?"

The sins of the 'traction moguls' were everywhere evident: T tracks projecting above the level of the pavements made the streets hazardous for horses and carriages; the space adjoining the rails was not kept clean, a particular affliction as long as the cars were horse-drawn; the cars were stuffy and cold in winter, dirty and overcrowded the year round; service was slow; tax evasion was frequent, and fifteen separate companies operating in the city and suburbs produced confusion rather than wholesome competition.

The commissioners protested at these abuses. When in 1895 the campaign against overhead trolley wires met with sudden success, the commissioners were able...
to exact other reforms. Ground rails flush with the pavements supplanted the projecting T rails, and express cars running at speeds up to ten miles an hour improved service.

Consolidation of competing lines provided the essential financing to these changes. When the Rock Creek Company bought out the Washington and Georgetown in 1895 to form the Capitol Traction Company, $12,000,000 went into new equipment and a power house on 11th street below the Avenue. In 1900 thirteen other independent lines merged to become the Washington Traction and Electric Company. The merger, effected with several million and reportedly generous congressional blessing, included the United States Electric Light and the Potomac Electric Company, the United States Electric Light and the Potomac Electric Company, A. Alexander McDermott of Jersey City took charge. No one considered it improper for a member of the House of Representatives to direct a huge public utility business in Washington while he served his term in Congress. The local public derived immediate advantages, transfers cut costs for passengers, better heated and ventilated cars added to their comfort, and more frequent runs reduced waits. With relief the city thought the problems of internal transportation solved at last.

The city's struggle with the Baltimore and Ohio and Pennsylvania railroads followed a different and far less satisfactory course. Again public
safety and urban aesthetics were the main points at issue, but the question of what to do and how to do it was complicated by sharp differences of opinion in Congress and by the awe in which public officials held the great railroad corporations. The safety campaign centered around the elimination of grade crossings within the city where the B & O tracks and those of the Pennsylvania's subsidiary, the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad, crossed the public ways at street level. Statistics assembled by a Board of Trade committee proved that fatal accidents or serious injuries to pedestrians at these crossings averaged about thirty a year. The most feasible of the proposed remedies called for sinking the rails into cuts below street level along part of the right of way and along the remainder elevating the tracks on embankments under which cross streets would tunnel. New construction would be necessary to obviate the hazards on the Long Bridge for trains puffing over the narrow causeway and the railroad bridge set up vibrations in the shaky spans of the highway bridge, frightened horses, caused runaways and made it unsafe for pedestrians and horse-drawn vehicles. Citizens declared that the Baltimore and Potomac in South Washington illegally used the public streets for freight yards and car sidings while the B & O similarly exploited Northeast Washington; as a result large areas of the city no longer had residential value. Finally, inasmuch as Boss Shepherd, while removing the rails laid in the 1850's by the defunct Washington and Alexandria Railroad at the foot of Capitol Hill, had not touched the Pennsylvania tracks crossing the Mall to the Gothic stone station on the present-day site of the...
National Gallery of Art, the Pennsylvania Railroad dominated the public domain in the very heart of the national capital.

Seemingly more powerful than Congress itself, the railroad corporations expressed willingness to abolish grade crossings and build freight terminals provided the public pay most of the cost but they fought every proposal to move the Baltimore and Potomac depot from its commanding position on the Mall or to erect a union station for all railroads entering Washington. For twenty years citizens who believed the District commissioners too ready to yield to the cavalier demands of railroad officials angrily watched the collapse of every scheme for relocating tracks and terminals. The engineering problems were formidable at best. No plan found universal favor. Permanent residents opposed further railroad intrusions upon public property, but businessmen hesitated to support any scheme that would mean long wagon hauls from freight terminals on Washington's outskirts. Throughout the city taxpayers objected to shouldering the costs of safety measures which they believed the railroads could well afford to finance.57

Year after year Congress, in turn, reached no consensus. Bills were offered, debated and shelved. When a bill of 1893 required the B & O to eliminate grade crossings, railroad officials stated that the measure would force the road into receivership. Congress dropped the idea. The B & O went into receivership anyway. Seven years later the Senate District Committee and all but two members of the House District Committee endorsed two astonishing proposals.
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would slice diagonally across the park toward the Long Bridge. A new
thoroughfare, "West Capitol Street," would pass under the embankment by
means of a fifty-foot archway. Symbolically and bodily members of Congress
would bow their heads to the railroad as they went to and from the Hill.

Senator Macmillan, whose name would later be associated with large plans for
beautifying the capital, defended the scheme: "Indeed so far as sightliness
is concerned, the proposed changes will add greatly to the beauty of that
portion of the Mall." The concessions tendered the B & O were less generous.

Its yard tracks and roundhouses were to be moved beyond the city limits,
the Metropolitan branch and the Washington-Baltimore branch lines were to be
combined and rerouted within the city proper and the company was to receive
a free gift of the square north of the present Senate office building on
which to erect a new passenger depot; tracks elevated on an embankment across
lower land to the northeast would enter the new station at ground level.

Thus one railroad would share the Hill with the Capitol; the second would
occupy the central stretch of the park between Capitol and White House.

Vigorous protests sounded at once: Congressmen Samuel Cowherd of
Missouri and Thaddeus Sims of Tennessee of the House District Committee labelled
the entire scheme shortsighted and excessively generous to the railroads.

The Chief of Army Engineers, Brigadier General John Wilson, and Major Thomas
Longstreet, Commissioner of Public Buildings and Grounds, deplored the folly of

\[\text{footnotes}\]
abandoning the very core of L'Enfant's original plan. Senator West of
Missouri declared the two bills yoked together by "an interdependent mutuality
of greed." Every citizens' association in the District, the Washington
Businessmen's Association and the Single Tax Club voiced outrage, while the
Board of Trade emphatically restated its ten-year opposition to any alienation
of the city's public parks. Unfortunately the commissioners' statements that
the plan was the best the District could hope for probably encouraged illusions
in Congress. Congressional leaders pronounced the bills satisfactory to
"ninety-nine out of one hundred" Washingtonians, a misinterpretation of local
sentiment which, Representative Cowherd remarked, showed the handicaps under
which unrepresented citizens labored in trying to make their wishes under­
stood. In February 1901 Senate and House passed both bills and President
McKinley signed them.

The Public Schools and Higher Education

While the commissioners' seeming deference to the railroad corpora­
tions offended citizens, they objected even more strongly to threats of
interference with the School Board. Admittedly the commissioners must
appoint the board, but public feeling was that the trustees, once appointed,
must have full authority over the school system. For, despite frequent
squabbles about the disposition of funds and about appointments, particularly
to teaching posts in the colored schools, the board generally functioned in
keeping with citizens' wishes. The one insuperable problem was to get money

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advanced pupils. An arrangement with the trustees of the Myrtilla Miner Fund, a fund raised by private donors for Negro education, enabled the superintendent of the colored schools to open a colored high school in 1879, until but before 1882 the nearest approach to a white high school was a scheme the white superintendent tried in 1881, he selected the best students in the eighth grades, put them in the third-floor rooms of one building and called the group a high school. The next year the white members of the board, in the face of some opposition from the Negro members, insisted upon using the principal of the school fund that had been accumulating since 1826 to build a white high school. During the late eighties unusually large appropriations for building schoolhouses lessened overcrowding in the lower grades, but scarcely was a new building opened than a new generation of school children overflowed it. The Board of Trade observed that Washington was the only city in the country which allowed non-residents to attend her schools free of charge. By 1899, lack of enough desks and school rooms necessitated holding morning sessions for sixty-eight white first grades and fourteen colored, and using the rooms in the afternoon for a like number of second grades. Parents who could afford to pay tuition naturally sent their children, for private schooling withdrew from private schools, and enrollment in the public schools rose to more than 36,000 pupils, a 50 percent increase in thirteen years. Moreover, popular demand for manual training, night schools for children who worked during the day, and a few summer "vacation schools" put further pressure upon limited budgets. The trustees felt obliged to open kindergartens in 1898, while clamor mounted for a high school course that would qualify graduates for college entrance. One group of citizens thought the schools provided too many
though appropriating more than the commissioners asked for, voted less than the trustees requested. Consequently a passionate outcry greeted the commissioners' announcement in December 1885 that they were taking over the duties of the school board because quarrels had destroyed its usefulness. At a mass meeting citizens asserted that the change would strip them of "the last that was left to them of popular government." Congress, besought to intercede, debated a school reorganization bill only to drop it. But the commissioners, obviously startled by the storm they had stirred up, quietly backtracked; the school board carried on, its membership/enlarged to include one white and one colored woman.

Fortunately in 1885 the appointment of William Bramwell Powell as superintendent of the white schools suddenly pumped vitality into the system. The new superintendent introduced a whole series of innovations similar to the changes in educational approach later attributed chiefly to John Dewey.

Brother of John Wesley Powell of The Geological Survey and Powell added to the curriculum courses in science and nature study probably somewhat influenced by "Was's" scientific interests. Started manual training in the elementary grades, and dispensed "book" Powell included nature study enriched by field trips with the rigid formality in the classroom that had ruled the put in the elementary and grammar school curricula. Under his regime, manual training, formerly limited to eighth grade and older pupils, began in the primary grades, and he insisted that teaching children merely to memorize and repeat lessons by rote was no substitute for awakening pupils' intellectual curiosity. In carrying out his program he fired ill-trained and uncooperative teachers, many of whom owed their jobs to
school and even smaller dental school which made up the National University
established a pattern that would later become standard in Washington: night
classes enabling young men to get professional training while they earned a
living in day-time government jobs. As the three older universities, like
the newer, lacked scholarly prestige, Washington was richer in quantity than
quality of higher education, but the fact that powerful religious bodies
envisaged the city as the future seat of American learning strengthened the
feeling that Washington had indeed become a national city.

A touch of that feeling apparently entered into Charles Glover's
proposals to fellow Episcopalians that they establish a national cathedral
foundation in the District "for the promotion of religion and education and
charity." Glover, then President of the Riggs National Bank, organized the
campaign for funds and in 1893 obtained a charter from Congress, while Henry
Satterlee, Bishop of Washington, selected Mt. St. Albans for the site on
which the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul should rise. There within the
National Cathedral School for Girls opened in 1895. Four years
later the Foundation completed the purchase of the entire hilltop with its
commanding view of river and city.

While the Cathedral Foundation, the universities, and other organiza-
tions lying outside the realm of the commissioners' and congressional respon-
sibility contributed to Washington's standing as a distinguished city,
Americans believed that the capital should and in most respects did represent
the best in American government. So far from labelling the autocratic
Washington's and Georgetown's limits became urgent, the community was indignant at congressional refusal to apply the half and half principle to the county as well as the city; for the law of 1878 pledged the federal government to sharing the expenses of the entire District, not merely the part formerly under municipal jurisdiction. If reason justified charging half the cost of suburban streets to abutting private property, only bad faith, local citizens believed, could account for putting the rest of the cost upon the District without any federal contribution at all. The real injustice, however, arose from the fact that after exercise of the right of eminent domain and after assessment of half the expense upon abutting private property, Congress again and again failed to vote the appropriation of District funds necessary to open up a street, thereby leaving adjacent land without the improvements for which its owners had already paid. But members of the House who sponsored the act professed to see it as a means of saving their own constituents and small taxpayers within Washington and Georgetown from having to foot the bills of real estate speculators.

Whether city-dweller or county, everyone felt the weight of congressional authority, and, when House or Senate dismissed a grievance summarily, citizens' sense of helplessness was acute. They realized that disagreements among themselves often hampered Congress in deciding what would best suit the community, but even when public opinion was virtually unanimous, a congressional whim could block a measure. For example, in the face of city-wide uneasiness about the paucity of charitable institutions for colored

38 Memorial to Congress by the Joint Executive Committees of the Citizens' Associations of the District of Columbia against the Repeal of the Fifty Percent Annual Congressional Appropriation Law, Jan 1091; U.S. Stat., 52C, 28, 2 Mar 93, XXVII, Ch 197, pp. 532-37; Rec., 52C, 18, 23 May and 30 Jun 92, pp. 1276-78, 5655-78; 52C, 28, 3 Feb 93, p. 1157, 27 Feb 93, p. 2209; S Rpt 1150, 55C, 28, 25 May 98, Ser 3625; Comra Rpts, 1899, pp. 33-38, Ser 3930, 1900, p. 31, Ser h118, 1901, p. 61, Ser h307; ptm, h304-III, 30 Mar 92, Anl Rpt B of Tr, 01, p. 29; S Doc 102, 57C, 18, 16 Nov 15, pp. 981-1006, Ser 6915.
children, Congress haggled over the terms on which it would accept the gift of a civic-minded Negro who offered his farm as a home for "the poor colored waifs of the city." Congressional inaction on codification of District law became so intolerable that the Board of Trade and the Bar Association finally engaged a lawyer at their own expense to draft a code. Congress then adopted the first part of the two-part draft. Every new Congress, moreover, presented a fresh hazard, since the men assigned to House or Senate District Committee could impede badly wanted legislation or recast bills to suit their personal interests; 39 those assignments once thought undesirable were now often sought after because of "the chances open to that committee for promising speculation" in property in the politically impotent city. 40

39 Star, 5 Apr 79, 1 Sep 81, 5 Mar 87, 18, 25 Feb, 3, 10 Mar 88, 2 Jan 99; Capitol, 1 Jan 88; Sun Chronicle, 23 Jan, 6 Feb 81, 5 Mar 82; Chronicle, 1st Sep 90; ptms, RL6A-DL, 8 Mar 80, S50A-912, 9 Jan 88; S Mis Doc 161, 536, 28, 23 Apr 91, Ser 3171; S Ex Doc 107, 590, 9, 7 Feb 96, Ser 3350; Anl Rep H of Tr, 1897, p. 65; Siddons, "Municipal Condition," Third Ntl Conference on Good City Govt., p. 365.

Rebellion against that impotence alternately waxed and waned in strength during the 1880's. Ambivalence marked the thinking of a great many people. While District representation in Congress looked desirable, could a non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives be of any use and could his election offset the possible disadvantages of unlimited manhood suffrage in municipal affairs? Could the community obtain a voting voice in Congress without accepting a popularly elected local government? Reopening the question settled by the Organic Act might result merely in scrapping the provision for federal appropriations without altering the District's non-voting status or, worse in the view of some Washingtonians, might and federal financing but revive a city regime dominated by Negro and propertyless voters. Fear of prying the lid off a Pandora's box kept influential men silent except when provoked into speech by some flagrant congressional sin of omission or commission.11

The local press generally opposed restoration of a popularly elected District government. The Star, invariably warning of the perils of a return of the "feather dusters," insisted that all the faults of the commission government lay in the men appointed, not in the system. The Post and the Sentinel, a paper directed mainly to Washington's German population, at first held limited suffrage better than none but later veered away from that position.12

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11 Star, 25 Jan, 16, 23, 30 Dec 79, 13, 24 Jan 80, 5 Mar 87, 18 Feb 88; Capitol, 26 Jan 79, 1 Jan 88; Siddens, Municipal Condition, a Third Nth Con for Good City Govt., pp 370-71.
12 Star, 1, 6, 11 Feb 79, 3, 4, 7, 8 Feb, 4 Mar 80, 27 Mar, 8 Apr 81, 22 May, 1 Jun 85, 27 Nov 86, 28 Jan 88; Capitol, 11 Jan 83, 1 Jan 88; Post, 22, 23, 30 Jan 79; Sentinel, 27 Mar, 1, 18 Dec 86, 21 Sep 89, 11 Mar 93, 7 Apr 94.
The People's Advocate, a short-lived Negro newspaper, declared: "Universal suffrage is wrong in policy of [sic] not in principle when applied to cities," and the Bee, a second Negro paper, argued that colored people were better off under the protection of Congress than they would be under city officials elected by Negro riff-raff. Only the Chronicle and John Forney's Sunday Chronicle consistently took the line that a local electorate including colored men could do no worse for itself than did federal appointees.

Handwritten petitions from labor groups repeated their earlier appeals for District self-government; inasmuch as white workingmen, however fanatically dedicated to the doctrine of white supremacy, obviously believed two white men could always outvote one Negro. Unlike wealthier citizens, the working classes were only incidentally concerned with perpetuation of the financial provisions of the Organic Act.

In 1888 Theodore Noyes, son of the editor of the Star, published a series of articles reviewing the eighty-eight years of what he termed congressional neglect of Washington. Coming on the heels of a congressional session that had seen no action on important local bills, the analysis struck
home with peculiar force. Popularly elected municipal officers he thought
would be useless. "Without representation," he argued, "suffrage is of no
value, and, shut out from the bodies which make its laws and imposes taxes
upon it, representation of the District under the Constitution in its
present shape can only be a sham." The one measure that could give District
citizens any power over their own destiny was a constitutional amendment
enabling qualified voters to elect representatives to Congress and a cor-
responding number of members to the presidential electoral college. 45

Later that year recently organized citizens' committee of 100, reminiscent
of the Committee of 1876, set itself to examine Noyes' proposal and possible
alternatives. While Appleton Clark, a Washington notary, assembled a
sheaf of letters expressing the views of well-known Washingtonians and
figures comparing the District's population, wealth and contributions to
the nation with those of a half dozen states, the committee drafted a
memorial to Congress requesting a constitutional amendment: "They are
unable to see why they should be excluded from participation in the General
Government any more than the people of State capitals should be excluded
from participation in State governments." 46 Several

letters favored something less radical than a constitutional amendment; the
rest supported the plan and several asked for an elected local government
as well as national representation. 47

45 *Star*, 5 Mar 87, 18, 25 Feb, 3, 10 Mar 88; *Rec.*, 196, 25, 29 Jan
87, p. 1172.
46 *Star*, 15 Jun 87, 15, 18 Feb 88; 5th Misc. Doc. 126, 506, 15, 11 Jun
88, Ser 2517; District of Columbia Citizens' Representative Committee of One
Hundred, Proposal to Improve the Present Form of Government of
7th Misc. Doc. 237, 513, 18, 17 Sep 90, Ser 2700; ptns, S51A-615, 17 the District
of Columbia, May 90, H51A-411, 19 Aug 90.
Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire presented the plea in the form of a resolution. In May 1890 the Senate committee on elections to whom the matter was referred reported it back adversely. Blair, incensed at the committee’s holding no hearings on a measure wanted by the “great mass” of District citizens, protested the summary dismissal. He spoke of the evil effects of civic irresponsibility upon young men growing up in Washington where business monopolies exercised control through “combinations and rings and syndicates which derive their strength from unholy or indifferent relations to and with the representatives of national power.” A constitutional amendment would take time to pass and ratify, the more reason for Congress promptly to take steps to free the District from the prevailing “absolute political despotism, all the more alarming because so many are in love with it.” Curiously enough, the newspapers did not pick up Blair’s allusion to an unholy alliance between Congress and special interests in Washington, and other comment was slow in coming into the open.

The speech, published in the Congressional Record, began and ended the Senate discussion. Two years later the Democratic national party platform of 1892 included a District section which, while flimsy at best, remained purely decorative until discarded in the 20th century.

Thin hopes for success apparently lessened the petitioners’ disappointment. If they had won nothing and, in Theodore Noyes’ phrase, were still “political slaves,” neither had they become “bankrupt freemen” by

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48 Rec, 51 C, 1 s, 17 Sep 90, pp. 10119-23.


49a Kirk Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, National Party Platforms, 1840-1956, pp. 74-125.
loss of the federal sharing of District expenses. During the 1890's the suffrage question in one form or another cropped up occasionally but without arousing citizens to new efforts. In 1895 Frederick Siddons, a Washington lawyer whom Woodrow Wilson would make a District commissioner eighteen years later, prophesied at a national conference on good city government that growing dissatisfaction among the rank and file of Washingtonians would shortly reinvigorate the campaign for self-government, since the existing system put them at the mercy of men uninformed about the needs of ordinary, socially obscure citizens. Siddons miscalculated. The suffering to be seen in other cities as the depression dragged on weakened the community's interest in political reorganization, since poverty and unemployment, bad enough in the District, could easily become worse. Furthermore, toward the end of the decade exceptionally generous appropriations made congressional rule relatively painless, and mounting faith in citizens' associations and the new Washington Board of Trade persuaded taxpayers that, voteless though they were, they could make their wants known on the Hill and expect an eventual response.

The Role of Citizens Associations and the Board of Trade

The citizens associations were initially neighborhood groups concerned each with its own section of city or county. The East Washington Citizens Association launched by property-owners on Capitol Hill in 1871 was the first, but others appeared after 1871, and the number multiplied rapidly in the mid-eighties. Inasmuch as law forbade the District's

50 Chronicle, 7 Apr 95; ptn, H25A-D1, 30 Mar 92; Siddons, "Municipal Condition," Third Natl Conference on Good City Government, pp. 370-71; Star, 1 Jan 00; Sentinel, 8 Jan 01. See also Mrs. John A. Logan, ed., Thirty Years in Washington, p. 524.
borrowing and appropriations for public works were expressly tabbed for particular projects, each area had to compete with its neighbors to get the largest possible sum for itself. Hence every association ordinarily discussed only its own special needs. But now and again topics like changes in the school system or methods of assessing property had city-wide interest, and the wish of all associations to have a voice in determining how taxes should be spent spurred efforts to set up a new committee of 100 comparable to that of 1876. An attempt in 1886 failed because residents of the 'West'
In 1886 a central committee representing eight associations in Washington and the Mt. Pleasant association in the county proposed a citizens' council of fifteen men to be appointed by the President and empowered to prepare the District's annual budget for submission to Congress. When that petition failed, a second embodied Noyes' plan for a constitutional amendment. Although citizens believed a central organization potentially valuable, the frequently conflicting aims of the separate associations gradually undermined the committee. It fell apart in 1889 just as the Washington Board of Trade came into being. Yet the citizens associations were useful; while they had no purely social function, they bore some resemblance to the farmers' Grange and served the same purpose of clarifying and giving form to members' ideas.

Tradition has it that Colonel Henry Robert, engineer commissioner in 1890, had first drafted Robert's Rules of Order to help new citizens associations conduct their meetings efficiently. "Difficult questions," remarked a detached observer, "are expounded with a fullness of detail and of technical precision that would never be dared before the usual political audience." The effort of Negroes excluded from white associations to form their own testified to the importance the community attached to these neighborhood pressure groups.

51 Star, 12 Jul 83, 11 Dec 86, 6, 19 Jan, 12, 26 Feb, 2 Mar, 1, 16 Apr, 4, 7 May, 15 Jun, 11 Aug, 12 Oct, 17 Nov 87, 1 May 88, 1 Jan 89; Bee, 14 May 87; ptn, 57A-Hh.2, 18 Apr 90; see also n. 37; Post, 6, 12 Nov 89.

52 Louis Brownlow, A Passion for Politics, p. 63, and interview with Louis Brownlow, 18 Nov 58; C. Meriwether, "Washington City Government," Political Science Quarterly, XII (Sep 1897), 418.

53 Star, 22 Jan 87, 1 Jan 98, 2 Jan 99, 1 Jan 00; ptn, H54A-B7, 6, 30 Mar 96; Suburban Citizen, 29 Jan 98; Bee, 14 May, 1 Jun, 2 Jul, 12 Nov 87, 3 Mar 88, 22 Oct 89.
Because more homogeneous, better organized and possessed of clearer vision of community needs, the Washington Board of Trade founded in November 1889 proved in its youth of greater value to the city as a whole than were the citizens' associations with their avowedly parochial interests. Many a 20th century Washingtonian would come to look upon the Board of Trade as an ultra-conservative body ruled by realtors for the sole benefit of real estate speculators and the bankers who financed them. But if, as the its Sentinel contended, from the very beginning the Board was a front for the street railway executives, bankers, insurance agents and "sprinkling of real estate brokers, politicians and the like," who really governed the city, they were of service to others than themselves. They showed little comprehension of workingmen's problems, in the main ignored the Negro third of the population, and took a complacent attitude toward the public schools, but most of the committee reports from 1890 to 1901 revealed painstaking investigation of civic wants and produced intelligent recommendations for meeting them. As the name Board of Trade implies, its first concern was to strengthen the District's economic position. With that goal in view, the directors opposed local suffrage, but because they saw that efficiently rendered local charities, a sound public health program and urban aesthetics were important assets to a residential city, their aims extended to reducing pauperism and providing for the helpless, to improving sanitation and to realizing a far-sighted plan for the "City Beautiful" which Congress through the Park and Fine Arts Commissions later largely adopted.

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54 Sentinel, 16 Jul 1892; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1890-1901.
Beriah Wilkins, an owner and later editor of the Washington Post, sent out the letters of invitation to the meeting that gave birth to the Board of Trade. His four-line note went to some 200 men prominent in Washington's business and professional life. He himself had just completed a third term in the House of Representatives as a member from Ohio, but, finding Washington at once congenial and challenging, he had chosen to buy a controlling interest in the Post and to settle here permanently. An independent newspaper with a growing circulation should make money and might at the same time be a useful tool in promoting the city's welfare. He paved the way for the proposed Board of Trade by an editorial explaining that an organization of responsible businessmen could represent public opinion in the District more fully and carry more weight with Congress and the commissioners than citizens' associations and individual petitions ever could. The men who attended the meeting agreed.

Organization proceeded quickly. The charter members, presumably most if not all of them the men to whom Wilkins had sent his invitation, elected thirty-one directors; the next year the number was cut to thirty. The board of directors chose the president from its own ranks, engaged the paid secretary, selected the treasurer, fixed the annual dues—$5 for an individual, $10 for a partnership or corporation—appointed the standing committees and recommended or, as things worked out in practice, determined policies. The entire Board might vote upon the admission of new members and annually re-elected or replaced ten directors, but the by-laws enabled thirty men to run an organization that soon came to exercise greater power in Washington than

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any body except Congress and the presidentially appointed District commissioners.

Within two years the District committees of Congress and the commissioners were turning to the Board of Trade for advice, and by the end of the century it was an open secret that the commissioners themselves owed their office to the Board's directors. As long as the directors were men of vision whose interests coincided with those of the city at large, the community benefitted.

Not every influential Washingtonian was a director or even a member of the Board of Trade. As it was primarily a business organization, no minister and only one or two university professors became members, and other reasons apparently kept several men eminent in other fields from joining. For example, a public-spirited person was Reginald Pendall, a member of a deeply respected old Washington family, and able lawyer greatly concerned with the city's welfare, and the equally civic-minded William Redin Woodward, head of the Board of Children's Guardians. Relatively few executives of the telephone, gas and street railway companies took much part, whereas several men in Masonry but without corresponding importance in Washington's business world were active. More than one Jew participated: Isadore Saks was a director during most of the nineties and Simon Wolf, a leader in Jewish welfare work, served on several committees. Nor, interestingly enough in view of later Board attitudes, was race a bar. James T. Wormley, son of the owner of the famous Wormley House, was a charter member, and three other Negroes were elected in the course of the next few years. The board of directors never included all Washington's wealthiest men, but the fifty-seven individuals who served between 1890 and 1901 nevertheless

56 1st Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1890, 2nd Anl Rpt, 1891, pp. 9, 13 and By Laws in 1st Anl Rpt, 1893, pp. 54-57; Bee, 2 Feb 01; memo, 23 Apr 00, McKinley mss, L.C.; Siddons, "Municipal Condition," Third Ntl Conference for Good City Govt, pp. 360, 371.
represented the city's economic dominants. Alongside such powerful persons as Charles Glover, president of the Riggs Bank, S. W. Woodward, department store owner, and Brainard Warner, the city's foremost real estate broker, were lawyers like Alexander T. Britton, expert on American land law and dean of Washington attorneys, journalists and editors like Beriah Wilkins, and Crosby and Theodore Noyes of the Star, the physician and writer, Dr. Samuel Busey, and General John N. Wilson of
the Army Engineer Corps. Just as most of the professional men were also directors of banks and other business enterprises, so several of the bankers and realtors held law degrees. The Board’s first president, handsome Vermont-born Myron M. Parker, was graduated from the Columbian University law school in 1876, after holding clerical jobs in the War Department since 1865 and before becoming a successful real estate broker and a District commissioner. John Joy Edson, president of the Board in 1900 and head of the Washington Loan and Trust Company, was also a trained lawyer. A great many realtors were at the same time presidents or directors of Washington banks and officials in the street railway companies. Contrary to later popular belief, real estate men as such were fewer than merchants and bankers, although the distinction between a real estate dealer and any other business man was shadowy. Indeed a striking feature of the make-up of the Board of Trade directorate was the interlocking interests of its members.

Most of these men had come to Washington after the Civil War and in 1869 were still in their early forties. Several were completely self-made. Brainard Warner, an unknown country boy upon his arrival in Washington, was head of the city’s foremost real estate firm before he was thirty, at the age of forty-two in 1889 the founder and first president of the Washington Loan and Trust Company, in the nineties president of the Board of Trade, and in the interim, while organizing a half-dozen other successful business enterprises, built and moved into a large red brick mansion in the millionaire section of Massachusetts Avenue beyond Dupont Circle. The dour-looking, witty Crosby Noyes, born in Maine, had walked into Washington on foot in 1848, and by his literary skills, his insights and his Yankee shrewdness, made his way up to a position of singular power not only
as editor of the Evening Star but as a citizen passionately devoted to Washington's interests as he saw them. The suave Theodore Noyes, a native Washingtonian, inherited that devotion as well as the editorship of the Star.

Whether to the man born or representing the rags to riches saga, the leaders of the Board of Trade all had some social finesse; over forty percent of them were listed in Washington's Social Register. All played some part in guiding local charities and reform institutions. Beriah Wilkins acted for years as treasurer of the citizens' relief committee. The heavily-built, round-faced, mustachioed Brainard Warner, outwardly the entrepreneur par excellence, repeatedly served on the school board and on the boards of the Industrial Home School, the Central Free Dispensary and Emergency Hospital; in addition, he was president of the National Philharmonic Society, a vice president of the National American Red Cross later and a sponsor of the Washington Choral Society and Georgetown Orchestra. Another Board of Trade president, S. W. Woodward, identified himself closely with the YMCA; rather prim-looking behind his rimless eyeglasses and carefully pointed beard, he had such firm religious convictions that he forbade the sale of playing cards in Woodward and Lothrop's department store, but he gave away thousands of dollars yearly and his gentleness and rectitude made him beloved and respected for more than his Christian endeavors.

Charles Glover threw his influence into getting public parks for the city and into launching the National Cathedral Foundation. If their ranks were thin and parochial in the 1890's, most of them were less ready to serve the community. Self interest to be sure, usually went hand in hand with altruism, but according to their lights the business leaders of this period were dedicated men. And Washingtonians by adoption were as eager as

\[57\] Anl Npts B of Tr and lists of officers and members, 1890-1901; City Directories; Chronicle, 12 Dec 96; Post, 8, 9 Oct 89; Washington Post Hist, pp. 69-70, 191-259, 341, 101-133; Washington Social Register, 1900.
Although by 1901 out of 720 members of the Board of Trade only 33 lived outside northwest Washington, no one accused the organization of sectional bias; indeed, occasional meetings included representatives from all sections. In encouraging the citizens' associations, President Edson remarked, "The spheres of activity of the associations and the Board, instead of colliding, are distinct and supplemental." The Board's sphere was the more comprehensive, not only geographically but substantively. It was the Board that organized the Washington Sanitary Improvement Company to build inexpensive model houses for workingmen; the Board that protested vigorously against taxing county dwellers differently from city property-owners for improvements; the Board that, with the collaboration of the District Bar Association, engaged Associate Justice Walter Cox of the District Supreme Court to codify District law, the Board that campaigned successfully for a public library and that led the fight to get the Pennsylvania railroad tracks and the depot off the Mall. The organization was intrinsically undemocratic. When the committee on membership in 1897 acknowledged the force of complaints that the Board did the bidding of a few members and held too few general meetings, the remedies the directors sought to apply still left an autocracy. Yet in light of the abuses of municipal governments elsewhere in America, Washingtonians who shrank from the mere idea of popularly elected city officials had some justification for placing faith in the Board of Trade. A political scientist writing for the Political Science Quarterly argued that this unofficial self-appointed "city council" provided an ideal form of local government through a "representative aristocracy."
Table 1

Population of Washington

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* Figures for entire District, but since the growth of the white population between 1810 and 1850 was only 2,515 in Georgetown and 925 in the county, the assumption seems reasonable that the bulk of European immigration was into Washington.
Chapter IV
Philanthropy and Welfare Services, 1879-1901

Although religious feeling combined with civic pride and interest in education to produce an organization like the National Cathedral Foundation, the extraordinary upsurge of philanthropy in Washington during the last twenty years of the 19th century was largely a secular movement. A dozen charities, it is true, sprang up under denominational aegis—Episcopal, Lutheran, Congregational, and Baptist; Washington's seven hundred Jewish families unceremoniously and efficiently cared for their own; and, as for years past, the Roman Catholic Church maintained an impressive array of eleemosynary institutions ranging from St. Ann's Infant Asylum to a Home for the Aged and the Providence Hospital. Yet the impelling spirit was not primarily religious; and the sense of civic obligation seemingly transcended feelings of Christian fellowship and "guild"fellowship. In other cities throughout the western world a similar phenomenon occurred, but nowhere was it more striking than in Washington.

Regardless of his church affiliation, the Washingtonian of widely recognized standing in the community expected as a matter of course to dedicate time, and energy as well as money to some charity, and usually to more than one. As enlightened self-interest heightened his sense of public duty, so duty, as influential people saw it, forbade indiscriminate charity. Humanitarianism was corsetted by the concept that only the "worthy poor" should receive help, a Calvinistic attitude the more startling because little in evidence in the District's earlier years. In the 1880's, if no Washingtonian publicly quoted Herbert Spencer, the Englishman's moralistic philosophy nevertheless left its mark. 

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1 E.g., see Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Female Union Benevolent Society of Washington City and the Report of the Managers, 1844.
mark upon the community scarcely less fully than in the rest of America.

Of the significant features of Washington's philanthropy in the last years of the century the most immediately noticeable was the expansion of charitable institutions and relief agencies and the amount of money poured into them. During the 1880's prosperity enabled people in the upper brackets of society to give large sums of money without great self-denial, but in the hard times of the nineties contributions to charity shrank surprisingly little and far exceeded those recorded in the 1870's. For example, whereas a citizens' committee in the severe winter of 1878-79 managed to raise $3000 to supply fuel, food and clothing to the poor, in 1893-94, the year of the panic, a similar committee collected nearly $50,000. Improbable as it is that the later generation was intrinsically more generous than the earlier, the differences in results doubtless sprang from the greater social pressures and better organized campaigning of the nineties; the contrast in effectiveness is nonetheless startling. A growing population explains some of the proliferation of charities, but while population rose from about 175,000 to 277,000 souls between 1870 and 1901, the number of institutions doubled and tax money spent for their support and for direct relief increased almost five-fold. Before 1879, despite the recurrence of an emergency every winter, Congress had yearly resorted to emergency appropriations for direct or "outdoor" relief, that is, for persons not in institutions; thereafter the District's annual budget included from $13,000 to $20,000 for outdoor relief. Public officials like private citizens accepted gradually broadening responsibilities toward the city's needy.

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2 Star, 30 Jan 79; Comrs Rpt, 1895, pp. 139-40, 153, Ser 3391; S Doc 185, H 55C, 15, 21 Jul 97, "Joint Select Committee to Investigate the Charities and Reformatory Institutions in the District of Columbia," Part I - Hearings, p. 157, Ser 3565 (hereafter cited as Ch.Hrgs.).
Children were, above all, the beneficiaries. Just as the Washington City Orphan Asylum had been the first organized charity in the city, so orphanages and "child saving" institutions enlisted wider interest and stronger financial support than any other form of philanthropy; by 1899 they were receiving eight times as much money as in 1879. Before the end of the century Washingtonians maintained eight non-sectarian homes for children in addition to three Roman Catholic orphanages and St. Rose's Industrial School for Girls. When the refusal of most of these institutions to accept any colored child over six created an acute problem, two more came into being, the Hart Farm School for destitute and delinquent Negro boys and a temporary home for colored children sponsored by the Board of Children's Guardians. The Board of Children's Guardians itself was an outgrowth of the mounting concern for child welfare. The Board's predecessors, the Guardian Society of the early sixties and in the eighties a Children's Branch of the Washington Humane Society, had both lacked the authority and the resources to institutionalize neglected and abused children. In 1892 Congress accordingly created the Board of Children's Guardians, empowering it to place out or itself to support any child whom the courts committed to its care. Under the selfless and public-spirited leadership of William Redin Woodward, a Washington attorney, real estate broker and title insurance company executive, the Board staunchly advocated placing children in private
"the last to be denied or... deferred." When a well-informed public official stated in 1897 that no other city in the United States could match Washington in her provision for the sick and injured, he referred not only to the number of facilities but to the quality of service. By any standards, conditions were appalling at the Washington Asylum Hospital, that catch-all for the helpless without other recourse, and the service there was "little above that of the primitive country poorhouse of an earlier day." But most of the public hospitals offered effective care, and an eminent physician from the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore and an equally competent doctor from Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Hospital pronounced the nursing and medical care at Freedmen's Hospital excellent, despite primitive sanitary facilities and a general aspect of "suffering and squalor."

For indigents stricken with contagious disease, alcoholics, drug addicts, the "mildly insane" and the chronically or incurably ill, on the other hand, provision was totally inadequate. Hospitals were unwilling to risk exposing patients to contagion and until congressional threats in 1899 to cut off appropriations persuaded the staffs at Freedmen's, Garfield and Providence to accept government subsidies and build isolation wards, all contagious cases had to be treated at home unless they landed in the small pox hospital at the Asylum. A Home for Incurables founded in 1889 took a few white patients, and occasionally a private hospital accepted one or two, but all medical institutions preferred to concentrate upon curable cases of...
a routine nature. Before a newly organized Aid Association for the Blind
opened a small home in 1900, the indigent blind could go only to the
tinsehose. The aged or chronically ill, the "inebriate", the "dope fiend" and
the mentally disturbed, refused admission elsewhere, usually ended up
at the Asylum Hospital where the physician in charge, because powerless to
turn anyone away, had to make a place for them in the general wards.

It may be imagined, reported the Asylum Commissioner, the crowding,
the bad air, and the consequent slow and poor progress towards recovery
in many cases; when, besides, we take into consideration that all
classes of patients, surgical cases before and after operation, chronic
ulcers, syphilitic, acute and chronic diseases of all kinds, have to be
treated in the same wards and in close proximity, it is a matter of
surprise that the death rate is as low as it is.

In view of the shocking gaps in the medical program, the fact is astonishing
that in the areas it did cover Negroes got as good care as whites.

Help for women in distress, particularly if their troubles arose through
no fault of their own, was a third form of charity to expand rapidly. Although
it rarely extended to colored women, no matter how "worthy," it slowly reached
out to include "fallen" white women despite lingering doubts about the wisdom
of lightening the wages of sin. Before 1885 the Roman Catholic House of the
Good Shepherd and the Episcopalian House of Mercy were accepting not only
girls in need of "preservation" but also unmarried mothers, and in 1888 the
Women's Christian Temperance Union set itself to join in salvaging that "most
Hope and Help Mission achieved some success in helping them to become self-supporting while keeping their children with them, but the number of applicants soon outran capacity. In 1897 the Mission came under the auspices of the National Board of Florence Crittenden Missions. Largely under the aegis of various Protestant churches, homes for aged women also began to multiply, a badly needed service in a community which had had in the 1870's only the almshouse, the Catholic Home for the Aged run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, and the Louise Home for a small carefully selected group of "women of education and refinement." Furthermore, following the example of the Women's Christian Association which had begun in the 1870's systematic assistance to transient women stranded in Washington without friends or work, several other organizations opened homes, like the Young Women's Christian Home and the Brown Home. Little or no tax money went into any of these women's institutions; private subscriptions supplied the bulk of the funds.

If the tremendous growth of charities was the most dramatic aspect of Washington's philanthropy in the last decades of the century, the services the community ignored or slighted were equally significant. The special cases which the medical charities passed over were only one example: No agency, public or private, stood ready to assist able-bodied unemployed men except in the direct emergency of a severe winter, and as soon as the weather improved, the agencies turned their backs on them. It was the aged, the infirm, the destitute, as well as the unfortunates of all sorts, who suffered from the lack of charity. If the Poor Law Board did not take care of the aged, it at least had the courage to admit that the medical charities did not. The aged were ignored. No provision was made for them, and as long as the Board existed it failed to even keep its bureau up to date. As late as 1895, the Board's report showed that the number of aged persons in the census was only 47, and no attempt was made to keep the number up to date. The aged were not provided for, and as long as the Board existed it failed to even keep its bureau up to date. As late as 1895, the Board's report showed that the number of aged persons in the census was only 47, and no attempt was made to keep the number up to date. The aged were not provided for, and as long as the Board existed it failed to even keep its bureau up to date. As late as 1895, the Board's report showed that the number of aged persons in the census was only 47, and no attempt was made to keep the number up to date. The aged were not provided for, and as long as the Board existed it failed to even keep its bureau up to date.
moderated that help ceased. In an endeavor to reduce the number of tramps who moved into the city in late fall and slept in the police station houses, in 1892 the commissioners, taking over a small private charitable enterprise, opened a Municipal Lodging House and Wood Yard where "professional vagabonds" were to earn three days' keep by splitting firewood for the school houses, but, operated as the house was for transients and to save the city money and trouble, the establishment in time deteriorated into a variation of the workhouse. The aged male got scarcely more consideration than the men unemployed.

The almshouse of necessity housed some old men, and the Catholic Home for the Aged a few, but men, irrespective of their handicaps, were expected to fend for themselves. Indeed the congressional committee investigating Washington's charities in 1897 recommended omitting all public appropriations for all homes for the aged, since it seemed "questionable policy" to provide for the few who would benefit. Finally, the generous hills gave white women and "while the many are required to seek the Asylum." Whereas help for white women and children was generous, it was conspicuously meagre for colored women and children. The clinics and hospitals by means of segregated wards admitted Negroes as freely as whites and gave colored patients equally good care, but except for St. Ann's Infant Asylum, the Catholic Home for the Aged, the National Colored Home, and before 1898 the Newsboys and Children's Aid Society, the institutions for children and needy women generally excluded Negroes, except for St. Ann's Infant Asylum, the Catholic Home for the Aged, and the National Colored Home, before 1898, the Newsboys and Children's Aid Society, and the institutions for children and needy women generally excluded Negroes, the poorest element in the city. Yet Negroes made up a third of the population and a very much higher proportion of the city's poor.

The St. John's Parish Orphanage very occasionally took a Negro child, and in the early nineties the Newsboys and Children's Aid Society accepted some colored boys, only to reverse itself in 1898 when Congress refused to make a grant for a separate building for the colored. Catholics and Protestants shared the view of the Directress of St. Rose's Industrial School when she explained: "It would not be supposed we could mix them [Negro girls] with our young girls who are mostly orphans from good families."
difficulties of placing colored children in private homes led the Board of Children's Guardians in 1897 to request the courts to commit as few charges as possible, since it would have to crowd most of them into its temporary home. Similarly, the restricted resources of the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children, supported as it was almost entirely by taxes, obliged its managers to limit the admission of children to those between the ages of three and ten. Although the secretary observed that "no householder will take into his family a colored child except as a servant and with the intention of getting a full equivalent for what he gives," the ten-year-old turned out of the Home could ordinarily hope for nothing better. Inevitably, an endless stream of them wound up at the workhouse and the almshouse, and "because the world affords them no other place," the Commissioner of the Asylum noted, "at the end of their terms they constantly importune me to allow them to remain." The promise held out by the founding of the Home for Friendless Colored Girls in 1886 all but collapsed within a few years. Launched by a Negro woman when she discovered two little colored girls eating out of a garbage can, the Home was Washington's first Negro-sponsored charity. But the "band of worthy colored women" who originally attempted to finance it failed to elicit funds from well-to-do Negroes, and the prominent white women whom Mrs. Grover Cleveland interested in the Home were able to raise only $150 for it in two years of soliciting.

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13 Ch Hrgs, pp. 100-01, 197; Ser 3565.
14 Comrs Rpt, 1862, p. 382-60, Ser 2103; Ch Hrgs, pp. 100-01, Ser 3565.
15 Ch Hrgs, pp. 310-13, 396-97, Ser 3565; Comrs Rpt, 1900, p. 290, Ser 3565.
The story of help for colored women was much the same. A few found a refuge in the National Colored Home, and nearly fifty, thanks to the kindness of the Little Sisters of the Poor, became inmates of the Catholic Home for the Aged. Otherwise before 1900 there was nothing but the Asylum and the Reform School for Girls, an institution more nearly penal than charitable. In 1900, greatly daring, the Hope and Help Mission undertook in collaboration with its "colored mission" in Alexandria to extend its services to unmarried colored mothers. Incredulously the director reported that "it has been proved that these colored girls can be cared for more easily and at less expense than the average white girl. As a rule, they are better trained for work, and more capable of earning their own living in a shorter time."

As William Redin Woodward of the Board of Children's Guardians saw the situation in 1897, Negroes were "a race not yet recovered from the effects of slavery, practically without resources for the private support of necessary institutions for the protection of its own dependents, and for whose benefit wealthy citizens of the District of Columbia neither left large bequests nor contributed any considerable sums." In implying that all Negroes were of one class and failing to note that a number of upper class Negroes had some means at their disposal, he revealed a point of view common among white people, but whites who observed the wealth of the upper stratum of Negro society tended to resent the apathy of its members toward the wants of the lower class. Large

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16 S. Doc. 23, 50th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1899; Com. Rpt., 1894, p. 101; Ser. 2615; Ch. Hrs., pp. 102, 584, Ser. 3565.

17 Ch. Hrs., p. 155, Ser. 3565.
gifts from wealthy individuals were, it is true, a mainstay of charity in most 19th century cities. W. W. Corcoran, for forty years the single most generous donor to good works in the District, endowed the Corcoran Gallery and the Louise Home, gave large sums to Columbian University and the local orphanages, and at least once contributed $1000 to St. Luke's Negro Episcopal Church, but upon his death in 1888 he left no bequest to any colored institutions. Nor did the succeeding generation of generous charitable-minded Washingtonians. Since the philosophy that came to prevail stressed charity only for the "worthy poor" and most whites regarded Negroes as an inferior breed of human being, cold logic justified a minimum of help for colored people. The question remains of why that philosophy first took strong hold here in the eighties rather than in the 1830's as it did in other American cities.

That it had little currency in the ante-bellum District was probably due both to the homogeneity of the permanent population and to a narrow view of public duty which limited obligations to caring for orphans and providing emergency relief for needy adults in winter. Before the war the derelicts produced by the industrial system and the commercial competitiveness of the North were a rarity in Washington; in spite of the inflow of transient paupers seeking government aid, the city had relatively few "deadbeats." Indeed the transients whose exigencies were for years a drain upon the community elicited some sympathy and ordinarily escaped the label "undeserving." Slaves were a responsibility of their masters and free Negroes concealed their needs as best they could lest the workings of the black code expel them from the District. Hence, because most of Washington's and Georgetown's visibly needy appeared to be worthy,
of charity for the unworthy did not arise.

When the wave of contrabands swept in during the war, the Army and Northern abolitionists bore much of the burden, and Washingtonians could persuade themselves for a time that here was a temporary problem. The immediate post-war era gave birth to wrathful protest at Mayor Bowen's made-work scheme which seemed to his political enemies to pander to the undeserving, but since indignant taxpayers could not stop him as long as he was mayor, he saved them the necessity of evolving clear-cut standards about who was worthy of charity, who lacking in the moral qualities to merit it. Doubtless the Calvinistic concept of poverty and its attendant ills as a judgment from on high upon the undeserving had always been latent in Washington, but circumstances had submerged it until the 1870s and then the confusions of the territorial regime, followed by the economic uncertainties of panic and depression further delayed an explicit formulation of principles. While migrant workers, attracted by the District's comparatively mild climate, flooded into the city every winter, the Night Lodging House and Mrs. Robert's Penny Lunch, partly subsidized by Congress, relieved Washingtonians of having to choose between seeing men starve and doing violence to their own consciences. It was apparently the enormous prosperity of the 1880s in the upper ranks of Washington society that brought into the open a philosophy of justification. Rooted perhaps in subconscious feelings of guilt and fed by the writings of Herbert Spencer, the Englishman who adapted the Darwinian theories to social evolution, the belief took hold that discrimination in giving was essential to human progress, certainly to community progress. The spread of that point of view and the resulting determination to establish standards by which to judge worthiness
was the third characteristic of the city's philanthropy.

The idea once well-sprouted flowered quickly and lasted longer in Washington than in cities where industrial strife ploughed deep and unsettled men's earlier premises. Conscientious citizens, Washingtonians carried into the 20th century the conviction that poverty sprang from the flaws in the character of the individual rather than from weaknesses in the social structure. As the moral regeneration of the poor must be the first aim of charity, so public-spirited citizens, instead of giving in to sentimental sympathy for suffering, must bend every effort to teach the poor to develop habits of frugality, industry, honesty, temperance, cleanliness and chastity.

In 1882, a year after Washington, following the example of London and some sixteen American cities, organized an Associated Charities, a set of formal "Suggestions to Friendly Visitors" issued to volunteers included the following instructions:

1. Give no money... because your chief object is to lift the idle, ignorant and dependent, out of pauperism, to make them self-supporting and self-respecting and to prevent their children becoming beggars.

2. Inform the idle and squalid of the sanitary laws of the District and show them that misery and suffering are the inevitable results of idleness, filth and vice. Make kindly suggestions concerning ventilation, clothing, digestion and household cleanliness.

3. Take a gift of a plant or picture or some other tasteful suggestive object of beauty, to each wretched home.

4. Write out a wholesome economical bill of fare, and show how a little saving and constant thrift will provide against illness and misfortune.

5. Ascertain what each member of a family can do... and see that every one over 12 years of age is engaged in some useful occupation looking toward permanent self-support.
Whatever the reception accorded the free advice and the gift of a "suggestive object of beauty," the volunteers assembled information about Washington's deserving poor which enabled the Associated Charities to establish a useful file of case histories. Otherwise the organization accomplished disappointingly little. It had envisaged itself as a clearing house which would eliminate duplicating services, halt "indiscriminate charity" and introduce efficient methods into relieving distress. But before 1897-its volunteer part-time staff undertook to solicit funds and disburse them itself and in so doing added one more agency to the several already engaged in direct relief. Aware of the confusion over who was to do what and troubled by the lack of information about specific community needs, a group of citizens in the mid-nineties organized a Civic Center patterned upon the Civic Federation of Chicago. The Center unhappily was a center only in name and contributed little to solutions of welfare problems. In these years of trial and error, competition between the Associated Charities and other organizations ran strong over who was to distribute the money raised yearly by the commissioners' appointees to an official citizens' relief committee. The citizens' committee, after years of using the police as its sole disbursing agents, in 1894 released part of its funds to the Associated Charities and in 1897 determined to drop the police as agents, use the Associated Charities primarily for investigation, and let other groups actually distribute the central fund.

Efficiency and economy in administering philanthropy were constant goals. Since the Associated Charities was unable to bring order out of the confusion, in 1890 Congress acting upon the pleas of the District commissioners created the office of Superintendent of Charities to supervise the work of all charitable agencies in the city. By law a presidential
appointee, the Superintendent was to be brought in from outside, obviously
to ensure an unprejudiced view of the entire local picture without prejudice. Amos G.
Warner, former head of Baltimore’s Charity Organization Society, was the
first incumbent and the first professional social worker to hold office in
Washington. His high national standing heightened in 1891 by his textbook
on social work, which for twenty-five years was the only one in the field,
gave his words weight. His primary objective was to reverse the trend that
had developed during the 1880’s whereby private agencies obtained public
money and used it as they saw fit. In 1892 medical charities drew 58 percent
of their income from the public treasury, the Industrial Home School and
reformatories nearly 90 percent, children’s charities 65.5 percent, and tem-
porary homes over 70 percent. Amos Warner, his two successors and leading
citizens believed private funds and public supervision a wiser arrangement;
at least blanket subsidies to private institutions should cease and a central
board of charities should set the standards for admitting applicants to all
institutions and allot any public money on a basis of a certain sum per
inmate. The outcome supposedly would be that only the deserving would receive
institutional care. Similar standards for outdoor relief would end the waste
of money and effort on imposters, paupers who drifted into the District from
states which ought to support them, and people whose moral shortcomings left
them beyond hope of redemption. At a time when well-to-do Virginians facetiously
but with some truth called the District “Virginia’s poorhouse,” the argument
for introducing rigid rules denying help to nonresidents had considerable force.

(See Table III).
It was not shortage of funds that inspired the campaigns for efficiency and economy. Although every penny saved by intelligent management naturally meant more money for desirable objectives, stretching dollars in order to widen the reach of philanthropy was scarcely a consideration at all. Year after year the citizens' relief committee limited the amount allotted to any one family to about $2 and came out every spring with an unexpended surplus of funds, in some years as large as the total spent for relief. But the committee felt to spend more levishly would simply be to encourage pauperism.22

In 1897 the committee secretary, a man trained in the new profession of social work, asserted that a large permanent relief fund would be dangerous once the poor, particularly indigent colored people, got wind of its existence. "You go to the house and see absolute destitution. The money is there for relief purposes and has to be granted. By having such a fund you take all the backbone out of these people." When asked whether they would not starve if not given help, he replied they would then go to work.22

Herbert Lewis who became Superintendent of Charities in 1897 took a slightly different position. He opposed the subsidy system because it fosters sentimentality and permitted private agencies to devote themselves exclusively to "the hopeful, promising and pleasant, leaving without sufficient consideration the idiotic, defective and crippled for whose care it is increasingly difficult to procure sufficient funds." At the same time he put his finger on the crucial weakness of Washington's charities: the almost
complete exclusion of colored children from institutions which provided
good care for white children. While he was unable to alter that, he
succeeded in substituting the so-called District supply system for the old
arrangement of turning over lump sums of public money to charitable institu-
tions. After 1897 payments were in goods. In 1900 after a long investi-
gation of local procedures, Congress dropped a half dozen sectarian institutions
from the list of the publicly subsidized, and a greater victory for the
proponents of efficiency and centralized control of expenditures, created
a Board of Charities. The Board was to establish uniform rules for organi-
izations which received any public money. By 1901 professionally trained
social workers in charge of the Associated Charities' ten branch offices, and
a new era of professionalism in welfare work was dawning in Washington.

Throughout the eighties and nineties the theories of professionals and
laymen had coincided closely. But laymen found theory hard to put consistently
into practice. In the mid-eighties three leading figures on the citizens
relief committee, Reginald Fendall, R. Ross Perry and Simon Wolf, reported
That some have been relieved who were not worthy of relief, in one
sense, is probable. Abstractly considered, a man or woman who will not
work ought to starve or freeze, but it will not do to enforce this
abstract proposition. That such ought to be forced to work is evident,
but until the law empowers us to enforce this work we must not let them
starve or freeze. It hurts the community to have such deaths in our
midst. The man who can comfortably eat a hearty dinner when he knows
that another man is starving near him, and yet does nothing to relieve
him, is at heart a murderer. Such men do not make good citizens, nor are

23 Comrs Rpt, 1897, p. 280, Ser 3652.
24 Comrs Rpts, 1897, p. 267, Ser 3652, 1899, pp. 285, 200, Ser 3930,
1900, p. 85, Ser 4116; Ch Hrgs, pp. 1-2, 13, 21, 332, 1594; Anl Rpts B of Tr,
1897, p. 27, 1901, p. 16.
they safe guides to follow. . . . But even should these chronic cases be left to their fate, what shall be done with their wives and children? . . . We must help them. There is no other way out of it. By so doing we doubtless increase poverty, but by refusing to do so we hurt ourselves, our community, our nation.

The sanitary officer of the police force shared that view. Irrespective of abstract principles, he felt obliged to provide for non-residents who arrived in Washington sick "without a penny in their pockets. . . . It would be inhuman to turn them away." In defiance of the tentative congressional stand that these people were no responsibility of the District, Officer Frank hospitalized sick and helpless strangers along with local cases, all told 3900 persons in 1896 alone. Many private citizens doubtless responded similarly when confronted with human misery. Charles Glover who repeatedly served on the citizens' relief committee and presumably subscribed to its doctrines unhesitatingly gave what the colored press described as "large sums" to his butler to distribute to the poor daily during a blizzard in 1899.

Furthermore, a group of hard-headed business men, perceiving that unwholesome living conditions might contribute to human depravity, organized in 1897 the Sanitary Improvement Company to build decent inexpensive houses which poor families could afford to rent. Enlightened self-interest, not charity in its restricted sense, gave rise to the plan, since its sponsors in the Board of Trade, the citizens relief committee, and the newer Civic Center were primarily concerned with combating the high overall death rate that had given the city a bad name. Yet implicit in the scheme was the idea that the

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Their primary purpose was to lower the city's disgracefully high death rate by providing the moral weaknesses of the poor might not be solely responsible for the disease and crime that flourished in Washington's noisome alleys. The project was a business proposition; stockholders were to receive 5 percent on their investment. By this autumn of 1898 the company had erected eight small double houses (each of four rooms) equipped with a bath, gas, hot and cold water, a range and a cellar, all renting at from $9 to $12.50 a month. A month's rent was to be remitted to every tenant who kept his flat in good repair for a year.

Three years later the company reported it had 162 dwellings occupied by working-men's families, a large part of them Negro. Tenants appeared to observe company rules, repairs were kept to a minimum, and company assets had risen to nearly $200,000. As a practical venture in instilling habits of cleanliness, thrift, and industry the enterprise could be labelled a success. The results, however, were less astounding than they at first seemed inasmuch as the original plan of transplanting alley-dwellers into the new houses had quickly given way to renting to "the better class of wage-earners" in the belief that "in work of this character it is always best to begin at the top." 27

"Character-building" organizations, as a later generation would call the YMCA and the Women's Christian Association, were never regarded as full-fledged charities, although the WCA, in devoting itself to helping women adjust themselves to life in a strange city, was sometimes accused of acting as a relief agency. During the 1880's both associations lost much of their one-time religious character. The YMCA gradually relegated Bible classes and prayer meetings to a secondary place and built up its membership by emphasizing sociability and the opportunity to enjoy athletics in the gymnasium of its new building on New York Avenue. In 1884, when a group of women organized the Young Women's Association, the managers followed the same general course.
insofar as the lack of a gymnasium permitted. 28

The charity organization movement in the latter part of the 19th century was a phenomenon common to rapidly growing cities in western Europe and the United States. Indeed interest in philanthropy might be called a by-product of urbanization. London and Berlin set the example which others caught up with, the challenge, in the 1880s and American cities followed. Washington slightly later than many others. While so strong in Washington, despite one of the humanitarianism that Washingtonians evinced and the limitations they imposed upon it were by no means unique, its universality among well-to-do permanent residents was exceptional. Call it enlightened self-interest or exaggerated civic pride in outshining other cities, the vigor with which white people on the upper social levels threw themselves into resolving the problems of poverty and want in the community was nevertheless a distinctive feature of Washington's life of the day.
CHAPTER XV

COLORED WASHINGTON, 1878-1901

For Negroes the satisfactions of life in the District diminished steadily after 1878. Relations between white and colored people worsened slowly until such tolerant friendliness as had survived the seventies virtually disappeared. White citizens succeeded in forgetting that Negro leaders had formerly commanded respect and, by their behavior, had encouraged both races to believe in the possibility of building an intelligent bi-racial community. The white press, during the 1880's increasingly critical of Negroes' "shiftlessness" and the high rate of crime among them, gradually reduced other news about colored people to an occasional facetious comment on a colored social gathering. "Hesitation or disgust blotted out compassion for the great mass of blacks," while "White people's interest in the careers of gifted Negroes became so condescending as to be insulting, the more so as the condescension was often unconscious." By the mid-nineties a reader of the white newspapers might have supposed Washington had no colored community, let alone three separate Negro communities. White people, in short, in the course of the twenty-odd years resolved the problem of race relations by tacitly denying its existence.

Concurrent with the loss of recognition from whites was a progressive loss of cohesiveness within each of the Negro communities and a widening of the gulf between the upper class group composed of people of predominantly white blood and the lower class black. Except as seen in all Negroes search for "whiteness"—the ability to pass unnoticed in the crowd, the power to avoid humiliation and abuse," 1 a community in the sense of a group of

1 Pauli Murray, Proud Shoes, the Story of an American Family, p.
people united by common aspirations and cultural identity had ceased to exist well before 1876. The biological accident of pigmentation, so far from supplying a basis of group accord, created growing resentments which colored people directed at each other more bitterly than at whites. By the end of the 1880s Negroes in the District were adhering to the social pattern common in the deep South: conflict within the caste and compliance with or carefully concealed hostility toward the white group outside. But Washington Negroes at the end of the Civil War had shown signs of escaping from entrapment in that mold of behavior. During the late sixties and early seventies educated intelligent colored men in the District, without attempting to halt the swift growth of elaborate class differentiations, strove to prevent a destructive divisiveness and to develop mutual helpfulness and mutual respect within a single enlarged Negro community; for a time they had seemed to make headway. The tragedy of the last decades of the century was the withering of the earlier promise as the men who had worked to make Washington a center of American Negro civilization in its highest form, a city where all Negroes might live in dignity, abandoned the struggle.

The discouragements besetting the District's colored people undoubtedly contributed to the decline of public spirit among them. Indeed the basic cause may have been the growing racism of whites. But cause

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and effect were intertwined. As time went on, the failure of the bulk of the city's black population to evince any sense of responsibility disillusioned whites who had once held high hopes for the race. That disillusionment fed racial discrimination and undermined Negroes' determination to help themselves. The result was a vicious spiral. Whites concluded that most Negroes would never make good citizens and Negroes, feeling themselves perpetually shoved by prejudice further into a corner, ceased to stand up for each other and let the fight degenerate into one of each man for himself. The exceptions were too few to alter the large picture.

Changing Legal Status

For upper class Negroes civil rights were the key to progress.

The nibbling away at those rights began early in the Hayes' administration. Colored men in the District, though disturbed over the President's conciliation of the Southern Bourbons and though uneasy over their own loss of the franchise, still counted on the local anti-discrimination laws for protection: the municipal ordinances of 1869 and 1870 were still in force within the limits of Washington City, the territorial civil rights acts still applied to Georgetown and county as well as to Washington, and the federal act of 1875 was added insurance. After 1878 violations occurred with mounting frequency, but for the next two or three years the incidents were apparently trivial or too skillfully cloaked to lead to court action.

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file complaints against Negro barbers who refused to serve other colored men. Two years later the editor was no longer sure of the wisdom of those tactics. "A respectable colored lady or gentleman, unless it happens to be a man like Frederick Douglass, John F. Cook, or Register Bruce [former United States Senator from Mississippi] is not readily accommodated, if at all, in the eating establishments, no matter how genteel he may be in appearance or in manners." The result was "more or less friction between the keepers of these saloons and a class of our citizens rapidly growing in wealth and intelligence." Still Washington Negroes relied upon patience to destroy prejudice. But in the summer of 1883 a visiting Negro from Connecticut, later described as a "professional plaintiff," chose to sue a Washington restaurant owner under the criminal section of the federal Civil Rights act. Newspapers throughout the country discussed the case, partly because it was only the second suit to be brought under the act of 1875, partly because the argument for the defense had an ominous logic: a government which sanctioned separate colored schools could not reasonably require a restaurant proprietor to seat boisterous unwelcome Negroes in a dining-room with whites; he had offered to serve the colored man in the pantry. The judge reviewed all earlier decisions in local civil rights cases, noted that several verdicts had been adverse to the plaintiffs, but in this case found against the defendant and fined him $500.4

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3 Peoples Advocate, 5 Jul, 15, 29 Nov 79, 10 Jul 80, 6 Aug 81 (hereafter cited as Advocate).
4 Ibid., 25 Aug 83; Dec. 1 Aug, 8 Sep 83; May 7, 13, 16, 18, 24 Aug 83. As the colored newspaper itself declared in 1884, and the B&G from 1882 onward declared in practically
It was at best a Pyrrhic victory. It strengthened white animosities and inspired pronouncements that Judge Mills' interpretation of the law would force restaurant owners either to accept an exclusively black clientele, or see their businesses ruined, or both. Negroes native to the District found that the ironic reward for their past forbearance was a repeated statement citing their eight-year failure to sue under the federal law as proof that the color line was unobjectionable to them. Two months after the Mills decision the United States Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights act unconstitutional in the states. Mass meetings of colored men in Washington discussed desperately what they could do.

Although the Court held the act still binding in the District of Columbia and all United States territories, educated Negroes were angry and the ignorant were badly frightened, expecting to see the whipping post brought back any moment. The most optimistic view was that the Court would in time recant and in the meantime District laws would suffice. But no one favoring racial legal equality pretended that the decision was not a blow.

During the next two decades local men filed a dozen or more suits, some of which were dismissed, others won. A Negro lawyer won a case by proving that a lunch room proprietor who had not posted a price list had overcharged him outrageously by demanding 50 cents for three eggs, some biscuits and a cup of coffee. Bar rooms generally catered to colored customers, but lunch rooms and "ice cream parlors" were likely to exclude

5 Ster, 17, 23, 26 Oct 83; Chronicle, 21 Oct 83; Sentinel, 3 Nov 83; Cleveland Leader, 23, 26 Oct, 28 Nov 83.
them, a source of particular irritation to "genteel" Negroes. Yet the
"genteel" clearly indicated their readiness to have blacks denied service.

Petitions submitted to Congress in 1886 asked for stronger local laws
and their extension to areas not covered in the municipal and territorial
acts, but sentiment in Congress was no longer markedly pro-Negro, and new
laws seemed unlikely to improve white tempers. Congress dismissed all
proposals for racial legislation, bills forbidding miscegenation, on the
one hand, and, on the other, those demanding a change in the District
Medical Society's discriminatory rulings. In the fall of 1900 a suit
against the owner of the Opera House for refusing to let a colored man
occupy the orchestra seat he had paid for netted the plaintiff damages of
one cent. 7

Nor were Negroes guiltless. A number of Negro-owned barber shops
and some hotels and restaurants run by colored men would not accept Negro
customers. For example, a circular issued in 1886 announced: "Preston's
Pension Office barber shop, first class in every particular. Devoted
Strictly to White Trade. The rumor that this shop has been serving any
Colored Trade is false in every particular, and was started only through
the jealousy and spite of one man." The white press was not slow to call
attention to such incidents. "The refusal is based, of course," remarked
the Star, "not on color prejudice, but on the business consideration that
the best paying class of customers can be retained only by excluding those

7 Star, 8, 22 Nov 81, 1 Feb, 2, 11 Nov, 10 Dec 87, 16 Feb 88; Rec,
l7c, 15, 25 Feb 82, pp. 1k08-10, 13 Mar 82, p. 1839; ptns, Sh9A-H12, 15 Jan
92mary 86; Bee, 23 Feb, 31 Jul, 18 Jul 84, 7, 16 Oct 86, 30 Jul, 27 Aug,
21 Dec 87, 17 Nov, 2 Jun 89, 15 Dec 91, 25 Jun, 3 Sep 98, 18, 25 Nov 2,
9, 16 Dec 99, 24 Nov 00, 18 Rpt 1050, 526, 15, 22 Jul 92, Ser 2015.
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Chance, moreover, played into the hands of segregationists. In
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Washington's old well-established colored families like the Cocks
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88 Ster, 12 Dec 87; Bee, 21 Jul 88.
9 Colored American, 9 Apr 98; Bee, 5 Nov 87, 16, 23 Nov 89, 10 May
19, 19 Sep, 21 Nov 91, 27 Aug, 21 Dec 98, 23 Feb 01; August Annes, "Booke.
t Field and the Negro Press," Journal of Negro History, XLIV, No 2 (Jan 54), 196-201.
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After the founding of the short-lived Afro-American League in 1890, a Washington branch sent delegates to its national conventions, but disunity, lack of a positive program to combat racism, and, indeed, the magnitude of the problem combined to strip the organization of effectiveness. Its successor, the Afro-American Council, which came into being in 1898 was largely controlled by Booker T. Washington whose seeming subservience to whites alienated Negro militants in the capital. As Jim Crow laws began to multiply in the southern states, Negroes in the District realized they were far better off than most of their race, but at the same time they saw that the local anti-discrimination laws had come to be as honored in the breach as in the observance.

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8 Star, 12 Dec 87; Bee, 21 Jul 88.
Trade: James T. Wormley was a charter member, and three other Negroes were elected in the mid-1890's. Robert Terrell, Dr. Charles Purvis, Washington's leading colored physician, and George F. Cook, Superintendent of the colored schools.11

Disregard of civil rights as a rule affected only upper class Negroes, but the workings of the criminal law touched the lives of countless blacks living on a bare subsistence level. Of those some were undoubtedly vicious; and some, though vaguely well-intentioned, took to thieving, drunkenness and disorderliness as the easiest way to blunder through a world that offered them at best very little. Statistics testified to the amorality of a considerable segment of the Negro population; in a community where only one person in three was colored the number of Negro arrests exceeded the number of white every year after 1889. The increase in Negro arrests, to be sure, admits of more than one explanation; people as ignorant of their rights as of their obligations were in some measure at the mercy of the police. The newspapers, the colored press in the van, repeatedly carried stories of police brutality. The Washington Bee asserted that policemen, particularly the Irishmen on the force, frequently clubbed Negroes savagely when arresting them and, when a crime

11 Advocate, 6 Sep 83; Star, 1 Feb 87; Edward Ingle, The Negro in the District of Columbia, in Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 11th Series, nos. III and IV (Mar-Apr 93) pp. 50-51, 90 (hereafter cited as Ingle, The Negro in D.C.); Coroner's Maps in Comrs Rpts, 1862, p. 505; Ser 2163, 1890, p. 626; Ser 2418 and 1900, p. 826; Ser 1513; Mary Church Terrell, A Colored Woman in a White World, pp. 113-19; membership lists in Apr Rpts B of Tr, 1897-1898, 1899; Colored American, 26 Mar 98; Bee, 29 Sep, 15 Oct 98, 7 Apr 00.
occurred, the dark-skinned man was always the first suspect. Officers "took delight in arresting every little colored boy they see on the street, who may be doing something not at all offensive, and allow the white boys to do what they please." The individual prejudice of police court justices was likely then to determine the severity of the sentences imposed. Perhaps the number of Negroes charged with misdemeanors and felonies was as much an index of white men's aversion to colored as a reflection of Negroes' criminal tendencies. William G. Chase, editor of the Bee, as a boy having seen his father shot down in cold blood and his white assailant go unpunished, was vitriolic about Washington police methods. But more temperate men than he believed that racial equality before the law had largely disappeared by the end of the century.

Political Status

The decline of Negroes' legal position in the District followed upon the loss of Negro political power in the states and consequent loss of influence in national political parties. Nevertheless political preferment for colored men in Washington during the 1880's and 1890's fell off surprisingly little. After 1880 a Negro rarely received a post of any importance in the federal government, and after President Garfield and President Arthur failed them, colored men ceased to talk of appointments to the Cabinet, but until the depression of the nineties began, Negroes held about as

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12 Star, 15 Mar 82, 23 May 83, 27 Oct 87; 1 Jan 97; Chronicle, 10 Mar 95, 7 Jun 96; Sentinel, 15 Oct 92, 25 Nov 93; Bee, 22 Aug, 17 Oct 85, 6 Aug 87, 21 Jul 88, 22 Aug, 26 Dec 91, 8 Jan, 3 Sep 96, 4 Feb, 15 Apr, 12 Aug, 1 Nov 99, 26 May 00; Ingle, The Negro in D.C., pp. 100-101; Simmons, Men of Mark, pp. 118-19. See also chapin, American Court Storie, p 36.
many minor clerkships and custodial jobs as they had formerly. Frederick Douglass, though shorn of some of the one-time dignities of the Marshal of the District, kept that post through President Hayes' administration, while the lucrative position of Recorder of Deeds and the only-lesse-sought-after office of Register of Wills continued to go to Negroes. In 1881, moreover, the President appointed ex-Senator Bruce of Mississippi Register of the Treasury, a place that would continue to be filled by a Negro for the next thirty-two years. Both before and after the Civil Service act of 1883 introduced competitive examinations, colored office-holders feared for their posts when a new administration took over, but even the shake-up anticipated during Grover Cleveland's first term did not cut the number of Negroes on the federal payroll; on the contrary, scrupulous fairness in grading examinations enabled more Negroes than ever before to enter government service. 12a In 1891 out of 23,144 federal employees in Washington, nearly 2,400 were colored; they held 337 of the 6120 jobs in the Department of the Interior and, though most of them were unskilled or custodial, 127 ranked as copyists', "transcribers'", clerks' or more responsible positions.

Fewer than a third of the incumbents were District citizens when appointed, but local Negroes in a voteless community had little reason to expect more for themselves even from the Republican party which derived its numerical strength in the District from its Negro members. Fortunately, once appointed, Negroes rarely encountered overt hostility from fellow white employees.

The Negro third of the local population got far less consideration from the District commissioners. In 1879 one appointment out of fifty to the police force was colored, none of twenty to the fire department. Later policy gave Negroes some of the jobs but never established a stable ratio. Outside the school system with its colored superintendent and 285 colored teachers, in 1891 Negroes held only

12a Lawrence John Wesley Hayes, The Negro Federal Government Worker, 1883-1941, A Study of His Classification Status in the District of Columbia, p. 22 (hereafter cited as Hayes, Negro Federal Govt Worker); Cleveland Leader, 7 Nov 84; Nation, XC VII, 7 Aug 13, p. 114.
25 positions above the rank of messenger and day laborer.\textsuperscript{13}

Cleveland's second administration, troubled as it was by country-wide
unemployment, saw a drop in Negro preference, and Republican prosperity,
launched with the election of William McKinley, failed to restore the
earlier proportion in spite of the liberal attitude in the Treasury Depart-
ment under Secretary Lyman Gage and Assistant Secretary Frank A. Vanderlip.

In other departments, the falling off, if less pronounced than white men
expected, was at once a bitter disappointment to Negroes and a gloomily
foreseen development in keeping with the course of events in other areas
of American life. Perhaps the most galling single grievance was the series
of appointments by the new President of Howard University made between 1897
and 1900; Rankin filled two out of every three vacancies with white people.

The collapse of earlier hopes for political and legal equality might
have distressed Negroes less had their economic opportunities widened,
consistently. With a colored population growing from the 57,000 of 1879 to
90,000 in twenty years, the District seemingly should have furnished abun-
dant openings for Negroes trained in the professions and ready to serve
their own people. Washington in the 1890's had in fact a large corps of
professional non—several hundred colored teachers, about one hundred

\textsuperscript{13} Sentinel, 10 Apr 80; Advocate, 3 Dec 81; Bee, 30 Dec 82, 13 Jan,
17 Feb, 7 Mar, 21 Apr 83, 11 Dec 83, 29 Jan, 27 Jun 87, 19 Oct 89, 15
Feb, 22 Mar, 1 Oct, 22 Nov 90, 23, 30 May, 19 Sep, 31 Oct 91; Star, 25, 29
Jan 92, 21 Mar 93, 9 May 93, 2 Feb 97; Cleveland Leader, 7 Nov 88; Ingle,
Negro in D.C., pp. 65-69.

\textsuperscript{14} Rot See/Int. 1895, p. 721; Ser 3368, Dec 21 Aug 95, 16 Aug, 5
Jun, 6 Oct 85, 15 Jan, 7 May, 3 Sep, 8 Oct 98, 10 Jun, 18, 19, 26 Aug 99,
13 Jan 1, 18 Aug 03.
trade and could rarely cater successfully to both races. The career of John A. Gray, a restaurant owner, illustrated some of the hazards. "He kept one of the first houses in the city," reported the Bee. "He first opened it for white people and was having a success until the Negroes kept clamoring for a respectable place to go. He opened his house to the high-toned colored people and in less than a year they broke him up." Undeterred by the refusal of white merchants to employ Negro help, colored families persisted in trading at white shops. Perhaps credit was easier there or the selection of goods better, but a pettier motive, some Negroes believed, was more basic: in the city's colored business world the "great impediment has been jealousy and a dislike to see each other succeed."

"Caterers" were one of the few groups who could safely avoid the complications of seeking mixed or purely colored patronage, for the business, unique to Washington, depended solely upon a white clientele.

Unlike the modern term, catering in the capital of the 1880's and 1890's meant delivering hot meals twice a day to people living in rented rooms and boarding houses who wished to escape from the restaurant or dismal boarding-house table by breakfasting and dining in their rooms. The best caterers charged from $25 to $30 a month per person. Those with fast teams of horses could deliver well-cooked dishes in the specially constructed double-racked tin containers before the food cooled. A skillful caterer with a hundred clients could clear a considerable sum in a year despite the decline of
his business in the months between congressional sessions. Since the enterprise, however profitable, smacked of menial service, white men rarely competed.\textsuperscript{18}

A few Negroes, on the other hand, made money in fields considered wholly dignified, notably real estate, building, and selling life insurance or policies in benefit and relief associations. James Wornley, owner of the famous Wornley House, left an estate of over $100,000 in 1884; his sons chose to put the family fortune into the construction business. Negroes who had owned local real estate before the war and had hung on to it through the disasters of the Board of Public Works era and the Freedmen's Bank failure were likely to be very well off indeed. District Tax Collector John F. Cook, himself said to be the largest taxpayer of his race, reported in 1887 two local colored men worth $100,000, two worth $75,000, a flour merchant worth $50,000, and some forty men with property valued at a figure between $10,000 and $25,000.\textsuperscript{19}

While the upper ranks of Negro society suffered from the lack of the racial solidarity which might have strengthened Negro enterprises, the lower class Negro was directly affected by the increasing hostility of white workingmen and the readiness of labor organizations to bar him from membership. The situation in Washington than in Southern cities, worsened steadily in the District of Columbia. An analysis of 1881 attributed the troubles of colored workmen in Philadelphia to foreign immigrants: "Southern

\textsuperscript{18} Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan, 7 Apr 83.

\textsuperscript{19} Bee, 6 Jan, 11 Jun, 22 Oct 87, 8 Sep, 17 Nov 88, 12 Jan 89, 12 Jul 90; Star, 23 Oct 87, 18 Apr 1926; Simmons, Man of Mark, pp. 249-50; Norman, remedy and workmen, Negroes Businessman, p. 91.
cities were built by colored mechanical labor. In this city twenty years before the late war, it was no unusual thing to find a majority of colored mechanics engaged in all the leading trades. . . . But Irish emigration was destined to strike a blow at the colored mechanic, from which it will take years for him to recover." Negroes in Washington looked upon Irishmen as enemies, but foreign immigrants were too few in the last decades of the century to be a determining factor in the local labor market. In the early eighties the local carpenters' union drew no official color line and one of the two mechanics unions had mixed membership, but white mechanics made life for their colored fellows miserable in a dozen minor ways. By refusing to accept colored apprentices, the unions gradually excluded all Negroes. A colored lodge of the Knights of Labor, organized in 1881 as the Thad Stevens Assembly, fell apart even before the Haymarket tragedy in Chicago two years later undermined the national brotherhood. In 1886 a Negro waiters' union appeared, but its ineffectualness was painfully obvious. Within a decade colored men found that occupations "which by common consent were regarded as belonging to them such as barbers, waiters and the like are now being monopolized by the whites." Even in domestic service white women at higher wages were replacing Negroes. Booker T. Washington's exhortations from Alabama that Negroes should think less about political equality and more about acquiring competence as workers fell on sterile soil in the District. Men here agreed that economic independence was important to the race but thought it unattainable by hard work alone. 20
Negro newcomers such as Frederick Douglass, Blanche K. Bruce and Dr. Augusta T. could enjoy some rights not specifically protected by law. Good manners, professional status and money should make them acceptable residents of any neighborhood provided they did not obtrude themselves socially upon white people. But cultivated Negroes, even those who looked almost white, discovered in the 1880's that each passing year made it harder for them to purchase or rent comfortable houses without paying exorbitant prices; by the 1890's, they could rarely buy at all in a conveniently located orderly neighborhood. Mary Church Terrell tells of endless humiliations in the course of her house-hunt. Yet her husband was a cum laude graduate of Harvard, a respected lawyer and after 1897 a member of the Board of Trade, and she herself was a graduate of Oberlin and one of two women before 1900 to be appointed to the School Board. In the seventies and early eighties, rising rentals hastened the exodus of Negro householders who had lived along 16th street two or three blocks above Lafayette Square and out beyond Scott Circle. As the real estate boom in Northwest Washington gained momentum, colored people moved farther from the center of the city. Whether sheer economics or, as rumor had it, combinations of real estate agents kept respectable Negroes from moving into desirable localities, the result was the same. It did not mean that clear-cut solid black belts arose outside of which Negroes could not find housing; on the contrary, some intersprinkling of white and Negro dwellings continued and still exists in mid-20th century. But by 1900 upper class Negroes perceived that the barrier of caste which seemingly had weakened in the late 1860's was as strong as ever. The one notable exception lay in the Board of...
Educational Status and the Colored Schools

To combat the discriminatory attitudes of trade unions, "the curse of which has more than any other, fettered the energies of the colored people," and to make all civil rights laws effective, non-segregated schools seemed to some Negroes the first essential; only early association of the races would induce a "more generous spirit" in white men. Unfortunately for the proponents of mixed schools, the opposition of other Negroes strengthened as the colored school system expanded and the number of teaching posts grew. The existence of a colored high school and the opening of the Miner Normal School for Negroes in 1872, a year before a white high school was established, undercut the integrationists' contention that the white schools invariably received a disproportionate share of the annual budget and provided a quality of education far superior to anything available in the colored schools. The question came to the fore in 1881 and 1882 when the school trustees were subjected to sharp criticism for allowing two or three very light colored children to attend white schools. Negro advocates of separate systems insisted that more money and better qualified Negro trustees less prone to toady to whites and less ready to show favoritism would correct every shortcoming in the colored schools. 21 The Star, in 1882 no doubt voicing the opinion of most of its readers, declared the question of school integration "purely sentimental;" there is a small sprinkling of colored children in the white schools, but for the most part the colored people prefer to have their separate school organization with a superintendent and teachers of their own.
race; just as they prefer to maintain their own distinctive organizations and benevolent and social associations. The colored schools get their full share of school moneys; and in proportion to numbers are supplied with better school accommodations than the whites. For various reasons the colored children get on better in schools of their own. One is that they are spared the disadvantageous competition with white children of their own age who have had greater opportunities at home and elsewhere for advancement in their studies. Again were the schools to be merged it would necessarily throw 165 colored teachers out of employment, as it could not be expected that the white school population of the District—outnumbering the colored about two to one—should give up their teachers to make room for colored teachers.

Under the present system the schools of Washington, both white and colored, are prospering in a way to give them a national reputation as among the best in the country. Better let well enough alone.

Congress remained immune to the pleas of integrationists and after 1883 most of their complaints subsided about injustice in the distribution of school moneys.

Conscientious members of the school board could not fail to realize that money alone could not make the colored schools equal to the white; too many colored children, as the Star noted, came from homes without the necessary background. The comparative figures on adults unable to write suggest the handicap under which the children of hundreds of Negro parents labored:

22 Star, 22 Feb 82.


24 Star, 11 Sep 81, 15, 18 Mar, 29, 30 Sep, 25 Oct 82; Bee, 21 Jul 83, 17 May 82.
Illiteracy of Persons 21 Years of Age and Over in the District of Columbia

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<th>1880</th>
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<td>5.4</td>
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<td>Colored</td>
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From the mid-1880's onward one group of colored people argued that vocational training was a wiser goal for the Negro schools than a more literary education; a curriculum like that of the white schools should wait until the economic level of the average colored family had risen enough to enable Negro children to benefit from purely academic courses. In the 1890's Booker T. Washington, by then head of the Tuskegee Institute, began to popularize that thesis among white people who, apparently oblivious of its Marxist connotations, saw in it an answer to the problem of creating a permanent docile working class. In Washington contrary-minded Negroes, although believing the plan equivalent to giving up the fight for racial equality and accepting a position of inferiority for decades to come, gradually abandoned the campaign for integrated schools. After 1900 that issue dropped out of sight for nearly two generations.

Meanwhile Negroes who were determined to develop an independent school system paralleling the white in every particular watched every move of the school board, particularly the colored members. Hypersensitive as most colored men were to any possible slight, they criticized school administration so constantly that Admiral Baird, president of the board of trustees...

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in 1899, resigned in protest at Negroes who were "never satisfied." The fact was undeniable that salaries were nearly 10 percent lower and teaching loads slightly heavier in the colored than in the white schools. At an annual salary of $750 a colored high school teacher earned $74.54 less than his white counterpart, and the differential for grammar and primary grade teachers was as great or greater. In 1880 white classes averaged 52.2 children to a teacher and the colored averaged 51; in 1890 the ratio stood at 40.9 and 46.7 respectively and in 1900 at 37.1 and 36.5. Otherwise the two systems ran generally parallel. The white teaching staff of 300 in 1880 grew to 530 in 1890 and to 857 in 1900, while the colored expanded from 158 to 265 and by 1900 to 426. The District had far too few schoolrooms, especially for the primary grades in which most children had to get all the schooling they would ever have, but half-day sessions at the end of the century were more common in the white than in the colored schools. Furthermore, in spite of Negro complaints about favoritism in teaching appointments and incompetence on the part of George F. Cook, the colored school superintendent of thirty years' experience, the Negro schools made a good showing. Although some evidence pointed to lower standards in the colored grade schools than in the white, in examinations given all high school students in 1899, the colored high school scored higher than either the Eastern or the Western white high schools. But when Congress, disturbed by the barrage of criticism of the District's schools, reorganized the entire...
administrative scheme by replacing the board of trustees with a seven-member Board of Education empowered to appoint a single superintendent for all the schools, most Negroes were well pleased. They evidently believed their schools would gain more in efficiency than they lost in prestige by having a white man put above the colored assistant superintendent.

Unhappily, however good the education available to Negro children, relatively few of them stayed in school beyond the fourth grade, and of those who finished the eighth grade still fewer went on. This was particularly true for boys. "The fact is," remarked the Bee, "there are inducements to keep white children in the white High School... Our colored citizens should see to it that some effort be made to keep their boys in the schools." Quite apart from their poverty, the seeming futility of acquiring more than an acquaintance with the three r's deterred a great many Negro families from making the effort. They saw well-educated girls, barred from suitable occupations by an inflexible caste system, drift into the life of the demi-monde and Negro college graduates forced for want of something better to take jobs as waiters and hotel bell boys.

The Class Structure

Long before it became obvious that public schooling was unlikely...
to elevate greatly the general level of Negro society, Washington's Negro aristocrats had begun to detach themselves as completely as possible from the Negro rank and file; for their own reassurance they must sharpen Negro class distinctions whether or no white people recognized them. In other cities also educated colored men defended the thesis that the social equality of all Negroes was a concept destructive to racial progress. In Washington, the withdrawal of the elite, perceptible in the 1870's but increasingly noticeable thereafter, created long-enduring hostility. In 1880 a letter to the Advocate declared Frederick Douglass, John F. Cook and one or two others to whom the community had once looked for leadership "have shown conclusively how little they care whether other colored men sink, as long as they swim." William Chase of the Bee, not himself one of Washington's "first families" but occupying a place in the upper brackets of the rank just below, alternately defended the aloofness of the "exclusive set" and attacked it for a snobbery which he believed originated in the determination of the Lotus Club after 1863 to force contrabands to keep to themselves. Later societies undertook to heighten that snobbery. "The Monday Night Literary is a cast organization," wrote Chase. "There is more intelligence excluded than there is in the association. . .there are few holding clerkships who belong to the Monday Night Literary. Messengers, watchmen and laborers are excluded." Members had ceased to give New Year's Day receptions because they did not want to meet "objectionable upstarts." The Negro press repeatedly insisted "There is more discrimination among the colored people than there is among the white against the colored." A petition of 1896 complained to Congress that only daughters of "the favored
few" were admitted to the colored normal school. "The would-be leaders
John M. Langston excepted, have taken no interest in the general
welfare of the masses of our people; political office by all means, after
that, their wish is total exclusion from their race and to be white."30
Yet most of that small group composing the highest circle of Negro society
were indeed nearly white, and many of them had personal distinction as
scholars, office-holders and professional men. They were certainly cul-
turally closer to the white community than to the lower class Negro. In
displaying an ungenerous attitude toward their inferiors, they were behaving
little differently from most self-made white men who reached positions of
eminence in the face of enormous obstacles.31
In 1883 the Sentinel, Washington's German-American newspaper edited
by a former abolitionist, presented the tolerant white man's view of the
Negro's position:

The colored people of Washington enjoy all the social and poli-
tical rights that law can give them, without protest and without
annoyance. The public conveyances are open to them, and the theatres,
the jury box, the spoils of party power are theirs. Many of these
men are wealthy...

But the color line is rigidly drawn in what is known as society.
Wealth, learning, official place, give no colored family the right
or privilege of entering the best or the commonest white society on
terms of equality or endurance. In this respect the colored race
lives as separate and exclusive a life as in the days of slavery,

30 Advocate, 4 Dec 80; Star, 11 May 80; Dec, 2 Feb 01, 2 Jan, 17, 24,
31 Jul, 18 Sep 86, 1 Jan, 30 Apr 87, 26 Feb, 11 May, 26 Jun 91, 16 Jan 97,
16 Sep 99, 17 Nov 00, 12; 19 Jan, 25 Feb 01; ptn, H511-H7, 2 Jun 96.
31 See cuts accompanying the articles on Washington Negroes in
Simmons, Men of Mark; Richard Bardolph, "The Distinguished Negro in America,
many minor clerkships and custodial jobs as they had formerly. Frederick Douglass, though shorn of some of the one-time dignities of the Marshal of the District, kept that post through President Hayes' administration, while the lucrative position of Recorder of Deeds and the only less sought-after office of Register of Wills continued to go to Negroes. Both before and after the Civil Service act of 1883 introduced competitive examinations, colored office-holders feared for their posts when a new administration took over, but even the shake-up anticipated during Grover Cleveland's first term did not sharply cut the number of Negroes on the federal payroll. In 1891 out of 23,118 federal employees in Washington, nearly 2,400 between 2,500 and 3,000 were colored; they held 337 of the 6,120 jobs in the Department of the Interior and, though most of them were unskilled or custodial, 127 ranked as copyists', "transcribers", clerks' or more responsible positions. Fewer than a third of the incumbents were District citizens when appointed, but local Negroes in a voteless community had little reason to expect more for themselves even from the Republican party which derived its numerical strength in the District from its Negro members. Fortunately, once appointed, Negroes rarely encountered overt hostility from fellow white employees. The Negro third of the local population got far less consideration from the District commissioners. In 1879 one appointment out of fifty to the police force was colored, none of twenty to the fire department. Later policy gave Negroes some of the jobs but never established a stable ratio. Outside the school system with its colored superintendent and 285 colored teachers, in 1891 Negroes held only
and as a drop of African blood was once held to make a man a negro, so now it taints him and makes an immutable barrier against social recognition.

\[\text{Ex-Senator Blanche K. Bruce, Washington's leading Negro, lives in a handsome house that he owns on M street. It is richly furnished.} \]

\[\text{Mrs. Bruce is a handsome woman, with not a suggestion of her race in her face, and whose manner are regarded as the consummation of ease, grace and courtesy. She dresses as richly and handsomely as any woman in the city. In official circles Mr. Bruce is received in courtesy and as a political equal, but there a line is drawn.} \]

Frederick Douglass, the most influential Negro in white men's eyes, was unpopular among his own people: "He is regarded as guilty of the same sins toward the colored men of which he accuses the whites, namely, refusal to recognize them or have personal relations with them."

\[\text{But that was clearly a superficial judgment, for a thousand and an acclimation to Douglass in the Negro press show how not Negro society was divided.} \]

\[\text{Other Negroes considered that exclusive set not good enough for whites and too good for their own race, but the next lower rank was equally disdainful of the class below. The basis of the second stratum was government clerks.} \]

\[\text{"They are well dressed, seem to prosper and are happy. For the great bulk of the colored population—the servants, laborers and the poor—they have sympathy, but have no more social relations than a white family would." Those at the base of the social pyramid "in the main are thriftless, living from hand to mouth; happy if they do nothing, happy if they get a job. Their social instincts are gratified by the organization and maintenance of societies of all sorts, benevolent, patriotic, social and economic. There are nearly one thousand of these organizations, supported almost entirely by the laboring colored people."} \]

\[\text{That portrayal, if fitting the Washington of 1883, was too simple} \]

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32 Sentinal, 22 Dec 83.
white people applauded him, his own people accused him of sycophancy and putting on airs. The New National Era had never taken that line, and the Peoples Advocate, which ceased publication in 1884, pursued it far less than the Bee. The Bee, never wholly consistent in its point-of-view, indulged in more sweeping condemnations of individuals and organizations the longer it ran. Perhaps its publisher found the paper sold better when it concentrated upon scandal and malicious gossip. A comment on a problem affecting the welfare of Washington as a whole was an utmost rarity. Condensation of any Negro was only less unusual. Small wonder that few colored people were ready to expend themselves for others; the reward would be hostility, not gratitude.35

Negro Charities and Self Help

Booker T. Washington, after some months at the Baptist Wayland Seminary in 1878-79, decided that Washington was no place for a Negro who wished to dedicate his life to helping his race; here false standards and selfishness predominated. Among immigrant minorities and among the Jews in the District, a sense of group solidarity produced mutual helpfulness, in spite of internal jealousies. Not so among Negroes. While the pressures of caste which kept the gifted colored man from moving as far upward as his talents would otherwise permit explained this contrast, the result was damaging to every Negro. A Philadelphia journal observed that Congress was naturally disinclined to do anything for Washington’s colored people.

35 Bee, 17 Jul 86, 28 Apr, 15 Dec 86, 8 Jun 89, 17 Nov 00, 23 Mar, 27 Apr 02; Jesse Lawson to Booker T. Washington, 6 May 02, Booker T. Washington mss (L.C.)
since they perennially made themselves a laughing stock:

If there is to be an Emancipation demonstration; if a principal or trustee of the public schools is to be appointed, or if a ball is to be given to entertain the visitors from the states to Presidential inaugural ceremonies, pandemonium at once breaks loose and rival factions begin to clamor for recognition claiming that this one's father was a horse thief, that one doesn't know who his father was, another was not married when he should have been, another is too black, another is too light and therefore does not represent the race, another does not belong to the best families and still another is an interloper who "just dropped from God knows whar and nobody here knows his people is." 36

The minority to whom that characterization did not apply suffered from it as much as did the vulgar and ignorant.

Who of our so called colored representative men asked the Bee in 1887 can point to a single thing of a public character beneficial to the colored people established and fostered by them? To their shame and to the humiliation of the race the record is a blank, and with all our boast about our wealthy and representative colored men the race is dependent upon the charity of whites for that which should be looked after by our "representative colored men." What the negro race wants is less eloquent talk and more practical work. 37

Similar comments recurred throughout the 1890's. "If you talk to our people about an excursion down the river in August, or a cake walk in December, they will listen to you and will no doubt purchase several tickets... There is a large per cent of the white population, in this city, ready and willing to help almost any colored enterprise. The great fault is the colored people will not help themselves." The mutual benefit

37 Philadelphia Odd Fellows Journal quoted in Bee, 23 Feb 01.
38 Bee, 15 Jan 87.
societies in which much of the social life of working class Negroes centered contributed a little to the relief of distress, but most of the funds went for elaborate funerals rather than help for the living. 39

The assertion that well-to-do Negroes never lifted finger for the needy was, of course, an exaggeration. 39a John F. Cook, for years an active member of the citizens' relief committee, was also a trustee of the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children, while a dozen public-spirited Negro women served on the board of manageresses. In 1885 a member of the Berean Baptist Church, after organizing a Church Aid Society, founded in 1885 the Home for Friendless Girls and enlisted the help of Negro churches and

enlisted the help of Negro churches and stores and of some white people. About the same time, two or three Negro women opened a free kindergarten and day nursery for the children of working mothers, and in the 1890's the newly organized Colored Women's League expanded the program. Although Alexander Crummel, rector of St. Lukes Episcopal church, was more concerned with developing character in his people than with their material progress, he raised a large sum of money for the Episcopal Freedmen's Aid Society by sale of copies of one of his speeches. In 1887 the Colored Baptist Home Mission Society was "putting shoes on the feet of the poor, clothing on them, and giving immediate aid," but $95.72 represented the total sum collected in the course of several months from Washington's thirty-five Baptist churches and the members of the society. During the worst of the depression of the nineties Negro volunteers worked with the Associated Charities, and the "Hill Group" on 6th street, moved by the suffering of the poor at the foot of the hill, distributed food and fuel in that neighborhood. Probably a good many relatively well-to-do individuals gave help without working through any organization, just as desperately poor people were found caring for the children of even poorer neighbors.

From a mother-child center opened in 1895 came the Southwest

39 Ibid., 11 Jan, 3 May 90, 21 May 91, 30 May 96, 15, 22 Oct 12 Nov 98, 1 Feb 99.

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\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 11 Jan, 3 May 90, 21 May 91, 30 May 96, 15, 22 Oct, 12 Nov 98, 1 Feb 99.
opened in 1895 came the Southwest Social Settlement. That year Miss Amanda Bowen, assisted by funds from the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, launched the Sojourner Truth Home for Working Girls. Three years later the Colored Women’s League of Washington undertook "Rescue Work" among young women. A study prepared by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1898 listed thirty-eight Negro churches in Washington which supported and eighty-three benevolent and missionary societies, supplied twelve workers in the slums and the jail and spent $1,300 for direct relief of needy families. In 1900 Mrs. Laura Queen of the 19th Street Baptist church started the Stoddard Baptist Home for aged Negroes.

Yet when everything is added together, the record of Negro charities, while not "blank," is distinctly meagre. It was thinner in the 1880’s and 1890’s than in the two preceding decades in spite of the far greater wealth of the upper and middle class Negro communities at the end of the century. The impressively long list of welfare projects was deceptive, for most of the undertakings were small-scale and short-lived unless white people came to the rescue. And the uncooperativeness of well-to-do Negroes chilled the ardor of white philanthropists. Negro pastors and Negro churches which in earlier years had not only provided spiritual leadership but taken an active part in lightening material distress apparently lost sight of both goals as congregations vied with each other in building big costly church.

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Ibid., 16 Sep, 30 Oct 86, 22 Jan, 5 Mar, 11 May 87, 10 Jan, 7 Mar, 21, 22 Dec 89, 25 Feb 99; Cleveland Leader, 29 Feb 84; Advocate, 5 Feb, 20 Nov 81; Isabel Lindsay, "Participation of Negroes in the Establishment of Welfare Services, with special reference to the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia," pp. 121, 129-30, 137-55, 159, 161, 170-73 (ms dissertation, Univ. of Pittsburgh, hereafter cited as Lindsay, "Negro Welfare Services").
illness and for distributing relief, but if Negro distrust of the police interfered with the officers' efficiency, nothing indicated that they failed to act promptly and with humanity. They found Negro families eking out existence by picking spoiled food from garbage cans and dumps. Households in the Negro slums were ridden with illness; in 1891, one report described a one-room shanty in which a dead infant lay five adults and six children stricken with influenza. Four-fifths of the patients at the Freedmen's Hospital were indigent Negroes; of the 17,048 people to whom the District's seven public dispensaries ministered in 1891, over 12,000 were colored. Negroes needing medical service disliked having to deal with the police, but the health department defended the system of having police officers report calls to the physicians of the poor because the arrangement avoided confusion, hastened investigations of complaints and relieved the doctors of "the untidy class." The most conscientious physician could do little more than palliate momentarily the miseries he daily. In twenty years the colored death rate dropped to 28.12
officer noted, was the foulness of the alleys in which thousands of Negroes lived; before new building regulations went into effect in 1895, "the avarice of a certain class of speculators resulted in the erection of a large number of badly constructed and unsanitary tenements in narrow alleys." Later studies would prove alley-dwelling a more important factor than race in fixing the infant mortality rate.¹³

Negro Diversions

Neither poverty nor illness, however, prevented Negroes from enjoying themselves. With a light-heartedness that sober-sided whites called irresponsible, colored families not always able to feed themselves joined in church sociables and the celebrations conducted by their clubs and fraternal societies. A funeral, always an occasion, usually called for lavish spending on carriages and clothes. In summer noisy picnics complete with bands to furnish music took place on Sundays frequently at the "Manor," the John P. Van Ness house and grounds where the Corcoran Gallery stands now; when the proprietor of the beer hall there closed the place in 1887, colored picnickers for a time were allowed to use the Schuetzenverein park. Mutual benefit societies arranged excursions down the Potomac until the steam boat lines, adopting the pretext that every boat was already chartered, refused to sell Negroes tickets. For lower class Negroes the great event of the year was the annual Emancipation Day parade.

¹³ Eleventh U.S. Census, 1890, Population, I, Pt II, 20; Twelfth Census, 1900, Population, Pt II, 22; Comrs Rpts, 1890, pp. 639, 756-57, 815, 847; 1895, pp. 9-13, Ser 339; Bee, 27 Aug 98, 7 Jul 00; Chronicle, 11 Sep 99.
In the upper brackets of Washington's Negro world after the Lotus
Club disappeared, the Monday Night Literary Club included the most
distinguished and intelligent society. Later the Bethel Literary and His-
torical Society, founded in 1851 by Bishop Payne of Metropolitan Methodist
Episcopal church, rather overshadowed the Monday Night Literary. Aus-
terances and elegant ballroom provided lighter entertainment. The Negro
newspapers gave a great deal of space to high class weddings; the list of
presents with the donors' names attached might fill over a column. The
gowns, "a Worth dress of canary silk," or a "crimson velvet entrainee"
were described in the same detail with which white society reporters
wrote of the costumes at White House receptions. Indeed the evidences
of Negro wealth were startling. Beautiful jewelry, handsome clothes, and
well-furnished houses tended by Negro servants were only a part. Every
June the summer exodus began. "Saratoga trunks are being packed for
Newport, Harpers Ferry, Cape May and 'The Fort.'" In 1886, a newspaper
reported: "Mr. Richard S. Locke of Washington who spends his summers at
Nonquitt Beach has sold his beautiful yacht, the Gracie, to Mr. Thomas
Gedney of South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Mr. Locke is the only gentleman
of color that ever owned a yacht at Nonquitt." By and large, the higher
a Negro's social standing, the more exactly his diversions corresponded
to those of white people of similar position.

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48 Advocate, 10 May 79, 12, 26 Mar, 9 Apr, 31 Dec 81; ltr, Francis
Cardozo, Jr. to Booker T. Washington, 8 Aug 02, Booker T. Washington mss
(L.C.); New MtI Era, 25 Jun 74; Bee, 27 Dec 81, 9 Oct 86, 2 Nov 87, 8 Oct
98, 13 Mar 99.

49 Advocate, 5 Jun 30; Bee, 18 Sep, 2 Oct 86, 4 Feb 88, 27 Jul 95;
At the opening of the 20th century Washington Negroes whose memory stretched back into the late 1860's had no cause for optimism. Since the days when colored men had shared in governing the city and the territory and the wall of caste had appeared to be crumbling block by block, their bright prospects had darkened and then vanished in the shadows of a new and mounting racism. Frederick Douglass and his associates of the New National Era had marked 1870 as the high point for Washington's Negro community and saw the shrinkage of its horizons as beginning with the creation of the territory. If some of their contemporaries placed the peak of progress slightly later, in 1873 or 1874, they nevertheless perceived the inexorable narrowing of their world thereafter. The wisest among them doubtless knew that the splintering of a single community into groups warring with each other had further reduced the elbow room for all contestants and multiplied the difficulties of combatting white prejudice. But Washington's revived racism was the harder to fight because the white community, increasingly oblivious to the existence of any other, recognized no opponent. And "as long as the flat surface of color remained the lone dimension of a human being," from the standpoint of a white man a duel was impossible for lack of human adversary. The very light-colored Negro with three-fourths or seven-eighths white blood might find an answer for himself by contriving to pass permanently into the ranks of whites. Miscegenation, not unlawful and perhaps
Social Settlement. That year Miss Amanda Bowen, assisted by funds from the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, launched the Sojourner Truth Home for Working Girls. Three years later the Colored Women's League of Washington undertook "Rescue Work" among young women. A study prepared for a conference on Negro problems in 1898 listed thirty-eight Negro churches in Washington which spent $1,300 for charity, contributed to the support of eighty-three benevolent and missionary societies and supplied twelve workers in the slums and the jail. The individual generosity of Professor William Hart of Howard University made possible the Hart Farm School for colored boys. And in 1900 a colored woman started the Stoddard Baptist Home for aged Negroes.

Yet when everything is added together, the record of Negro charities, while not "blank," is distinctly meagre. It looked thinner in the 1880's and 1890's than in the two preceding decades in spite of the greater wealth of the upper and middle class Negro communities at the end of the century. The impressively long list of welfare projects was deceptive, for most of the undertakings were small-scale and short-lived unless white people came to the rescue. And the uncooperativeness of well-to-do Negroes chilled the ardor of white philanthropists. "We all know," a white woman told a congressional committee, "that a good deal of what was good in the race has gone and they are now in a state of transition." What exasperated whites failed to take into account was that the social pressures which fostered philanthropy in the white community could not operate effectively among people who felt their precarious position in the city's over-all social structure progressively and inescapably weakening further. And white people probably attributed larger
resources to prosperous Negroes than they actually had. Meanwhile, Negro pastors and Negro churches which in earlier years had not only provided spiritual leadership but taken an active part in lightening material distress apparently lost sight of both goals as congregations vied with each other in building big costly church.
edifices. Between the worldliness of the sophisticated churches and the excessive other-worldliness of those wedded to a somewhat primitive highly emotional religion teaching that only heaven or hell in the hereafter mattered, the efforts of the handful of selfless civic-minded Negroes met with defeat. Proposals to turn over to the National Colored Home the proceeds of Emancipation Day celebrations fizzled because the money from ticket sales went into the pockets of "sharks" or for the rental and elaborate decorations of floats for the parades. Lack of funds threatened to close the Sojourner Truth Home three years after it opened. A small indebtedness, which modest gifts could have wiped out, shut down the colored YMCA. According to one critic of his people, when Negroes contributed to any good works their motive was notoriety not Christian charity. Such behavior was characteristic of the nouveaux riches the world over, but the disturbing fact remained that the generosity that had once distinguished Washington's upper class Negro society was rarely in evidence at the end of the century.

Negroes with means could scarcely plead ignorance of the want about them, for destitution was nearly as widespread as in post Civil War years. In the early nineties while most of the District was enjoying enormous prosperity, 16,000 persons, the great majority of them colored, were without visible means of support; in 1870 the number had been little greater. Until 1897 the police were responsible for reporting cases of pauperism and

officer noted, was the foulness of the alleys in which thousands of Negroes lived; before new building regulations went into effect in 1895, "the avarice of a certain class of speculators resulted in the erection of a large number of badly constructed and unsanitary tenements in narrow alleys." Later studies would prove alley-dwelling a more important factor than race in fixing the infant mortality rate.\(^{13}\)

**Negro Diversions**

Neither poverty nor illness, however, prevented Negroes from enjoying themselves at times. The "gift of laughter," that capacity to create and delight in moments of gaiety in the midst of suffering and went, is a Negro characteristic that down to the present day confuses and baffles white people. As W. E. B. Du Bois sardonically put it, "that we do submit to life as it is and yet laugh and dance and dream is but another proof that we are idiots.\(^{13a}\)

With a light-heartedness that sober-minded white Washingtonians called irresponsible, colored families not always able to feed themselves joined in church sociables and the celebrations conducted by their clubs and fraternal societies. The lower down the economic ladder the more pleasure the more pleasure they gained from their members of a society apparently derived from its having a high-sounding name, such as "Grand Ancient Order of the Sons and Daughters and Brothers and Sisters of Moses of the USA and the World at Large." A funeral, always an occasion, usually called for lavish spending on carriages and clothes. During the 1880's noisy picnics complete with bands to furnish music took place on Sundays frequently at the "Manor," once the John P. Van Ness house and grounds where the Conservancy Gallery stands now; when the


proprietor of the beer hall there closed the place in 1887, colored picnickers for a time were allowed to use the Schuetzenverein park.

Mutual benefit societies arranged excursions down the Potomac until the steam boat lines, adopting the pretense that every boat was already chartered, refused to sell Negroes tickets. For lower class Negroes the great event of the year was the annual Emancipation Day parade.
on April 16th. Every colored organization in the District usually took part. Despite a downpour of rain, in 1883 the procession was a mile and a half long; every trade union had its float and among the scores of societies parading in dress array were the Chaldeans, the Knights of Moses, the Osceola, the Galilean Fishermen, the Sons and Daughters of Samaria, the Solid Yantics, the Lively Eights and the Celestial Golden Links. White onlookers, watching the elaborately decorated floats and the thousands of Negroes marching on foot to the accompaniment of twelve brass bands, were impressed, amused or indignant at the money poured into the display. Sophisticated Negroes sensitive to white ridicule protested now and again that a church service would mark the day more fittingly. Frederick Douglass pleaded in 1886:

The thought is already gaining ground, . . . that tinsel show, gaudy display and straggling processions, which empty the alleys and dark places of our city into the broad day-light of our thronged streets and avenues, thus thrusting upon the public view a vastly undue proportion of the most unfortunate, unimproved, and unprogressive class of the colored people, and thereby inviting public disgust and contempt, and repelling the more thrifty and self-respecting among us, is a positive hurt to the whole colored population of this city. These annual celebrations of ours. . . . should bring into notice the very best elements of our colored population, and in what is said and done on these occasions, we should find a deeper and broader comprehension of our relations and duties.45

But until the school board voted in 1899 not to dismiss the colored schools for the day, the parade on the 16th of April was more important to most of colored Washington than the 4th of July and Christmas and New Year's.

45 Ingle, The Negro in D.C., p. 105; Cleveland Leader, 19 Apr 83, 26 Sep 83; Bee, 21 Apr 83, 19 Sep 85, 21 Apr 88, 5 Apr 90; Advocate, 28 Apr 82.
Few middle and upper class Negroes were in a position to carp at the extravagances of their social inferiors, for in much of their own diversion display was an essential ingredient. Below the thin top crust, all Negro society was intent upon keeping up with the Joneses. Booker T. Washington spoke with dismay of seeing "young colored men who were not earning more than four dollars a week spend two dollars or more for a buggy on Sunday to ride up and down Pennsylvania Avenue in, in order that they might try to convince the world that they were worth thousands." Negro "dudes" in plug hats and carrying canes swaggered about the streets to impress their fellows. Clothes were all-important. At a party held by one of the social clubs "young gentlemen and ladies in and just leaving their teens, assembled, dressed in full reception style, the young gents in full dress suit, the ladies in every ornamentation art or fancy could give. One lady of family remarked, 'they are all plebians, too!" Plebians as well as aristocrats still attended the theatre occasionally, but as time went on evening parties at home or affairs sponsored by one or another literary society became a more customary form of entertainment. Athletics had not yet begun to loom large, although Negro bicycle clubs appeared in the eighties and in the nineties colored cyclists held races at Park Cycle Track.

\[16\] Ibid., 7 Mar 96, 13 Mar 99.
\[17\] Cleveland Leader, 7 Apr 84; B. T. Washington, Up From Slavery, pp. 88-89; Bee, 11 Apr 83, 27 Aug, 10 Sep, 17 Dec 98; Advocate, 17 Jan, 22 May 60, 21 Jun 99.
In the upper brackets of Washington's Negro world for several years after the Lotus Club disappeared, the Monday Night Literary Club included the most distinguished and intelligent society. Later the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, founded in 1881 by Bishop Payne of the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal church, overshadowed the "Monday Night Literary." The younger society not only dealt with literary and philosophical topics, but, more important, supplied the principal forum for enlightened discussion of race problems; the most notable colored men in America addressed the group. In 1900 business and professional men also valued membership in the newly organized Cosmas Club. If the choral groups were less class conscious than the literary societies, nevertheless the Treble Clef Club formed by some twenty colored ladies in 1897 was as selective as the white Friday Morning Music Club, and the programs of one were as ambitious as those of the other. Receptions and elegant balls also provided entertainment. The Negro newspapers gave a great deal of space to high class weddings; the list of presents with the donors' names attached might fill over a column. The gowns, "a Worth dress of canary silk," or a "crimson velvet entrainee" were described in the same detail with which white society reporters wrote of the costumes at White House receptions. Indeed even after discounting the braggadocio of the Negro press the evidences of Negro wealth were startling. Beautiful jewelry, handsome clothes, and well-furnished houses

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tended by Negro servants, were only a part. Every June the summer holiday exodus began. "Saratoga trunks are being packed for Newport, Harpers Ferry, Cape May and 'The Fort.'" In 1886, a newspaper reported: "Mr. Richard S. Locke of Washington who spends his summers at Nonquitt Beach has sold his beautiful yacht, the Gracie, to Mr. Thomas Gedney of South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Mr. Locke is the only gentleman of color that ever owned a yacht at Nonquitt." By and large, the higher a Negro's social standing, the more exactly his diversions corresponded to those of white people of similar position. 49

49 Advocate, 12 May 79, 12 x 2, 5 Jun 80; Bee, 18 Sep, 2 Oct 86, 4 Feb 88, 27 Jul 95; Ingle, The Negro in D.C., pp. 92-93.
At the opening of the 20th century Washington Negroes whose memory stretched back into the late 1860's had no cause for optimism. Since the days when colored men had shared in governing the city and the territory and the wall of caste had appeared to be crushing block by block, their bright prospects had darkened and then vanished in the shadows of a new and mounting racism. Frederick Douglass and his associates of the New National Era had marked 1870 as the high point for Washington's Negro community and saw the shrinkage of its horizons as beginning with the creation of the territory. If some of their contemporaries placed the peak of progress slightly later, in 1873 or 1874, they nevertheless perceived the inexorable narrowing of their world thereafter. The wisest among them doubtless knew that the splintering of a single community into groups warring with each other had further reduced the elbow room for all contestants and multiplied the difficulties of combating white prejudice. But Washington's revived racism was the harder to fight because the white community, increasingly oblivious to the existence of any other, recognized no opponent. And "as long as the flat surface of color remained the lone dimension of a human being," from the standpoint of a white man a duel was impossible for lack of human adversary. The few white Washingtonians who admitted that the city contained Negro citizens were prone to dismiss the possibility of any injustice by declaring the capital "the colored man's paradise."

The very light-colored Negro with three-fourths or seven-eighths white blood might find an answer for himself by contriving to pass permanently into the ranks of whites. Miscegenation, not unlawful and perhaps

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50 New Nat. Era, 20 Feb 73.
far more common in the District of Columbia than most people realized, eased the process for the stranger in Washington. But passing was an impossibility for a member of any well-known local family and, in any case, left the larger problem unsolved: how Negroes were to live with dignity in a white world. Frederick Douglass speaking in 1883 urged assimilation rather than isolation; he himself married a white woman two years later, but presumably he was advocating the ideal of social rather than biological assimilation. Voluntary isolation might protect individuals from some humiliations but would scarcely ensure economic progress for the race. Preoccupation with these questions stripped colored Washington of interest in the well-being of the city as a whole. In 1901 for white Washingtonians the future stretched out in an ever-widening vista of prosperity and orderly living in a beautiful city whose national and world importance could only expand. The difference between that picture and what perceptive Negroes could envisage for their own people was heightened by the contrasts between their then status and that of a quarter century before. True, some families had made money in the interval, and others had achieved a modicum of financial security. Those who held government clerkships, while perpetually fearful for their tenure in office, usually enjoyed civil, if impersonal, treatment. Moreover, a careful unobtrusiveness permitted well-dressed Negroes to hover in the background at the reception celebrating Washington's centennial. But sensitive men

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52 Star, 17 Apr 83.
53 Bee, 15 Dec 00.
and women found that concession a poor substitute for friendliness.

Fortunately they could not foresee that events in the next fifteen years would force colored aristocrats and middle class Negroes into a psychological ghetto along with irresponsible blacks.

While the most easily observed factor in the progressive disintegration of Washington's Negro world was the failure of economic opportunity to keep pace with the growth of the colored population and the spread of education, that material loss was itself rather a manifestation than a cause of the change. The wealthy Negro knew all too well that financial security provided no safeguard against endless humiliations and frustration. The deterioration of Negro status sprang from a complex of causes, but the common denominator was the steady paring down of incentive. With the dwindling of the attainable external rewards for continuing the struggle, only the strongest individual able to draw upon deep inner resources could withstand the ceaseless battering of his self-respect. That the number of Negroes possessed of such spiritual fortitude would not increase rapidly in the bitter years ahead was a logical development.
When the final offense was
In 1903. We were
remembering the
congressional vote of July 1927 which
made
the
imperial
Mitt, a
treatment.

We were greatly gratified to
mark the 25th anniversary in
Jan 192, 1902. The grandson plan.
CHAPTER XV

COLORED WASHINGTON, 1878-1901

For Negroes the satisfactions of life in the District diminished steadily after 1878. Relations between white and colored people worsened slowly until such tolerant friendliness as had survived the seventies virtually disappeared. White citizens succeeded in forgetting that Negro leaders had formerly commanded respect and, by their behavior, had encouraged both races to believe in the possibility of building an intelligent bi-racial community. The white press, during the 1880’s increasingly critical of Negroes’ “shiftlessness” and the high rate of crime among them, gradually reduced other news about colored people to an occasional facetious comment on a colored social gathering. Desperation or disgust blotted out compassion for the great mass of blacks, while white people’s interest in the careers of gifted Negroes became so condescending as to be insulting, the more so as the condescension was often unconscious. By the mid-nineties a reader of the white newspapers might have supposed Washington had no colored community, let alone three separate Negro communities. White people, in short, in the course of the twenty-odd years resolved the problem of race relations by tacitly denying its existence.

Concurrent with the loss of recognition from whites was a progressive loss of cohesiveness within each of the Negro communities and a widening of the gulf between the upper class group composed of people of predominantly white blood, and the lower class black. Except as seen in all Negroes’ search for “whiteness”—the ability to pass unnoticed in the crowd, the power to avoid humiliation and abuse, 1 a community in the sense of a group of

1 Pauli Murray, Proud Shoes, the Story of An American Family, p. 53.
people united by common aspirations and cultural identity had ceased to exist well before 1878. The biological accident of pigmentation, so far from supplying a basis of group accord, created growing resentments which colored people directed at each other more bitterly than at whites. By the end of the 1880s Negroes in the District were adhering to the social pattern common in the deep South: conflict within the caste and compliance with or carefully concealed hostility toward the white group outside. But Washington Negroes at the end of the Civil War had shown signs of escaping from entrapment in that mold of behavior. During the late sixties and early seventies educated intelligent colored men in the District, without attempting to halt the swift growth of elaborate class differentiations, strove to prevent a destructive divisiveness and to develop mutual helpfulness and mutual respect within a single enlarged Negro community; for a time they had seemed to make headway. The tragedy of the last decades of the century was the withering of the earlier promise as the men who had worked to make Washington a center of American Negro civilization in its highest form, a city where all Negroes might live in dignity, abandoned the struggle.

The discouragements besetting the District's colored people undoubtedly contributed to the decline of public spirit among them. Indeed the basic cause may have been the growing racism of whites. But cause

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...and effect were intertwined. As time went on, the failure of the bulk of the city's black population to evince any sense of responsibility disillusioned whites who had once held high hopes for the race. That disillusionment fed racial discrimination and undermined Negroes' determination to help themselves. The result was a vicious spiral. Whites concluded that most Negroes would never make good citizens and Negroes, feeling themselves perpetually shoved by prejudice further into a corner, ceased to stand up for each other and let the fight degenerate into one of each man for himself. The exceptions were too few to alter the large picture.

Changing Legal Status

For upper class Negroes civil rights were the key to progress.

The nibbling away at those rights began early in the Hayes' administration. Colored men in the District, though disturbed over the President's conciliation of the Southern Bourbons and though uneasy over their own loss of the franchise, still counted on the local anti-discrimination laws for protection: the municipal ordinances of 1869 and 1870 were still in force within the limits of Washington City, the territorial civil rights acts still applied to Georgetown and county as well as to Washington, and the federal act of 1875 was added insurance. After 1878 violations occurred with mounting frequency, but for the next two or three years the incidents were apparently trivial or too skillfully cloaked to lead to court action. The *Peoples Advocate*, in 1879 Washington's only colored newspaper, urged Negroes to concentrate on fostering attitudes of fair play: instead of suing white proprietors for refusing them accommodation, let them first...
file complaints against Negro barbers who refused to serve other colored men. Two years later the editor was no longer sure of the wisdom of those tactics. "A respectable colored lady or gentleman, unless it happens to be a man like Frederick Douglass, John F. Cook, or Register Bruce [former United States Senator from Mississippi], is not readily accommodated, if at all, in the eating establishments, no matter how genteel he may be in appearance or in manners." The result was "more or less friction between the keepers of these saloons and a class of our citizens rapidly growing in wealth and intelligence." Still Washington Negroes relied upon patience to destroy prejudice. But in the summer of 1883 a visiting Negro from Connecticut, later described as a "professional plaintiff," chose to sue a Washington restaurant owner under the criminal section of the federal Civil Rights act. Newspapers throughout the country discussed the case, partly because it was only the second suit to be brought under the act of 1875, partly because the argument for the defense had an ominous logic: a government which sanctioned separate colored schools could not reasonably require a restaurant proprietor to seat boisterous unwelcome Negroes in a dining-room with whites; he had offered to serve the colored man in the pantry. The judge reviewed all earlier decisions in local civil rights cases, noted that several verdicts had been adverse to the plaintiffs, but in this case found against the defendant and fined him $500.4

3 Peoples Advocate, 5 Jul, 15, 29 Nov 79, 10 Jul 80, 6 Aug 81 (hereafter cited as Advocate).
4 Ibid., 25 Aug 83; Bee, 1 Aug, 8 Sep 83; Star, 7, 13, 16, 18, 21 Aug 83.
It was at best a Pyrrhic victory. It strengthened white animosities and inspired pronouncements that Judge Mills' interpretation of the law would force restaurant owners either to accept an exclusively black clientele, or see their businesses ruined, or both. Negros native to the District found that the ironic reward for their past forbearance was a repeated statement citing their eight-year failure to sue under the federal law as proof that the color line was unobjectionable to them. Two months after the Mills decision the United States Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights act unconstitutional in the states. Mass meetings of colored men in Washington discussed desperately what they could do. Although the Court held the act still binding in the District of Columbia and all United States territories, educated Negros were angry and the ignorant were badly frightened, expecting to see the whipping post brought back any moment. The most optimistic view was that the Court would in time recant and in the meantime District laws would suffice. But no one favoring racial legal equality pretended that the decision was not a blow.

During the next two decades local men filed a dozen or more suits, some of which were dismissed, others won. A Negro lawyer won a case by proving that a lunch room proprietor who had not posted a price list had overcharged him outrageously by demanding 50 cents for three eggs, some biscuits and a cup of coffee. Bar rooms generally catered to colored customers, but lunch rooms and "ice cream parlors" were likely to exclude

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5 Star, 17, 23, 24 Oct 03; Chronicle, 21 Oct 03; Sentinel, 3 Nov 83; Cleveland Leader, 23, 26 Oct, 26 Nov 83.
them, a source of particular irritation to "gentle" Negroes. Yet the "gentle" clearly indicated their readiness to have blacks denied service. Petitions submitted to Congress in 1886 asked for stronger local laws and their extension to areas not covered in the municipal and territorial acts, but sentiment in Congress was no longer markedly pro-Negro, and new laws seemed unlikely to improve white tempers. Congress dismissed all proposals for racial legislation, bills forbidding miscegenation, on the one hand, and, on the other, those demanding a change in the District Medical Society's discriminatory rulings. In the fall of 1900 a suit against the owner of the Opera House for refusing to let a colored man occupy the orchestra seat he had paid for netted the plaintiff damages of one cent. 7

Nor were Negroes guiltless. A number of Negro-owned barber shops and some hotels and restaurants run by colored men would not accept Negro customers. For example, a circular issued in 1888 announced: "Preston's Pension Office barber shop, first class in every particular. Devoted Strictly to White Trade. The rumor that this shop has been serving any Colored Trade is false in every particular, and was started only through the jealousy and spite of one man." The white press was not slow to call attention to such incidents. "The refusal is based, of course," remarked the Star, "not on color prejudice, but on the business consideration that the best paying class of customers can be retained only by excluding those

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7 Star, 8, 22 Nov 81, 9 Feb, 9, 11 Nov, 10 Dec 87, 18 Feb 88; Rec, 476, 18, 25 Feb 82, pp. 1100-10, 13 Mar 82, p. 1839; ptsn, Sh9A-H12, 18 Jan 866, 86; Rec, 86, 23 Feb, 21 Jul, 12 Jul 81, 9, 16 Oct 86, 30 Jul, 27 Aug, 24 Dec 87, 10 Mar, 2 Jun 82, 15 Dec 94, 25 Jun, 3 Sep 98, 18, 25 Nov, 2, 9, 16 Dec 99, 24 Nov 00; Rpt 1050, 520, 13, 22 Jul 92, Ser 2015.
and effect were intertwined. As time went on, the failure of the bulk of the city's black population to evince any sense of responsibility disillusioned whites who had once held high hopes for the race. That disillusionment fed racial hostility as surely as racial discrimination undermined Negroes' determination to help themselves. The result was a vicious spiral. Whites concluded that most Negroes would never make good citizens and Negroes, feeling themselves perpetually shoved by prejudice further into a corner, ceased to stand up for each other and let the right degenerate into one of each man for himself. The exceptions were too few to alter the large picture. Gradually over the years any person known to be "tainted" by as much as a drop of Negro blood found himself stripped of incentives to self-improvement. The ensuing frustration manifested in every aspect of Negro life in Washington, forms the central theme of Negro history of the period.

**Chang**ing **Legal** Status

For upper class Negroes civil rights were the key to progress. The nibbling away at these rights began early in the Hayes' administration. Colored men in the District, though disturbed over the President's conciliation of the Southern Bourbons and though uneasy over their own loss of the franchise, still counted on the local anti-discrimination laws for protection: the municipal ordinances of 1869 and 1870 were still in force within the limits of Washington City, the territorial civil rights acts still applied to Georgetown and county as well as to Washington, and the federal act of 1875 was added insurance. After 1878 violations occurred with mounting frequency, but for the next two or three years the incidents were apparently trivial or too skillfully cloaked to lead to court action.

The *People's Advocate*, in 1879 Washington's only colored newspaper, urged Negroes to concentrate on fostering attitudes of fair play; instead of suing white proprietors for refusing them accommodation, let them first
who for any reason are objectionable to their fastidious notions." After
the founding of the short-lived Afro-American League in 1890, a Washington
branch sent delegates to its national conventions, but domestic lack of a
positive program to combat racism, and, indeed, the magnitude of the
problem combined to strip the organization of effectiveness. Its suc-
cessor, the Afro-American Council, which came into being in 1898 was largely
controlled by Booker T. Washington whose pressing subservience to whites
alienated Negro militants in the capital. As Jim Crow laws began to
multiply in the southern states, Negroes in the District realized they were
far better off than most of their race, but at the same time they saw that
the local anti-discrimination laws had come to be as honored in the breach
as in the observance.9

Chance, moreover, played into the hands of segregationists. In 1901
Congress accepted the first part of a codification of District Law but,
acting upon the recommendations of the Board of Trade, left "the second or
municipal part" to be revised and adopted later. Although Congress speci-
ified that existing police regulations, unless expressly repealed, should
continue in force, a stipulation that meant the civil rights laws were still
valid, the fact that the published code contained no mention of the anti-
discrimination ordinances probably encouraged white men to risk ignoring them.10

Washington's old well-established colored families like the Cooks
and the Workleys at one time had reason to believe that they and distinguished

8 Star, 12 Dec 87; Sen, 21 Jul 88.

9 Colored American, 9 Apr 88; Sen, 5 Nov 87, 16, 23 Nov 89, 10 May
90, 19 Sep, 21 Nov 91, 27 Aug, 24 Dec 99, 23 Feb 01; August Meier, "Booker T.

10 Sen, 563, 25, 2 Mar 01, pp. 3b77, 3586, 3603; Walter S. Cox,
"Attempts to Obtain a Law Code for the District of Columbia," CBS Rec, III,
187-32; Phineas Indritts, "Post Civil War Ordinances Prohibiting Racial
Discrimination in the District of Columbia," Georgetown Law Journal, XIX,
No 2 (Jan 5h), 196-201.
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9 Colored American, 9 Apr 88; Bee, 5 Nov 87, 16, 23 Nov 89, 10 May 90, 19 Sep, 21 Nov 91, 27 Aug, 24 Dec 98, 23 Feb 01.  
Negro newcomers such as Frederick Douglass, Blanche K. Bruce and Dr. Augusta, could enjoy some rights not specifically protected by law. Good manners, professional status and money should make them acceptable residents of any neighborhood provided they did not obtrude themselves socially upon white people. But cultivated Negroes, even those who looked almost white, discovered in the 1880's that each passing year made it harder for them to purchase or rent comfortable houses without paying exorbitant prices; by the 1890's, they could rarely buy at all in a conveniently located orderly neighborhood. Mary Church Terrell tells of endless humiliations in the course of her house-hunt. Yet her husband was a cum laude graduate of Harvard, a respected lawyer and after 1897 a member of the Board of Trade, and she herself was a graduate of Oberlin and one of two women before 1900 to be appointed to the School Board. In the seventies rising rentals hastened the exodus of Negro householders who had lived along 16th street two or three blocks above Lafayette Square and out beyond Scott Circle. As the real estate boom in Northwest Washington gained momentum, colored people moved farther from the center of the city. Whether sheer economics or, as rumor had it, combinations of real estate agents kept respectable Negroes from moving into desirable localities, the result was the same. It did not mean that clear-cut solid black belts arose outside of which Negroes could not find housing; on the contrary, some intersprinkling of white and Negro dwellings continued and still exists in mid-20th century. But by 1900 upper class Negroes perceived that the barrier of caste which seemingly had weakened in the late 1860's was as strong as ever. The one notable exception lay in the Board of
Trade: James T. Wormley was a charter member, and three other Negroes were elected in the mid-1890's—Robert Terrell, Dr. Charles Purvis, Washington's leading colored physician, and George F. Cook, Superintendent of the colored schools.

Disregard of civil rights as a rule affected only upper class Negroes, but the workings of the criminal law touched the lives of countless blacks living on a bare subsistence level. Of those some were undoubtedly vicious; and some, though vaguely well-intentioned, took to thieving, drunkenness and disorderliness as the easiest way to blunder through a world that offered them at best very little. Statistics testified to the amorality of a considerable segment of the Negro population; in a community where only one person in three was colored the number of Negro arrests exceeded the number of white every year after 1889. The increase in Negro arrests, to be sure, admits of more than one explanation; people as ignorant of their rights as of their obligations were in some measure at the mercy of the police. The newspapers, the colored press in the van, repeatedly carried stories of police brutality. The Washington Bee asserted that policemen, particularly the Irishmen on the force, frequently clubbed Negroes savagely when arresting them and, when a crime

11 Advocate, 8 Sep 83; Star, 1 Feb 87; Edward Ingle, The Negro in the District of Columbia, in Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 11th Series, nos. III and IV (Mar-Apr 93) pp. 50-51, 90 (hereafter cited as Ingle, The Negro in D.C.); Coroner's Maps in Comrs Rpts, 1882, p. 508, Ser 2103; 1890, p. 462, Ser 2818 and 1900, p. 826; Ser 341; Mary Church Terrell, A Colored Woman in a White World, pp. 113-19; membership lists in Anl Rpts B of Tr. 1897, 1898, and 1899; Colored American, 26 Mar 98; Bee, 10 Sep, 15 Oct 98, 7 Apr 00.

Joseph W. Moore, Picturesque Washington p.139.
occurred, the dark-skinned man was always the first suspect. Officers "took delight in arresting every little colored boy they see on the street, who may be doing something not at all offensive, and allow the white boys to do what they please." The individual prejudice of police court justices was likely then to determine the severity of the sentences imposed. Perhaps the number of Negroes charged with misdemeanors and felonies was as much an index of white men's aversion to colored as a reflection of Negroes' criminal tendencies. William C. Chase, editor of the Bee, as a boy having seen his father shot down in cold blood and his white assailant go unpunished, was vitriolic about Washington police methods. But more temperate men than he believed that racial equality before the law had largely disappeared by the end of the century. 12

Political Status

The decline of Negroes' legal position in the District followed upon the loss of Negro political power in the states and consequent loss of influence in national political parties. Nevertheless political preferment for colored men in Washington during the 1880's and 1890's fell off surprisingly little. After 1880 a Negro rarely received a post of any importance in the federal government, and after President Garfield and President Arthur failed them, colored men ceased to talk of appointments to the Cabinet, but until the depression of the nineties began, Negroes held about as

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12 Star, 15 Mar 82, 23 May 83, 27 Oct 87, 1 Jan 97; Chronicle, 10 Nov 95, 7 Jun 96; Sentinel, 15 Oct 92, 25 Nov 93; Bee, 22 Aug, 17 Oct 85, 6 Aug 87, 21 Jul 88, 22 Aug, 26 Dec 91, 8 Jan, 3 Sep 98, 8 Feb, 1, 15 Apr, 12 Aug, 4 Nov 99, 26 May 00; Ingle, The Negro in D.C., pp. 100-101; Simmons, Men of Mark, pp. 118-19.
many minor clerkships and custodial jobs as they had formerly. Frederick Douglass, though shorn of some of the one-time dignities of the Marshal of the District, kept that post through President Hayes' administration, while the lucrative position of Recorder of Deeds and the only less-sought-after office of Register of Wills continued to go to Negroes. In 1881, moreover, the President appointed ex-Senator Bruce of Mississippi Register of the Treasury, a place that would sometimes be filled by a Negro for the next thirty-two years. Both before and after the Civil Service act of 1883 introduced competitive examinations, colored office-holders feared for their posts when a new administration took over, but even the shake-up anticipated during Ex-Governor Cleveland's first term did not cut the number of Negroes on the federal payroll; on the contrary, scrupulous fairness in grading examinations enabled more Negroes than ever before to enter government service.

In 1891 out of 23,111 federal employees in Washington, nearly 21,000 were colored; they held 337 of the 6120 jobs in the Department of the Interior and, though most of them were unskilled or custodial, 127 ranked as copyists', "transcribers'", clerks' or more responsible positions.

Fewer than a third of the incumbents were District citizens when appointed, but local Negroes in a voteless community had little reason to expect more for themselves even from the Republican party which derived its numerical strength in the District from its Negro members. Fortunately, once appointed, Negroes rarely encountered overt hostility from fellow white employees.

The Negro third of the local population got far less consideration from the District commissioners. In 1879 one appointment out of fifty to the police force was colored, none of twenty to the fire department. Later policy gave Negroes some of the jobs but never established a stable ratio.

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12a Laurence John Wesley Hayes, The Negro Federal Government Worker, 1883-1911, A Study of His Classification Status in the District of Columbia, p. 22 (hereafter cited as Hayes, Negro Federal Govt. Worker); Cleveland Leader, 7 Nov 81; Nation, XCVII, 7 Aug 13, p. 111.
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25 positions above the rank of messenger and day laborer.\(^{13}\)

Cleveland's second administration, troubled as it was by country-wide unemployment, saw a drop in Negro preferment, and Republican prosperity, launched with the election of William McKinley, failed to restore the earlier proportion in spite of the liberal attitude in the Treasury Department under Secretary Lyman Gage and Assistant Secretary Frank A. Vanderlip.

In other departments the falling off, if less pronounced than white men expected, was at once a bitter disappointment to Negroes and a gloomily foreseen development in keeping with the course of events in other areas of American life. Perhaps the most galling single grievance was the series of appointments the new President of Howard University made between 1897 and 1900; Rankin filled two out of every three vacancies with white people.\(^{14}\)

### Economic Status

The collapse of earlier hopes for political and legal equality might have distressed Negroes less had their economic opportunities widened consistently. With a colored population growing from the 57,000 of 1879 to 90,000 in twenty years, the District seemingly should have furnished abundant openings for Negroes trained in the professions and ready to serve their own people. Washington in the 1890's had in fact a large corps of professional men—several hundred colored teachers, about one hundred

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\(^{13}\) Sentinel, 10 Apr 80; Advocate, 3 Dec 81; Bee, 30 Dec 82, 13 Jan, 17 Feb, 3 Mar, 7, 21 Apr 83, 11 Dec 86, 29 Jan, 27 Jun 87, 19 Oct 89, 15 Feb, 22 Mar, 1 Oct, 22 Nov 90, 23, 30 May, 19 Sep, 31 Oct 91; Star, 25, 29 Jan 79, 2h Mar 81, 9 May 83, 2 Feb 87; Cleveland Leader, 7 Nov 81; Ingle, Negro in D.C., pp. 48-19.

\(^{14}\) Rpt Sec/Int, 1895, p. 72h, Ser 3383; Bee, 2h Aug 95, 16 Aug, 5 Sep, 6 Oct 96, 15 Jan, 7 May, 3 Sep, 8 Oct 98, 10 Jun, 12, 19, 26 Aug 99, 13 Jan, 4, 18 Aug 00.
qualified physicians, somewhat fewer dentists, over ninety ministers and scores of lawyers. But except for the pastors, including those without much schooling, colored professional men faced hard sledding. An oversupply of teachers—about ten applicants for every place in the school system—created intense competition. Relatively few Negroes could afford to pay doctors', dentists', and lawyers' fees no matter how modest, and a discouragingly large proportion of the colored people of means preferred to deal with white men. The Bee, scolding its readers ceaselessly, observed that most colored people in Washington would not go to a colored doctor "unless we wish to run a bill we do not intend to pay." Dozens of lawyers in a frantic scramble to find clients underbid each other shamelessly, hawking their services in undignified fashion about the Police Court.15

Colored business enterprises also suffered from Negroes' reluctance to patronize men of their own race. The failure of the Freedmen's Bank in June 1874, although primarily to white exploitation, had shattered confidence in their capacity to handle finances.16 A colored savings bank opened in 1888 and yearly thereafter increased the list of its depositors, but Negroes used white banks for most purposes instead of attempting to organize a commercial bank of their own. As in other American cities, Negro merchants had enormous difficulty in competing with white for the colored
trade and could rarely cater successfully to both races. The career of John A. Gray, a restaurant owner, illustrated some of the hazards. "He kept one of the first houses in the city," reported the Bee. "He first opened it for white people and was having a success until the Negroes kept clamoring for a respectable place to go. He opened his house to the high-toned colored people and in less than a year they broke him up." Undeterred by the refusal of white merchants to employ Negro help, colored families persisted in trading at white shops. Perhaps credit was easier there or the selection of goods better, but a pettier motive, some Negroes believed, was more basic: in the city's colored business world the "great impediment has been jealousy and a dislike to see each other succeed." 17

"Caterers" were one of the few groups who could safely avoid the complications of seeking mixed or purely colored patronage, for the business, unique to Washington, depended solely upon a white clientele. Unlike the modern term, catering in the capital of the 1880's and 1890's meant delivering hot meals twice a day to people living in rented rooms and boarding houses who wished to escape from the restaurant or dismal boarding house table by breakfasting and dining in their rooms. The best caterers charged from $25 to $30 a month per person. Those with fast teams of horses could deliver well-cooked dishes in the specially constructed double-racked tin containers before the food cooled. A skillful caterer with a hundred clients could clear a considerable sum in a year despite the decline of

his business in the months between congressional sessions. Since the enterprise, however profitable, smacked of menial service, white men rarely competed.\textsuperscript{18}

A few Negroes, on the other hand, made money in fields considered wholly dignified, notably real estate, building, and selling life insurance or in benefit and relief associations. James Wormley, owner of the famous Wormley House, left an estate of over $100,000 in 1884; his sons chose to put the family fortune into the construction business.

Negroes who had owned local real estate before the war and had hung on to it through the disasters of the Board of Public Works era and the Freedmen’s Bank failure were likely to be very well off indeed. District Tax Collector John F. Cook, himself said to be the largest taxpayer of his race, reported in 1887 two local colored men worth $100,000, two worth $75,000, a flour merchant worth $50,000, and some forty men with property valued at a figure between $10,000 and $25,000.\textsuperscript{19}

While the upper ranks of Negro society suffered from the lack of the racial solidarity which might have strengthened Negro enterprises, the lower class Negro was directly affected by the increasing hostility of white workingmen and the readiness of labor organizations to bar him from membership. The situation in Washington than in Southern cities, worsened steadily in the District of Columbia. An analysis of 1881 attributed the troubles of colored workmen in Philadelphia to foreign immigrants: “Southern

\textsuperscript{16} Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan, 7 Apr 83.

\textsuperscript{19} Bee, 6 Jan, 11 Jun, 22 Oct 87, 8 Sep, 17 Nov 88, 12 Jan 89, 12 Jul 90; Star, 23 Oct 84, 18 Apr 1926; Simmons, Men of Mark, pp. 249-50.
cities were built by colored mechanical labor. In this city twenty years before the late war, it was no unusual thing to find a majority of colored mechanics engaged in all the leading trades. . . . But Irish emigration was destined to strike a blow at the colored mechanic, from which it will take years for him to recover." Negroes in Washington looked upon Irishmen as enemies, but foreign immigrants were too few in the last decades of the century to be a determining factor in the local labor market. In the early eighties the local carpenters' union drew no official color line and one of the two mechanics unions had mixed membership, but white mechanics made life for their colored fellows miserable in a dozen minor ways. By refusing to accept colored apprentices, the unions gradually excluded all Negroes. A colored lodge of the Knights of Labor, organized in 1884 as the Thad Stevens Assembly, fell apart even before the Haymarket tragedy in Chicago two years later undermined the national brotherhood. In 1886 a Negro waiters' union appeared, but its ineffectualness was painfully obvious. Within a decade colored men found that occupations "which by common consent were regarded as belonging to them such as barge3, waiters and the like are now being monopolized by the whites."

Even in domestic service white women at higher wages were replacing Negroes. Booker T. Washington's exhortations from Alabama that Negroes should think less about political equality and more about acquiring competence as workers fell on sterile soil in the District. Men here agreed that economic independence was important to the race but thought it unattainable by hard work alone.20

20 Advocate, 25 Dec 80, 15 Sep 83, 21 Sep 81, 21 Apr 82; Star, 10, 11 Jan 79, 17 Dec 81, 26 Jul 85; Simmons, Men of Mark, pp. 270-72; Bee, 9 Jun, 22 Dec 83, 27 Sep 81, 8 May 86, 15 Jan, 15 Oct, 12 Nov 87, 19 Oct 95, 1 Jan 97, 8 Oct 98, 30 Jun 00; Sentinel, 30 Mar 89.
Educational Status and the Colored Schools

To combat the discriminatory attitudes of trade unions, "the curse of which has more than any other, fettered the energies of the colored people," and to make all civil rights laws effective, non-segregated schools seemed to some Negroes the first essential; only early association of the races would induce a "more generous spirit" in white men. Unfortunately for the proponents of mixed schools, the opposition of other Negroes strengthened as the colored school system expanded and the number of teaching posts grew. The existence of a colored high school and the opening of the Miner Normal School for Negroes in 1879, a year before a white high school was established, undercut the integrationists' contention that the white schools invariably received a disproportionate share of the annual budget and provided a quality of education far superior to anything available in the colored schools. The question came to the fore in 1881 and 1882 when the school trustees were subjected to sharp criticism for allowing two or three very light colored children to attend white schools. Negro advocates of separate systems insisted that more money and better qualified Negro trustees less prone to toady to whites and less ready to show favoritism would correct every shortcoming in the colored schools. 21 The Star, in 1882 no doubt voicing the opinion of most of its readers, declared the question of school integration "purely sentimental."

There is a small sprinkling of colored children in the white schools, but for the most part the colored people prefer to have their separate school organization with a superintendent and teachers of their own.

21 Advocate, 13 Dec 79, 6 Nov 80, 8 Jan, 10, 21 Sep 81, 11, 25 Feb, 20 May 82; Bee, 21 Jun, 30 Dec 82, 21 Feb, 14 Apr 83, 10, 17, 21 May 84, 21 Nov 85; Sixth Anl Rut Bd of Trustees, pp. 29, 33, 67.
race; just as they prefer to maintain their own distinctive organizations and benevolent and social associations. The colored schools get their full share of school moneys; and in proportion to numbers are supplied with better school accommodations than the whites. For various reasons the colored children get on better in schools of their own. One is that they are spared the disadvantageous competition with white children of their own age who have had greater opportunities at home and elsewhere for advancement in their studies. Again were the schools to be merged it would necessarily throw 165 colored teachers out of employment, as it could not be expected that the white school population of the District—outnumbering the colored about two to one—should give up their teachers to make room for colored teachers.

Under the present system the schools of Washington, both white and colored, are prospering in a way to give them a national reputation as among the best in the country. Better let well enough alone.\textsuperscript{22}

Congress remained immune to the pleas of integrationists and after 1883 most of their complaints subsided about injustice in the distribution of school moneys.\textsuperscript{23}

Conscientious members of the school board could not fail to realize that money alone could not make the colored schools equal to the white; too many colored children, as the Star noted, came from homes without the necessary background.\textsuperscript{24} The comparative figures on adults unable to write suggest the handicap under which the children of hundreds of Negro parents labored:

\textsuperscript{22} Star, 22 Feb 82.


\textsuperscript{24} Star, 14 Sep 81, 15, 16 Mar, 29, 30 Sep, 25 Oct 82; Bee, 21 Jul 83, 17 May 84.
From the mid-1880's onward one group of colored people argued that vocational training was a wiser goal for the Negro schools than a more literary education; a curriculum like that of the white schools should wait until the economic level of the average colored family had risen enough to enable Negro children to benefit from purely academic courses. In the 1890's Booker T. Washington, by then head of the Tuskegee Institute, began to popularize that thesis among white people who, apparently oblivious of its Marxist connotations, saw in it an answer to the problem of creating a permanent docile working class. In Washington contrary-minded Negroes, although believing the plan equivalent to giving up the fight for racial equality and accepting a position of inferiority for decades to come, gradually abandoned the campaign for integrated schools. After 1900 that issue dropped out of sight for nearly two generations. 26

Meanwhile Negroes who were determined to develop an independent school system paralleling the white in every particular watched every move of the school board, particularly the colored members. Hypersensitive as most colored men were to any possible slight, they criticized school administration so constantly that Admiral Baird, president of the board of trustees

in 1899, resigned in protest at Negroes who were "never satisfied." The fact was undeniable that salaries were nearly 10 percent lower and teaching loads slightly heavier in the colored than in the white schools. At an annual salary of $750, a colored high school teacher earned $71.5 less than his white counterpart, and the differential for grammar and primary grade teachers was as great or greater. In 1890 white classes averaged 52.2 children to a teacher and the colored averaged 54.3; in 1890 the ratio stood at 40.9 and 46.7 respectively and in 1900 at 37.1 and 36.5. Otherwise the two systems ran generally parallel. The white teaching staff of 300 in 1880 grew to 530 in 1890 and to 857 in 1900, while the colored expanded from 158 to 265 and by 1900 to 426. The District had far too few schoolrooms, especially for the primary grades in which most children had to get all the schooling they would ever have, but half-day sessions at the end of the century were more common in the white than in the colored schools. Furthermore, in spite of Negro complaints about favoritism in teaching appointments and incompetence on the part of George F. Cook, the colored school superintendent of thirty years' experience, the Negro schools made a good showing. Although some evidence pointed to lower standards in the colored grade schools than in the white, in examinations given all high school students in 1899, the colored high school scored higher than either the Eastern or the Western white high schools. But when Congress, disturbed by the barrage of criticism of the District's schools, reorganized the entire

administrative scheme by replacing the board of trustees with a seven-
member Board of Education empowered to appoint a single superintendent
for all the schools, most Negroes were well pleased. They evidently believed
their schools would gain more in efficiency than they lost in prestige by
having a white man put above the colored assistant superintendent.\textsuperscript{28}

Unhappily, however good the education available to Negro children,
relatively few of them stayed in school beyond the fourth grade, and of
those who finished the eighth grade still fewer went on. This was par-
ticularly true for boys. \textquote{The fact is,} remarked the Bee, \textquote{there are
inducements to keep white children in the white High School. . . . Our
colored citizens should see to it that some effort be made to keep their
boys in the schools.} Quite apart from their poverty, the seeming futility
of acquiring more than an acquaintance with the three r's deterred a great
many Negro families from making the effort. They saw well-educated girls,
barred from suitable occupations by an inflexible caste system, drift into
the life of the demi-monde and Negro college graduates forced for want of
something better to take jobs as waiters and hotel bell boys.\textsuperscript{29} It is not sur-
prising that only 42 of the 367 students at Howard University
in 1898 were taking the college course and the rest were
\textbf{The Class Structure}
\textit{enrolled as secondary school pupils.} \textsuperscript{29a}

Long before it became obvious that public schooling was unlikely

\textsuperscript{28} Bee, 12 Jul 94, 11 Feb 98, 13 Nov 97, 15 Jan, 22 Oct 98, 26 Aug,
2 Sep 99, 27 Jul, 11 Aug, 29 Sep 00; S Rpt 711, 56C, 15, 23 Mar 00, pp. 1-4,
1h, Ser 3689; Lofton, \textit{Separate but Equal,} pp. 161-87.

\textsuperscript{29} S Rpt 711, 56C, 15, 23 Mar 00, p. 231, Ser 3689; Booker T.
Washington, \textit{Up From Slavery,} p. 91; Ingle, \textit{The Negro in D.C.,} pp. 31-37, 103;
Sixth Annual Rpt Bd of Trustees, p. 152; Rpt, 1892, p. 17; Rpt Bd of
Education, 1901, pp. 140-143.

\textsuperscript{29a} W. E. B. DuBois \textit{ed., The College-Bred Negro (Fifth
Atlanta Conference, 1900),} p. 16.
to elevate greatly the general level of Negro society, Washington's Negro aristocrats had begun to detach themselves as completely as possible from the Negro rank and file; for their own reassurance they must sharpen Negro class distinctions whether or no white people recognized them. In other cities also educated colored men defended the thesis that the social equality of all Negroes was a concept destructive to racial progress. In Washington, the withdrawal of the elite, perceptible in the 1870's but increasingly noticeable thereafter, created long-enduring hostility. In 1880 a letter to the Advocate declared Frederick Douglass, John F. Cook and one or two others to whom the community had once looked for leadership "have shown conclusively how little they care whether other colored men sink, as long as they swim." William Chase of the Bee, not himself one of Washington's "first families" but occupying a place in the upper brackets of the rank just below, alternately defended the aloofness of the "exclusive set" and attacked it for a snobbery which he believed originated in the determination of the Lotus Club after 1863 to force contrabands to keep to themselves. Later societies undertook to heighten that snobbery. "The Monday Night Literary is a cast organization," wrote Chase. "There is more intelligence excluded than there is in the association...there are few holding clerkships who belong to the Monday Night Literary. Messengers, watchmen and laborers are excluded." Members had ceased to give New Year's Day receptions because they did not want to meet "objectionable upstarts." The Negro press repeatedly insisted "There is more discrimination among the colored people than there is among the white against the colored." A petition of 1896 complained to Congress that only daughters of "the favored
few" were admitted to the colored normal school. "The would-be leaders
John M. Langston excepted, have taken no interest in the general
welfare of the masses of our people; political office by all means, after
that, their wish is total exclusion from their race and to be white."
Yet most of that small group composing the highest circle of Negro society
were indeed nearly white, and many of them had personal distinction as
scholars, office-holders and professional men. They were certainly cul-
turally closer to the white community than to the lower class Negro. In
displaying an ungenerous attitude toward their inferiors, they were behaving
little differently from most self-made white men who reached positions of
eminence in the face of enormous obstacles.
In 1883 the Sentinel, Washington's German-American newspaper edited
by a former abolitionist, presented the tolerant white man's view of the
Negro's position:

The colored people of Washington enjoy all the social and politi-
cal rights that law can give them, without protest and without
annoyance. The public conveyances are open to them, and the theatres,
the jury box, the spoils of party power are theirs. Many of these
men are wealthy.

But the color line is rigidly drawn in what is known as society.
Wealth, learning, official place, give no colored family the right
or privilege of entering the best or the commonest white society on
terms of equality or endurance. In this respect the colored race
lives as separate and exclusive a life as in the days of slavery.

30 Advocate, 1 Dec 80; Star, 11 May 80; Dec, 2 Feb 84, 2 Jan, 17, 24,
31 Jul, 11 May 84, 11 May, 20 Jun 91, 16 Jan 97,
16 Sep 99, 17 Nov 00, 12, 19 Jan, 25 Feb 01; ptb, H51A-87.6, 2 Jun 96.

31 See cuts accompanying the articles on Washington Negroes in
Simmons, Men of Mark; Richard Bardolph, "The Distinguished Negro in America,
and as a drop of African blood was once held to make a man a negro, so now it taints him and makes an immutable barrier against social recognition.

Ex-Senator Blanche K. Bruce, Washington's leading Negro, lives in a handsome house that he owns on M street. It is richly furnished. Mrs. Bruce is a handsome woman, with not a suggestion of her race in her face, and whose manners are regarded as the consummation of ease, grace and courtesy. She dresses as richly and handsomely as any woman in the city. In official circles Mr. Bruce is received in courtesy and as a political equal, but there the line is drawn.

Frederick Douglass, the most influential Negro in white men's eyes, was unpopular among his own people. "He is regarded as guilty of the same sins toward the colored men of which he accuses the whites, namely, refusal to recognize them or have personal relations with them."

Other Negroes considered this exclusive set not good enough for whites and too good for their own race, but the next lower rank was equally disdainful of the class below. The basis of the second stratum was government clerks. "They are well dressed, seem to prosper and are happy. For the great bulk of the colored population—the servants, laborers and the poor—they have sympathy, but have no more social relations than a white family would." Those at the base of the social pyramid "in the main are thriftless, living from hand to mouth; happy if they do nothing, happy if they get a job. Their social instincts are gratified by the organization and maintenance of societies of all sorts, benevolent, patriotic, social and economic. There are nearly one thousand of these organizations, supported almost entirely by the laboring colored people."

That portrayal, if fitting the Washington of 1883, was too simple

32 Sentinel, 22 Dec 83.
and too cheerful in tone to describe the Negro community a decade or more later. Before the end of the century the class structure resembled a pyramid less than a truncated cone capped by a needle. From the strata below, the Negroes who danced on the point of the needle appeared to be not angels but scarcely more accessible than heavenly creatures. Of the District's 700 octoroons and 1100 quadroons, those who had in addition to light color the other qualifications of antiquity of family, money, education, and honorable occupation belonged to this aristocracy; "honorable occupations" included the professions, political posts of more than trivial importance, banking, real estate brokerage and businesses not tinged with menial service. Washington's Negro "Four Hundred," as the Bee dubbed the aristocrats, probably numbered not more than sixty or seventy families.33

The middle class in the 1890's apparently derived mainly from the District's 18,000 mulattoes. Although there were those of "doe-nut or ginger-cake color who said those blacker than themselves should be ignored," the exceptionally able, ambitious, full-blooded Negro might also be accepted.34 Minor government employees still formed the core of this group, but even a government clerk if a newcomer to the District was held suspect by native Washington Negroes and did not have immediate entrance to upper middle class circles. Whether the barber, the caterer, the livery-stable man, the oyster-house owner or the proprietor of any other small business was

33 Eleventh U.S. Census, 1890, Population, I, 397. Later published censuses do not tabulate Negroes by degree of color. The description of the class divisions given here is based on careful study of the local newspaper files of the period.

34 The Negro in Business (Fourth Atlanta Conference, 1899), pp 18, 19-20.
acknowledged as upper or lower middle class evidently depended upon the
extent of his business success as well as his nativity and his complexion.
The gradations were several, but the middle class as a whole was more fluid
and less selective than the top level group. Warnings frequently appeared
in the Bee about unsuitable marriages between scions of established families
and those of doubtful antecedents who wormed their way into the "social
circle" by joining a "tony" church, by enrolling for a few weeks in one of
Howard University's professional schools or by making a specious show of
great wealth.

The Negro press largely ignored the "masses," and only noticed the
few low class Negroes who by hook or crook began to edge their way up, but
in so class conscious a place as colored Washington a certain amount of
differentiation no doubt developed also among the 56,000 full-blooded
Negroes. Perhaps the one generally recognized distinction lay between
hard-working honest laborers, on the one hand, and, on the other, the
shiftless who enjoyed idleness as fully as steady wages and the undeniably
large number of thieves and other petty criminals.

For the mid-20th century reader, the most striking and distressing
feature of Washington's Negro newspapers at the end of the 19th century is
the exhibition of back-biting and the destructive jealousy of one class
and one Negro toward another. Let anyone get his head ever so little
above his associates and his individual accomplishments and former services
were forgotten in vitriolic attacks upon his real or imagined self-seeking
and other shortcomings. Instead of taking pleasure in seeing a colored
man win recognition, his fellows at once set to work to belittle him. If
white people applauded him, his own people accused him of sycophancy and putting on airs. The New National Era had never taken that line, and the People's Advocate, which ceased publication in 1884, pursued it far less than the Bee. The Bee, never wholly consistent in its point-of-view, indulged in more sweeping condemnations of individuals and organizations the longer it ran. Perhaps its publisher found the paper sold better when it concentrated upon scandal and malicious gossip. A comment on a problem affecting the welfare of Washington as a whole was an utmost rarity. Cond­emnation of any Negro was only less unusual. Small wonder that few colored people were ready to expend themselves for others; the reward would be hostility, not gratitude.35

Negro Charities and Self Help

Booker T. Washington, after some months at the Baptist Wayland Seminary in 1878–79, decided that Washington was no place for a Negro who wished to dedicate his life to helping his race; here false standards and selfishness predominated. Among immigrant minorities and among the Jews in the District, a sense of group solidarity produced mutual helpfulness, in spite of internal jealousies. Not so among Negroes. While the pressures of caste which kept the gifted colored man from moving as far upward as his talents would otherwise permit explained this contrast, the result was damaging to every Negro. A Philadelphia journal observed that Congress was naturally disinclined to do anything for Washington's colored people.

35 Bee, 17 Jul 86, 28 Apr, 15 Dec 88, 8 Jun 89, 17 Nov 00, 23 Mar, 27 Apr 02; Letter, Jesse Lawson to Booker T. Washington, 6 May 02, Booker T. Washington Papers (L.C.).
since they perennially made themselves a laughing stock:

If there is to be an Emancipation demonstration; if a principal or trustee of the public schools is to be appointed, or if a ball is to be given to entertain the visitors from the states to Presidential inaugural ceremonies, pandemonium at once breaks loose and rival factions begin to clamor for recognition claiming that this one's father was a horse thief, that one doesn't know who his father was, another was not married when he should have been, another is too black, another is too light and therefore does not represent the race, another does not belong to the best families and still another is an interloper who "jest dropped from God knows whar and nobody here knows his people is."

The minority to whom that characterization did not apply suffered from it as much as did the vulgar and ignorant.

Who of our so called colored representative men asked the Bee in 1887 can point to a single thing of a public character beneficial to the colored people established and fostered by them? To their shame and to the humiliation of the race the record is a blank, and with all our boast about our wealthy and representative colored men the race is dependent upon the charity of whites for that which should be looked after by our "representative colored men." What the negro race wants is less eloquent talk and more practical work.38

Similar comments recurred throughout the 1890's. "If you talk to our people about an excursion down the river in August, or a cake walk in December, they will listen to you and will no doubt purchase several tickets. . . . There is a large per cent of the white population, in this city, ready and willing to help almost any colored enterprise. The great fault is the colored people will not help themselves." The mutual benefit


37 Philadelphia Odd Fellows Journal quoted in Bee, 23 Feb 01.

38 Bee, 15 Jan 87.
societies in which much of the social life of working class Negroes centered contributed a little to the relief of distress, but most of the funds went for elaborate funerals rather than help for the living. 39

The assertion that well-to-do Negroes never lifted finger for the needy was, of course, an exaggeration. John F. Cook for years served on the citizens relief committee. Mrs. Caroline Dean Taylor of the Berean Baptist church, after organizing a Church Aid Society, founded in 1885 the Home for Friendless Girls and enlisted the help of Negro churches and stores and some white people. About the same time, two or three Negro women opened a free kindergarten and day nursery for the children of working mothers. Although Alexander Crummel, rector of St. Lukes Episcopal church, was more concerned with racial equality than with Negroes' material welfare, he raised a large sum of money for the Episcopal Freedmen's Aid Society by sale of copies of one of his speeches. The Colored Baptist Home Mission Society in 1887 was "putting shoes on the feet of the poor, clothing on them, and giving immediate aid," but $95.72 represented the total sum collected in the course of several months from Washington's thirty-five Baptist churches and the members of the society. During the worst of the depression of the nineties Negro volunteers worked with the Associated Charities and the "Hill Group" on 6th street, moved by the suffering of the poor at the foot of the hill, distributed food and fuel in that neighborhood. Probably a good many individuals without the backing of any organization helped their neighbors. From a mother-child center

39 Ibid., 11 Jan, 3 May 90, 21 May 91, 30 May 96, 15, 22 Oct, 12 Nov 98, 4 Feb 99.
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The assertion that well-to-do Negroes never lifted finger for the needy was, of course, an exaggeration. John F. Cook, for years an active member of the citizens relief committee, was also a trustee of the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children, while a dozen public-spirited Negro women served on the board of managers. In 1885 a member of the Berean Baptist Church, after organizing a Church Aid Society, founded in 1885 the Home for Friendless Girls and enlisted the help of Negro churches and contributed the help of Negro churches and stores and of some white people. About the same time, two or three Negro women opened a free kindergarten and day nursery for the children of working mothers, and in the 1890s, the newly organized Colored Women's League expanded the program. Although Alexander Grummel, rector of St. Lukes Episcopal church, was more concerned with developing character in his people than with their material progress, he raised a large sum of money for the Episcopal Freedmen's Aid Society by sale of copies of one of his speeches. In 1887 the Colored Baptist Home Mission Society was "putting shoes on the feet of the poor, clothing on them, and giving immediate aid," but $95.72 represented the total sum collected in the course of several months from Washington's thirty-five Baptist churches and the members of the society. During the worst of the depression of the nineties Negro volunteers worked with the Associated Charities, and the "Hill Group" on 6th street, moved by the suffering of the poor at the foot of the hill, distributed food and fuel in that neighborhood. Probably a good many relatively well-to-do individuals gave help without working through any organization, just as desperately poor people were found caring for the children of even poorer neighbors. From a mother-child center opened in 1895 came the Southwest

39 Ibid., 11 Jan, 3 May 90, 21 May 91, 30 May 96, 15, 22 Oct 12 Nov 96, 1 Feb 99.
Social Settlement. That year Miss Amanda Bowen, assisted by funds from the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, launched the Sojourner Truth Home for Working Girls. Three years later the Colored Women's League of Washington undertook "Rescue Work" among young women. A study prepared for a conference on Negro problems in 1898 listed thirty-eight Negro churches in Washington which spent $1,300 for charity, contributed to the support of eighty-three benevolent and missionary societies and supplied twelve workers in the slums and the jail. The individual generosity of Professor William Hart of Howard University made possible the Hart Farm School for colored boys. And in 1900 a colored woman started the Stoddard Baptist Home for aged Negroes.

Yet when everything is added together, the record of Negro charities, while not "blank," is distinctly meagre. It looked thinner in the 1880's and 1890's than in the two preceding decades in spite of the greater wealth of the upper and middle class Negro communities at the end of the century. The impressively long list of welfare projects was deceptive, for most of the undertakings were small-scale and short-lived unless white people came to the rescue. And the uncooperativeness of well-to-do Negroes chilled the ardor of white philanthropists. "We all know," a white woman told a congressional committee, "that a good deal of what was good in the race has gone and they are now in a state of transition." A what exasperated whites failed to take into account was that the social pressures which fostered philanthropy in the white community could not operate effectively among people who felt their precarious position in the city's over-all social structure progressively and inescapably weakening further. And white people probably attributed larger

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Ibid. Dec, 18 Sep, 30 Oct 86, 22 Jan, 5 Mar, 11, May 87, 10 Jan, 7 Mar 91, 22 Dec 91, 25 Feb 99; Cleveland Leader, 29 Feb 86; Advocate, 5 Feb, 20 Nov 81; Isabel Lindsay, "Participation of Negroes in the Establishment of Welfare Services, 1865-1900, with special reference to the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia," pp. 128, 129-30, 137-55, 159, 161, 17073; (ms dissertation, Univ. of Pittsburgh, hereafter cited as Lindsay, "Negro Welfare Services").

Ioa Ch Huge, 550, 18; Apr 97, p. 56; Anl Rpt of the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children, 1891.
resources to prosperous Negroes than they actually had. Meanwhile, Negro pastors and Negro churches which in earlier years had not only provided spiritual leadership but taken an active part in lightening material distress apparently lost sight of both goals as congregations vied with each other in building big costly church.
edifices. Between the worldliness of the sophisticated churches and the excessive other-worldliness of those wedded to a somewhat primitive highly emotional religion teaching that only heaven or hell in the hereafter mattered, the efforts of the handful of selfless civic-minded Negroes met with defeat. Proposals to turn over to the National Colored Home the proceeds of Emancipation Day celebrations fizzled because the money from ticket sales went into the pockets of "sharks" or for the rental and elaborate decorations of floats for the parades. Lack of funds threatened to close the Sojourner Truth Home three years after it opened. A small indebtedness, which modest gifts could have wiped out, shut down the colored YMCA. According to one critic of his people, when Negroes contributed to any good works their motive was notoriety not Christian charity. Such behavior was characteristic of the nouveau riches the world over, but the disturbing fact remained that the generosity that had once distinguished Washington's upper class Negro society was rarely in evidence at the end of the century.

Negroes with means could scarcely plead ignorance of the want about them, for destitution was nearly as widespread as in post Civil War years. In the early nineties while most of the District was enjoying enormous prosperity, 16,000 persons, the great majority of them colored, were without visible means of support; in 1870 the number had been little greater. Until 1897 the police were responsible for reporting cases of pauperism...
illness and for distributing relief, but if Negro distrust of the police interfered with the officers' efficiency, nothing indicated that they failed to act promptly and with humanity. They found Negro families eking out existence by picking spoiled food from garbage cans and dumps. Households in the Negro slums were ridden with illness; in 1891, one report described a one-room shanty in which a dead infant lay five adults and six children stricken with influenza. Four-fifths of the patients at the Freedmen's Hospital were indigent Negroes; of the 17,048 people to whom the District's seven public dispensaries ministered in 1891, over 12,000 were colored. Negroes needing medical service disliked having to deal with the police, but the health department defended the system of having police officers report calls to the physicians of the poor because the arrangement avoided confusion, hastened investigations of complaints and relieved the doctors of "the untidy class." The most conscientious physician could do little more than palliate momentarily the miseries he encountered daily. In twenty years the colored death rate dropped to 28.12 per thousand from the 40.78 of 1876, but Negro mortality always greatly exceeded and in most years was double that of whites.\(^2\) Infant mortality, shockingly high for whites, ran in 1890 to 336.5 per thousand for Negroes and in 1900 to 317. The occasional charge that Negro "ignorance and indifference" was to blame was a part-truth. A larger cause, as the health

\(^2\) Ingle, The Negro in D.C., pp. 98-100; Advocate, 19 Apr 79, 27 Mar 80; Ster, 15 Mar 82; Comrs Rpts, 1887, pp. 16-17, Ser 2547, 1889, p. 14, Ser 2731; H Ex Doc 1, 516, 13, 20 Jul 89, p. 94, Ser 2726.
officer noted, was the foulness of the alleys in which thousands of Negroes
lived; before new building regulations went into effect in 1895, "the
aversion of a certain class of speculators resulted in the erection of a
large number of badly constructed and unsanitary tenements in narrow
alleys." Later studies would prove alley-dwelling a more important factor
than race in fixing the infant mortality rate.\textsuperscript{b3}

\textbf{Neighborhoods}

Neither poverty nor illness, however, prevented Negroes from enjoying
themselves at times. The "gift of laughter," that capacity to create and
delight in moments of gaiety in the midst of suffering and want is a Negro
characteristic that down to the present day confuses and baffles white
people. As W.E.B. DuBois sardonically put it, "that we do submit to life
as it is and yet laugh and dance and dream is but another proof that we are
idiots."\textsuperscript{b3a} With a light-heartedness that sober-minded white Washingtonians
called irresponsible, colored families not always able to feed themselves
joined in church sociables and the celebrations conducted by their clubs and
fraternal societies. The lower down the economic ladder the more pleasure
members of a society apparently derived from its having a high-sounding
name, such as "Grand Ancient Order of the Sons and Daughters and Brothers
and Sisters of Moses of the USA and the World at Large." A funeral,
always an occasion, usually called for lavish spending on carriages and
clothes. During the 1880's noisy picnics complete with bands to furnish
music took place on Sundays frequently at the "Widow," once the John P.
Van Ness house and grounds where the Concern-Building stands now; when the

\textsuperscript{b3} Eleventh U.S. Census, 1890, Population, I, Pt II, 20; Twelfth
Census, 1900, Population, I, Pt II, 22; Census Reports, 1890, pp. 692, 776-77,
815, 817, Ser 26112, 1895, pp. 9-13, Ser 2391; Dec. 27 Aug 98, 7 Jul 00;
Chronicle, 11 Sep 99. See also W.E.B. Du Bois,\textsuperscript{b3} Mortality among Negroes
in Cities (2nd Atlanta Conference, 1895), pp. 593-121. 18-19, 20-23.

\textsuperscript{b3a} W.E.B. DuBois, \textit{Dusk of Dawn}, p. 117.
proprietor of the beer hall there closed the place in 1887, colored picnickers for a time were allowed to use the Schmutzenverein park. Mutual benefit societies arranged excursions down the Potomac until the steam boat lines, adopting the pretext that every boat was already chartered, refused to sell Negroes tickets. For lower class Negroes the great event of the year was the annual Emancipation Day parade
on April 16th. Every colored organization in the District usually took part. Despite a downpour of rain, in 1883 the procession was a mile and a half long; every trade union had its float and among the scores of societies parading in dress array were the Chaldeans, the Knights of Moses, the Osceola, the Galilean Fishermen, the Sons and Daughters of Samaria, the Solid Yanties, the Lively Eights and the Celestial Golden Links. White onlookers, watching the elaborately decorated floats and the thousands of Negroes marching on foot to the accompaniment of twelve brass bands, were impressed, amused or indignant at the money poured into the display.

Sophisticated Negroes sensitive to the white ridicule protested now and again that a church service would mark the day more fittingly. Frederick Douglass pleaded in 1886: 

The thought is already gaining ground... that tinsel show, gaudy display and straggling processions, which empty the alleys and dark places of our city into the broad day-light of our thronged streets and avenues, thus thrusting upon the public view a vastly undue proportion of the most unfortunate, unimproved, and unprogressive class of the colored people, and thereby inviting public disgust and contempt, and repelling the more thrifty and self-respecting among us, is a positive hurt to the whole colored population of this city. These annual celebrations of ours... should bring into notice the very best elements of our colored population, and in what is said and done on these occasions, we should find a deeper and broader comprehension of our relations and duties.

But until the school board voted in 1899 not to dismiss the colored schools for the day, the parade on the 16th of April was more important to most of colored Washington than the 4th of July and Christmas and New Year's

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44 Igle, The Negro in D.C., p. 106; Cleveland Leader, 19 Apr 83, 28 Sep 84; Bee, 21 Apr 83, 19 Sep 85, 21 Apr 88, 5 Apr 90; Advocate, 28 Apr 82.

45 Bee, 24 Mar 88.
Few middle and upper class Negroes were in a position to carp at the extravagances of their social inferiors, for in much of their own display was an essential ingredient. Below the thin top crust, all Negro society was intent upon keeping up with the Joneses. Booker T. Washington spoke with dismay of seeing “young colored men who were not earning more than four dollars a week spend two dollars or more for a buggy on Sunday to ride up and down Pennsylvania Avenue in, in order that they might try to convince the world that they were worth thousands.” Negro “dudes” in plug hats and carrying canes swaggered about the streets to impress their fellows. Clothes were all-important. At a party held by one of the social clubs “young gentlemen and ladies in and just leaving their teens, assembled, dressed in full reception style, the young gents in full dress suit, the ladies in every ornamentation art or fancy could give. One lady of family remarked, ‘they are all plebians, too!’” Plebians as well as aristocrats still attended the theatre occasionally, but as time went on evening parties at home or affairs sponsored by one or another literary society became a more customary form of entertainment. Athletics had not yet begun to loom large, although Negro bicycle clubs appeared in the eighties and in the nineties colored cyclists held races at Park Cycle Track.

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16 Ibid., 7 Mar 96, 18 Mar 99.

17 Cleveland Leader, 7 Apr 84; B. T. Washington, Up From Slavery, pp. 88-89; Bee, 11 Apr 83, 27 Aug, 10 Sep, 17 Dec 98; Advocate, 17 Jan, 22 May 80, 21 Jun 99.
THE CITY BEAUTIFUL and SOCIAL BETTERMENT" 1900-1917

Until American involvement in the Katzen war before incitation in 1901, it had begun to assume by 1901. The prestige of the United States, so recently enhanced by the Spanish American War, and her rise to the position of a world power, heightened the stature of the American capital by the eyes of European nations and made New York a focal point in the city. Washington, D.C., taking advantage of its location and resources, began to assume the role of the American municipalities. The tide of immigration that brought to the seat of the Free City some million people in 1917 showed north of the Potomac.

In 1910, as in 1900, she continued to be more, the biggest measure possible of any city on earth, but, by the rule of white residents, the incorporation of colored inhabitants in the life of the city for the past half of the century. At the same time, while her pro-creative local government kept her largely free of corrupt political bosses, the aggression of her industries, chiefly her 13, 001,000 people, on her social relations with labor and capital. The Wall Street panic of 1907 was the буме that affected the business aspects of the city. Following the outbreak of war in Europe, which brought financial and manpower centers created only a ripple on the social surface of Washington's society. Wealth, ill will, public or private, is, in wealth, it is true, beneath no pronounced as in New York or Chicago.
Although the District's working classes were not subject to conditions such as Upton Sinclair described in The Jungle of Chicago's stockyards, Jacob Riis found a counterpart to Manhattan's slums in Washington's alleys. But here the misery of the abjectly poor poor poor was tucked out of the sight of all but its victims and conscientious men and women who sought them out. "The poor ye have always with you" whether in Washington or elsewhere, and the capital seemed to most Americans the least anxiety-ridden place on the continent.

The good things of a country still at peace were here to enjoy. When disasters like the San Francisco earthquake and fire, the Johnston flood or the sinking of the Titanic occurred, she showed ready sympathy without losing her air of detachment. When War in Europe forced difficult and decisions upon the federal government, national determination to stay out of the fight preserved Washington's calm. Even the mounting tensions of 1916, with its Mexican border "incidents," its militant suffragette demonstrations and, above all, the German submarine threat to neutral shipping, failed to destroy the city's serene mode of life.

In this felicitous setting white Washington carried on with her civic plans. Ideas moved slightly to the left with Theodore Roosevelt in the White House, and to the nation at large the atmosphere of the capital countless seemed different from that of McKinley's day: the winds no longer blew as Wall Street and powerful trusts listed. But within the local community the change was rather in tempo than in direction; the last years of the McKinley regime had already seen the charting of the city's course and except in the area of race relations deviations were minor. Growing hostility in Congress after 1909 put Washingtonians increasingly on the defensive,
forcing them to realize they must now fight for the consideration they had taken for granted for a decade. The coming of President Wilson in 1913 appeared, moreover, to presage revolutionary upheavals, but the effect soon proved to be merely a quickening of the reform spirit that had stirred in the city since the late 1890's and a strengthening of the will to keep the gains of the immediate past. Just as the keynote of the early 20th century was gratification over what Washington had come to represent, so the dominant note of the last pre-war years was determination to see her fulfill the destiny her citizens envisaged for her. Complacency about their achievements even at its peak in no way precluded recognition of shortcomings still awaiting correction, but optimism over the community's ability to resolve unanswered problems and to meet new as they arose prevailed after as well as before the altered temper of Congress multiplied difficulties. That faith in Washington's capacity to make herself the perfect model for all American municipalities spurred the efforts of public-spirited citizens, while it provided for the irresponsible and imperceptive a pleasant feeling that all was for the best in the best of all possible cities.

Physical Improvements

So far from stagnating in the pleasant warmth of finding herself the most admired and envied city in America during the early years of the 20th century, Washington made steady progress in her drive to become the most beautiful capital in the world. Indeed, success in turning some of her dreams into visible realities exceeded reasonable hopes, and the interest aroused by the proposals of the Park Commission as they became known during
1902 gave new impetus to city planning throughout the country. What a magazine writer called "Washington's civic renascence" could obviously not have taken physical form without the endorsement of Congress, for not only were large-scale improvements to federal property the very core of the plan, but the spending of every dollar of local tax money had to receive congressional approval. And horrified holders of the purse strings estimated the cost of executing the plan in its entirety at sums ranging from $200,000,000 to $600,000,000. Nor could local citizens, irrespective of their talents, have commanded the prestige needed to win over Congress to so elaborate a scheme; to persuade Washington's "city council" to consider parts of it required the professional skills and the reputation of a Daniel Burnham, a Charles McKim, a Frederick Law Olmstead, and an Augustus St. Gaudens.

Yet the role of the local community was by no means negligible. The Board of Trade, citizens' associations and influential individuals had prod and pleaded for years before Senator James McMillan induced his associates on the Hill to sanction the appointment of an advisory Park Commission; and important features of the commission's magnificent over-all plan duplicated those long urged by Washington taxpayers. Perhaps the widespread assumption that Washingtonians contributed nothing and merely

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2 Times, 1 Nov 07.

3 See above ch. XIII, pp. ; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1902, p. 11;
reaped the benefits of other men's aesthetic concepts derived from popular magazine articles which contrasted in dramatic phrases the beautiful city soon to emerge under the Park Commission's guidance with the dreary community in which the natives had supposedly been content to live until, in spite of themselves, Boss Shepherd briefly shook open their pocketbooks.

In submitting its report in January 1902, the Park Commission made no request for appropriations. The function of its experts as they themselves interpreted it was to prepare "a well-considered general plan covering the entire District of Columbia," with the object of securing a "harmonious and consistent building up" of the city. As Congress provided for new buildings and parks, it would have a blue print to follow instead of letting the former "piecemeal, haphazard and unsatisfactory methods" prevail. Consistency in sticking to a plan was more important, Frederick Olmstead insisted, than the adoption of any particular plan. L'Enfant's original plan, restored where obliterated or mangled by past makeshifts, served as the basis of the commission's proposal, although some adaptations and considerable enlargement of the 1791 lay-out were necessary for the 20th century city.

Since an unobstructed Mall, the "government gardens" stretching from the Capitol to the Potomac, was a vital element in L'Enfant's scheme, the park commissioners had early realized that they must either abandon the

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5 S Rpt 166, 57C, 18, 15 Jan 02, Ser 4259; Olmstead, "Beautifying a City," Independent, LIV, Aug 02, p. 1670.
Frenchman's plan or persuade the Pennsylvania railroad to remove its tracks, train sheds and the heavy-towered stone depot from the Mall. As the law passed in February 1901 authorized the Pennsylvania railroad to enlarge its holdings there and to erect a huge new station at 6th street, the task of inducing the corporation to relinquish its title to that valuable land promised to be difficult if not impossible. In August 1901 Daniel Burnham, at the end of a Park Commission tour of European cities, sought out Alexander Cassatt, president of the railroad, in London. Unexpectedly Cassatt volunteered to withdraw from the Mall and to collaborate in building a Union station, provided that compensation be made for the cost of the change and that proper approaches be ensured "worthy of the building the railroads propose to erect." For this right-about-face, so one story runs, Mary Cassatt was responsible; the gifted painter convinced her brother that he must not stand in the way of an artistic movement in America. A few months later Senator McMillan's explanation stated: "The acquisition of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company of a controlling interest in the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad makes it possible at this time to secure such a modification of the project of last year as will, when carried out, give a complete, adequate, and monumental treatment of the railroad terminals in Washington." The design of the Union station was to make it "in reality


7 S Rpt 987, 57th, 19, 3 Apr 02, Ser 1261; see also S Doc 220, 57th, 28, Ser 1430, a compilation of all canal and railroad legislation for the District, 1800-1903.
the great and impressive vestibule to Washington. Its building and the subsequent removal of the tracks and depot from the Mall were the first fruits of the Park Commission's labors.

Neither Congress nor the local public greeted all the recommendations of the commission with undiluted enthusiasm. The scope of the over-all plan made it seem visionary, and even with its execution spread out over decades the costliness gave more than one congressman gooseflesh. Objections also arose to particular proposals—to moving the Botanical Garden from the foot of Capitol Hill where the greenhouses had stood for sixty-odd years or to locating new federal office buildings in Lafayette square and south of the Smithsonian Institution instead of placing them in the triangle formed by Pennsylvania avenue and the old canal bed north of the Mall.

When the Commission placed on exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery of Art plaster models of the future city westward from the Library of Congress, residents of East Washington had reason to fear they were again to be slighted, although the commission report included a scheme for a parkway running from Soldiers Home to the Washington Asylum on the Anacostia, use of the upper reaches of that stream for a "water park" like Belle Isle in Detroit, and eventually treatment of the river front below like the quays of the Seine with a boulevard along the top and stone wharfage at the water's edge. Georgetown similarly received scant attention in the plan. It called for no significant improvements west of Rock creek except for a narrow ribbon

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8 See n. 6.

9 Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1902, pp. 52-53, 1905, pp. 7, 59-60, 1909, p. 30, 1916, p. 62; BAr, 13 Mar 03, 1 Jan 08, 1 Aug, 30 Nov 09; Times, 5 Dec 08, 1, ?; 14 Nov 07; Post, 30 Jun 02, 5 Jan 10.
of parkway linking Potomac and Rock Creek parks. Congress, perhaps fortunately in view of its initial shock, had no occasion to reject or accept the plan as a whole; the House did not discuss it at all and the Senate merely implied tepid approval by ordering two hundred copies of the commission report. But it exercised "great moral force." When the time came to vote money for new buildings or new bridges or other badly needed public works, a majority of members of Congress found themselves converted to the principle if not to the details of the Park Commission's plan.

Other than purchasing the land for the Union station on Massachusetts avenue and voting to pay the railroads the compensation promised in 1901 for the elimination of grade crossings within the city, the first congressional measures relating to the commission plan authorized new government buildings rather than additional parks. As the railroads began the erection of the elaborate new station and launched upon tunneling under the Hill to carry the tracks underground across government property, work started on the long awaited District building at 14th street on the former site of the Capital Traction Company powerhouse, offices for the House of Representatives and the Senate on the Hill, a new building for the Department of Agriculture and a new National Museum flanking the Mall on the south and north respectively, and an imposing home on Arsenal Point for the recently


organized War College. Finished and in use by 1908, these buildings immediately added to the city's aura of dignity, and after the clearing of the Mall of the railroad tracks and depot in 1909 and the grading and planting of the plaza in front of the new Union Station, Washington began to bear much of the aspect she would have for the next 20 years. On Mt. Vernon place stood the District Public Library built with money given by Andrew Carnegie and opened in 1903. The spring of 1910 saw the completion of Continental Hall erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution and adjacent, located above the Mall near the Washington Monument, the Hall of the American Republics, in its architecture a skillful blend of Spanish and French renaissance styles. The new city Post Office on the station plaza, the "Marble Palace", headquarters of the American National Red Cross, rising alongside the Corcoran Gallery, and nearby a new building for the Navy Department furthered the city's air of stateliness.

Although critics later complained about the inappropriateness of the classical architecture executed in white marble and pale gray granite, the general uniformity of design found wider favor than the late 19th century variations to be seen in the State Department building, the Gothic Post Office on Pennsylvania avenue and the ornate Italian Renaissance Library of Congress. As the Lincoln Memorial began to take form beyond the Washington Monument, the least imaginative person could envisage the future grandeur of the sweep of the Mall from the Capitol to the Potomac. Citizens who agreed with the Star that "esthetics are business in Washington" were
disappointed at the slowing of progress on the Park Commission plan after 1911. 13 Until the Lincoln Memorial was completed in 1922 and the less monumental Federal Triangle became a landmark in the 1930's, the city would lack architectural features later generations regard as part and parcel of the national capital. But the concept of Washington as a place where harmony between buildings and space must obtain had taken deep root before World War I.

That harmony was in no small degree ensured by the creation of a permanent Fine Arts Commission in 1910 to advise Congress "upon subjects within the domain of the fine arts." The distinguished architects, sculptors, painters and landscape architects composing the commission had no final authority, but their recommendations carried weight; they determined the site and design for the Lincoln Memorial in the face of vigorously pressed counter proposals. 14 But the commission was threatened with a disastrous defeat in 1916 at the hands of Treasury officials.

Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo insisted that economy dictated placing a new government power and heating plant at the head of the Washington channel near the Bureau of Engraving where, the Fine Arts Commission contended, four huge smoke stacks cutting the sky line would not only mar the view of

13 Star, 25 Mar 03, 1 Jan 15; Times, 10 May, 16 Dec, 11, 15 Feb 11; Rpt B of Tr, 1912, p. 21; Annual Address, President James G. Oyster to Chamber of Commerce, 11 Jan 13, p. 13, Copy in File NUM Series VI, Woodrow Wilson Mss (L.C.); unless otherwise noted hereafter all citations of the Wilson papers refer to Series VI; International Bureau of the American Republics, The Report of the Director to the Fourth Pan American Conference Held at Buenos Aires, Argentine Republic, Jul 1910, pp. 46-51.

the city when approached from the south but compete with the Washington
Monument and the Capitol seen from any angle. A citizens' committee joined
in the protest, but Congress remained unconvinced and excavation began.
In the end it was the chairman of the citizens' committee, Glenn Brown of
the American Institute of Architects, who saved the day. When he saw
engineers sending up from the power plant foundations a balloon to mark
the height to which the smoke stacks would rise, he hastily got a photographer
to make pictures showing the balloon slicing across the shaft of the Monument
and blotting out part of the Capitol dome. Prints sent to every member of
Congress and published in a special article in the National Geographic
Magazine failed to halt the work, but Brown seized upon an opportunity to
dramatize the consequences to the public. He engaged a sign maker to paint
two sandwich boards based on a cartoon from Clifford Berryman's pen in the
one board depicted the 18th century plan of the city under the caption
Star: "The Past--A Heritage from Washington"; the second, marked "The
Present--McAdoo's Smoke Stacks," portrayed the city on the completion of
the new power plant. Dressed in a long white robe, bare feet in sandals
and his face covered by a black mask, Brown wore the sandwich boards to a
great Beaux Arts ball given at the New Willard Hotel to raise money for
the children of French artists who had lost their lives in the war against
Germany. The only person with masked face, he aroused immediate attention
as he walked back and forth, saying no word but letting everyone study the
contrasting pictures. Overnight McAdoo became a laughing stock. Congress
agreed to the Fine Arts plan of enlarging the existing power plant on low­
lying land to the south of the Capitol, and "The Heritage of Washington"
was saved. 15

15 Brown, Memories, pp. 301-03; An Appeal to the Enlightened Sentiment
of the People of the United States for the Safeguarding of the Future
Development of the Capital of the Nation, March 1916.
Meanwhile replacement of the historic Long bridge over the Potomac with a new steel trestle "highway" bridge a quarter-mile upstream contributed to the city's convenience without enhancing her architectural beauty. In 1908, however, the new "Lion" bridge with its placid-looking stone creatures crouching at the Connecticut avenue approaches to the spans over Rock Creek valley displayed the decorative possibilities of handsome structures; at the same time the solidly rebuilt but unembellished bridge over the Anacostia above the Navy Yard perhaps further convinced Congress that future highway appropriations must allow for aesthetics as well as utility. The Park Commission plan included a memorial bridge as an extension of the Mall to Arlington Cemetery, but although members of the Grand Army of the Republic laid a cornerstone for the bridge in May 1902 in endeavor to inspire congressional action, not until 1913 did Congress appoint a special commission to choose a site and a design, and not until the mid-1920's would work begin. Nevertheless the District saw the completion of a half-dozen handsome bridges before the end of 1916. Several of them involved extraordinary feats of engineering, notably the skillful use of concrete to encase the old water mains which carried the Pennsylvania avenue bridge over Rock creek and the graceful strength of the arches of the Q street bridge guarded by two bronze buffaloes. And a million dollar appropriation for a Francis Scott Key bridge to replace the old aqueduct bridge promised vastly to improve the looks of the Potomac river front at Georgetown. 16

New construction alone would have only partially altered the city's appearance. Quite as important was the landscaping of the areas adjoining the new buildings and the approaches to some of the bridges. As grass and flower beds began to cover the public grounds, gratified citizens lent support to a campaign to demolish the billboards that had long enclosed most vacant lots. With the acquisition of land for new parks and boulevards, the installation of fountains in several commanding places and the erection of marble and bronze statues at avenue intersections, the national capital though still unkempt and unfinished-looking in many sections stirred the pride of all Americans. As a safeguard against future obstructions, in 1910 Congress passed a Height of Buildings act which empowered the District commissioners thereafter to restrict the height of private buildings lest skyscrapers overshadow the streets and dwarf public buildings. 17 At the same time the restraints imposed by the Fine Arts Commission met with warm public approval, for if no one had taken exception to the undistinguished bronze of Alexander Shepherd erected in front of the District building or to the towering Daniel Webster on his huge granite pedestal at Scott circle, the Board of Trade remarked that the city would benefit from the exercise of "a more critical judgment than has heretofore prevailed in the selection of models for statues, fountains and monuments in the public

squares, streets and parks of the District."  

Probably the development of most universal interest was inaugurated by Mrs. William Howard Taft when she chose to use the Japanese cherry trees, presented to her by the Mayor of Tokyo, to ring the tidal basin beyond the Washington monument. She planted the first tree with her own hands and, despite the disheartening discovery that several hundred trees were diseased and must be replaced with healthy stock, she later supervised the public gardener’s planting of each new shipment. Washington thus owes her famed cherry trees to Mrs. William Howard Taft. Public delight in the beauty of the Tidal Basin undoubtedly inspired fresh attention to planting flowering trees and shrubs and laying out flower beds in suitable spots throughout the city.  

The "Social Betterment" Movement  

Yet as money poured out to adorn the public domain, uneasiness stirred among citizens who saw signs of a disturbing one-sidedness in the program for Washington—spacious parks and imposing buildings in some sections of the city, in others slums hidden away in alleys; emphasis upon beautifying public property, disregard of the rest. As early as 1904 gerry-built row-houses had begun to turn some of Washington’s main suburbs into tenement sections, threatening rapid deterioration in adjoining neighborhoods. By 1906 the alley dwellings in the heart of the city were receiving almost as much publicity in national journals as was the Park Commission.
plan. The lack of playgrounds in Washington's poorer sections and the ramshackle condition of school houses contrasted sharply with the landscaped grounds and architectural elegance of new federal buildings. Appropriations of $600,000 for new parks in northwest Washington and $275,000 for the bridge at Q street seemed out of all proportion to the $100,000 for reclamation of the malarial swamps near the mouth of the Anacostia and the $75,000 for demolition of the shanties in the "notorious Willow Tree Alley" and its conversion to a playground. Speakers at the national conferences on city planning held in Washington in 1909 and 1910 pointed out that city planners everywhere, captured by "a superficial quest for beauty," had tended to pay too little attention to overcrowding of vital residential areas; thus a community "from a social and hygienic standpoint" might continue to be undesirable "though outwardly it may be 'the city beautiful.'"20

The completion of the pumping station and sewage disposal plant, the water filtration system and enlargement of the District water supply by 1907 relieved the District budget of the heaviest demands upon it and seemingly left funds available for playgrounds, roomy fireproof school buildings and a concentrated attack upon the great blight of the capital, the alley dwellings. But powerful members of Congress, having permitted the District to finance its costly public works by deficit spending,
insisted that taxes must go first of all toward reducing the funded debt and next to repaying with interest the sums advanced from the United States Treasury for sewers and the water supply.21 Even so, had Congress seen fit to authorize the expenditure, local taxes could have provided for the gradual redemption of the alleys and for decent housing and more open space in the most wretched areas of the city. Leaders in the community, though unwilling to have the District bear the entire cost, had long felt strongly about the necessity of action. The two laws of 1892 had prevented the building of additional shanties in the alleys, but neither law had restored the authority exercised by the Board of Health under the territorial government to condemn and raze unsanitary tenements.22 Yet if Washington was to become the magnificent capital she aspired to being, she must redeem her slums, a task which civic-minded people now saw could not be achieved simply by the moral regeneration of alley dwellers.

For gradually public-spirited Washingtonians were perceiving the narrowness of their earlier views of philanthropy in the battle against pauperism. The reorganization of the Associated Charities in 1896 had started the process of changing the focus, and in the next dozen years the philosophy dominant in the eighties and early nineties shifted considerably. Reduced to its simplest terms the change lay in a growing

acceptance of the idea that environment might be as important as inherited character in making good citizens and thus a good city. If "moral uplift" alone could not win the fight against the degradation of poverty, the campaign must broaden to include provision for decent living conditions and wider economic opportunity for the city's poor. The "social betterment leaders," as the language of the day called them, continued to rely heavily upon education and persuasion to evoke cooperation, but they early realized that new legislation was also essential to the success of their enlarged program.

Among the leaders in this movement a half dozen stand out as men of exceptional vision and tireless vigor. Perhaps John Joy Edson supplies the best single example. Except for his searching eyes peering through rimless pince-nez, nothing in his kindly undistinguished face, partly hidden by untrimmed mustachios, suggested the extraordinary force of his personality; he looked more like a small-town businessman than the powerful big city banker and the deeply religious, selfless social reformer that he in fact was. He repeatedly refused appointment as a District commissioner and rather kept his light under a bushel, but for more than three decades he played an important part in formulating every significant civic project in Washington, for twenty years shouldered the thankless task of heading the District Board of Charities, and in the realm of penal reform blazed a new trail. The contributions of Dr. George Kober of the Georgetown medical faculty were equally valuable and through his published articles better known outside Washington than Edson's. Kober was at once a scientist, a gifted teacher and a philanthropist who initially devoted himself to sanitation and housing problems. Years of serving on the Board
of Charities widened the range of his interests until upon his seventieth birthday in 1920 grateful fellow citizens would acclaim him one of Washington's chief benefactors. Closely associated with him in the campaign against the alley slums was Ex-Surgeon General George Sternberg. Sternberg, with his military bearing and the prestige of his rank, carried enormous weight in the community and early became the city's foremost authority on sanitary housing.

Washington also owed much to three successive secretaries of the Associated Charities. George Wilson more than any other one man had given new direction to its work in the late 1890's, and his informed humane ideas continued to have great influence when he became the first secretary of the Board of Charities, that official body created by act of Congress to watch over relations between public and private philanthropies. The other two men were newcomers to Washington in the first decade of the century. Without Charles Weller the city's social betterment movement would probably have progressed relatively slowly. In 1900 he had behind him five years' work with Chicago's Associated Charities. Still a man under thirty, he saw with fresh eyes. His insights, sharpened by his professional experience in Chicago and his youthful confidence that once Washingtonians fully comprehended the dimensions of the local problem they would find solutions, gave him peculiar persuasiveness.

In his eight years of directing the Associated Charities, he trained hundreds of volunteers and taught a large segment of upper-class Washington

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the meaning of enlightened social service. Under his inspiration the Monday Evening Club became a vital force in the community. Originated in 1898 to enable professional social workers to become acquainted, the club expanded to include laymen closely connected with local charities and by 1908 was turning into "an educational lyceum" on Washington's civic needs.

Under the guidance of Walter Ufford, Weller's successor at the Associated Charities, the members of the Monday Evening Club formed virtually "a standing conference" on charities and corrections. Ufford had begun his career as an ordained Congregational minister before he took a Ph.D. degree in sociology at Columbia and undertook settlement work in New York. In 1908 when Weller's cloak descended upon him, he was a gentle, soft-looking man of forty-nine whose unimpressive appearance belied his gifts and his vitality. Like Weller before him, he gave more than one well-intentioned Washingtonian a new concept of social work and philanthropy.

Long established residents and newer arrivals alike, loath to let plans for the city beautiful exclude social needs, set themselves to right the balance. In 1902, while attempting to persuade Congress of the urgency of the alley problem, fifty prominent Washingtonians acting on Charles Weller's suggestion had organized a Committee on the Improvement of Housing Conditions. Headed by men of the stature of Sternberg, Kober, Episcopal Bishop Henry Y. Satterlee and S. W. Woodward, president of the

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25 Survey, XXIV, 7 May 10, pp. 197-98.
Washington YMCAs, the committee had sponsored lectures, distributed circulars and prepared notices for the press and for the local churches. Weller had inaugurated the use of visual aids in presenting the data to Washingtonians: a series of stereopticon slides showing existing conditions. The committee's most effective method of publicizing the facts to the rest of the country had followed upon an invitation to Jacob Riis of New York to investigate Washington's alleys and describe what he found. Riis, widely known for his book 'How the Other Half Lives,' had testified before a special joint session of the House and Senate District committees that Negro alley dwellers in the national capital lived under worse conditions and "one-room families" were more numerous than in the grimmest slums of New York City. President Roosevelt had driven the meaning of that statement home when his message to Congress in 1901 pointed out that the death rate in Washington's one-room tenements averaged twice that in two-room, four times that in three-room, and eight times that in four-room tenements. The combined pressure of Riis' findings, the President's appeal and the demands for remedial action pouring in upon Congress from constituents had promised to bring into being the congressional legislation for which Washingtonians had begged in vain for more than a decade.

In the expectation that a new law would soon empower the District commissioners to demolish alley dwellings, in 1901 Dr. Sternberg and Dr. Kober had launched a second housing company patterned on the then seven-year-

26 Post, 14 Apr 02; Anl B of Tr, 1902, pp. 33; A.C. Rpts, 1902, pp. 5, 9, 15, 1903, pp. 18, 32, 1905, p. 13.

27 Jacob Riis, "Racking up the President," Charities, XV, 3 Mar 06, p. 75; Charles F. Weller, "Neglected Neighbors," ibid., pp. 76, 77; Grace Vawter Hacknell, The Inhabited Alleys of Washington, D.C., pp. 8-9; Star, 28 Dec 03.
old Sanitary Improvement Company but with a 11 instead of a 5 percent limit on dividends in order to have inexpensive housing available to the families that would be rooted out of the alley slums. Certainly no critic could truthfully say that Washington had not tried to help herself.

In 1906 after several disheartening delays Congress did create a board vested with authority to condemn unsanitary buildings. Within a year 203 alley houses were razed and 53 more repaired while the District commissioners, inspired to make the most of their powers, ordered the opening up of twelve narrow alleys. Unfortunately early in 1907 the Supreme Court ruled the provision of the 1892 alley-opening act unconstitutional in requiring property-owners in the square involved and in the four abutting squares to meet the cost of damages and expenses unless a jury found the benefits accruing equal to the costs assessed. In consequence all attempts to convert the alleyways into streets came to a halt and, in spite of the President's appointment of a Homes Commission, the campaign to wipe out alley dwelling also slackened. The Sanitary Housing Company was unable to attract more than dribbles of capital with only a 11 percent return and a sense of public service as bait; the job was too big for private enterprise to handle alone. Unless public funds supplied money to build hundreds of cheap houses, the eviction of families from the alley shanties might only mean doubling up in tenements on the streets. But large-scale federal or even a District house-building program was more than Congress could contemplate, particularly members from rural communities and primarily agricultural

28 H Rpt 2178, 58C, 28, 11 Apr 04, Ser 1583.

29 U.S. Stat., 59C, 18, 1 May 06, Ch. 2073, pp. 157-161.
Accordingly the recently created Board of Condemnations ceased to condemn any but the most flagrantly unsanitary buildings.  

The report of the President's Homes Commission when published in 1908, while producing no tangible results, was not without significance. Although Congress refused to spend federal money or District taxes on slum clearance, and although the commission's specific proposals, pointing as they did to the futility of small-scale individual efforts, discouraged private citizens, the analysis in the report of the causal relationship between low wages and the miseries of alley dwellers helped to destroy lingering illusions that pauperism was due solely to the moral weaknesses of its victims and could be cured by moral uplift. Nor did the commission accept entirely the validity of the Associated Charities' thesis that moving people out of the hidden alleys into the open light of the streets would effect a remedy. For the recommendations of the commission indicated its awareness that fundamental faults in the economic and social structure of the community contributed to the ills of which alley dwelling was only a symptom.

The diverse backgrounds of the commission's fifteen members makes their report the more remarkable. All served without compensation. No member was a trained social worker and only General Sternberg and Dr. Kober qualified as professional housing experts. S. W. Woodward, philanthropist,


31 George M. Kober, "Report of Committee on Social Betterment," Reports of the President's Homes Commission, pp. 3-9.

32 Weller, "Neglected Neighbors," pp. 761-94. See also Comrs Rpt, 1906, p. 29; Times, 3 Jan 08.
tight-laced Puritan and successful merchant, must have viewed some problems from a very different standpoint from that of the former cigar maker or the livery stable man on the commission, just as attorney Frederick L. Siddons, confirmed single taxer, doubtless differed at times with the Negro real estate broker; the ideas of George W. Cook, Negro dean of Howard University, may have troubled some of his associates; the two women members, Miss Mabel T. Boardman and Mrs. Thomas Griff, both decidedly of the city's wealthy social elite, might have been expected to think wage rates and salary scales not questions with which a Homes Commission or any non-employer group should deal. Perhaps every member had studied an article in the Bureau of Labor Bulletin which traced statistically the links between dependency and destitution in Washington and unemployment or annual wages of less than $600. If divergent points of view initially handicapped the commission, the common concern to locate the "causing cause" and suggest feasible remedies for the wretchedness of thousands of Washington families resulted in a report that showed deeper insight than other civic bodies had theretofore achieved.

Some of the proposals of the Homes Commission called for legislation--partial public financing for opening alleys and establishing playgrounds, government loans at low interest to enable "business philanthropy," like the Sanitary Housing Company, to build low-rental houses, an anti-usury law, a District Bureau of Labor, workmen's accident insurance, provision for more vocational training in the public school system and better pay for

33 U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Labor, Charity Relief and Wage Earnings (prepared by Samuel E. Forman), 1908, pp. 876-922.
government employees, including not only the unskilled but also the clerical
force whose salary scale had remained unchanged since 1853. But in an
appeal to community conscience and enlightened self-interest the commission
also urged private employers to raise wages in order to ensure a minimum
standard of living below which no family, irrespective of its morals or its
wage-earners' skills, need have to exist. The one basic problem which the
commission ignored was the effect of race prejudice upon the ability of
nearly a third of the city's population to help itself.34

Unfortunately the report stirred up little discussion, and after 1908
laziness overtook the movement for reform through legislation. Optimists
persuaded themselves that past accomplishments, if not permitted to lapse,
were sufficient to meet the needs of the immediate future.35 Those accom­
plishments were in fact impressive. Congress yielding to community pressure
had created a juvenile court, appointed a Prison Commission to study penal
reform, passed a "non-support" act compelling fathers to contribute to the
support of their children, enacted school attendance and child labor laws,
established an Industrial Home School for Colored Children, replaced the
almshouse with a new Home for the Aged and Infirm, opened a model tuber­
culosis hospital and appropriated several small sums for public playgrounds.36

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34 See n. 27; ptü, U.S. and D.C. employees to the President, 19 Dec
16, Folder 326, File 81/2, Services VI, W. Wilson ms (L.C.).

35 Times, 16 Feb 08; Star, 24 Nov 09; A C Rpt, 1909, pp. 8-9; William
H. Baldwin, "Making the Deserter Pay the Piper, The District of Columbia Plan
of Paying Prisoners' Wages to Their Deserted Wives," Survey, XXIII, 20 Nov 09,
pp. 219-52.

36 U.S. Stat., 55C, 2S, 1 Mar 01, ch 670, p. 851, 58C, 28, 27 Apr 01,
ch 1628, p. 388, 59C, 15, 19 Mar 06, ch 960, pp. 73-78, 23 Mar 06, ch 1131,
pp. 86-87, 3 Jun 06, ch 3051, pp. 219-20, 27 June 06, ch 3555, p. 182, 60C,
15, 26 May 08, ch 198, p. 303, 28 May 08, ch 209, pp. 120-23; A C Rpt, 1905,
At the same time groups of private citizens had not waited for Congress to act; they had opened playgrounds and arranged summer outings with money raised by subscription; the Board of Trade had organized a free legal aid service; the Associated Charities staff had served as employment agents; and voluntary gifts had increased the charity fund fifteen fold within a few years. 37 Perhaps still more noteworthy, Negroes had started the educational campaign against tuberculosis, an organized Alley Improvement Association, founded a Children's Temporary Home and with white cooperation maintained a colored settlement house. 38 But the dedicated zeal that had made that record possible faded as citizens concluded they could no longer look for help from official Washington. When President Taft succeeded Theodore Roosevelt, the White House ceased to provide initiative. District commissioners Henry Macfarland and Henry West resigned and were replaced by men of narrower outlook and less executive vigor. Cuno Rudolph, a well-to-do hardware merchant, had served as president of the Associated Charities and won the title "Father of Washington's Playgrounds," but he was an inexperienced administrator and only less conservative than the retired army general, John A. Johnston, whom Taft appointed as the second civilian commissioner. The turnover in Congress, moreover, occasioned by the elections in 1910 gave control of the District committees to men more concerned with attacking real estate speculators and the utility interests in Washington


38 A C Rpt, 1902, pp. 8, 10, 1903, p. 23; Bicknell, The Inhabited Alleys, pp. 24-25; Bee, 3 See below, pp.
than with helping her poor. For the District of Columbia the one forward-looking measure passed during an administration determined to check the spread of socialism in America and all that dread term implied was the endorsement of most of the recommendations of the Penal Commission of 1908 and the appropriation of funds to carry them out. The innovations proposed and accepted were primarily the fruit of the humane and courageous thinking of John Joy Edson, the commission chairman. Not content with spelling out the obvious need for a parole system and suspended sentences and for an expanded physical plant to relieve the shocking overcrowding at the workhouse and jail, Edson and his associates boldly advocated a totally new method of handling first offenders and minor misdemeanants: help them to rehabilitate themselves under watchful but unrestrictive supervision, instead of locking them up with hardened criminals in the penitentiary or with "the mass of derelicts" at the Asylum workhouse. Because the ladies of the Mt. Vernon Association objected to having a penal institution of any kind at Belvoir, Virginia, adjacent to a national shrine, in 1912 Congress transferred to the War Department the Belvoir site purchased in 1910 for the reformatory for the "more hopeful" class of adult offenders; the change of location to Lorton, Virginia, consequently delayed the opening of the new reformatory until November 1916. For different reasons the wanted legislation authorizing

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39 H Rpt 825, 61C, 2S, 24 Mar 10, Ser 5592; S Doc 989, 62C, 3S, 19 Dec 12, Ser 6364; interview, Louis Brownlow; Times, 22 Nov, 16 Dec, 28 Feb 13

40 Interview, Louis Brownlow, 6 Mar 59.

41 Comrs Rpt, 1909, p. 28, Ser 5809; Times, 9, 15 Jun 07.
indeterminate sentences and parole had to wait till the 1920's. But the opening of the new workhouse at Occoquan, Virginia, in 1911 initiated a revolution in penal administration, for here was a large institution without bars, bolts or other means of physical restraint, night or day. The inmates worked on the farm or at the brick kilns which by 1914 were supplying all the brick for the District Government's building and repair work. Officials from every section of the United States and from Europe visited Occoquan to observe the astonishing success of a system that combined minimum custody with wholesome outdoor employment.

While the pace of the civic uplift movement slowed after 1908 it did not grind to a halt, and though Washington progressives marked time in pushing for further legislation, they joined with more conservative citizens in pursuing a public health program through education. Because of the effect upon Washington's reputation in the rest of the nation, the cleanliness of the city, like a lowered death rate, was as important to business promoters as to social workers. When a "clean-up week" sponsored chiefly by the Evening Star resulted in the collection of thirty-three wagon loads of rubbish from a single block, a "clean city" committee set itself to teach thoughtless citizens the principles of sanitation and good health.

The District Health office, understaffed and starved for funds though it was,


struggled faithfully to better sanitary conditions, and by 1912 the Board for the Condemnation of Insanitary Buildings, even while grumbling that "a school of good housekeeping" was the chief need of alley dwellers, had ordered the demolition of over 1500 buildings in the city. Meanwhile philanthropy, prouded to the plight of aged people, provided some seven new homes, chiefly under denominational aegis. Private contributions of time and money continued to flow also into the city's medical and children's charities. And, contrary to all logic during these years of congressional reluctance to vote appropriations for adequate public health and building inspection, for additional officers to enforce compulsory school attendance or for staff for the Board of Children's Guardians, Congress continued to grant generous subsidies to private hospitals.

Out of this curious situation grew a struggle that for several years absorbed much of the energies of civic-minded Washingtonians and focussed their attention on administrative procedures. The fight lay between boards of directors of private charities and the Board of Charities, that public body created to prevent overlapping services and inefficiencies in public and private charities and to provide for needy people whom private institutions did not reach. The five-man Board of Charities felt strongly that public money should go only to public institutions; private resources could and would meet the challenge and support private philanthropies adequately. But socially important Washingtonians resented that plan as

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44 Star, 1 Apr, 27 Jun 09, 3 Mar, 23 May, 8 Sep, 2 Oct 12; Comrs Rpt, 1912, pp. 16, 47, Ser 6661; Bicknell, The Inhabited Alleys, pp. 23-25; 8 Doc 422, 61c, 2s, 11 Mar 10, p. 62, Ser 5588.

45 H Rpts, 1903, pp. 18-19, 1913, pp. 12, 15; S Doc 207, 69c, 28, 14 Feb 27, pp. 22, 118, 167, Ser 8762.
belittling of their own pet charities. Consequently the Board's arguments urging the economies of building a general municipal hospital financed by public funds and administered by public officials met with fierce resistance.

The sanctity of custom and the prestige of its defenders defeated a recommendation of 1909 when the Board, itself composed of such influential men as John Joy Edson and Dr. George Kober, proposed closing Emergency Hospital and denying the public Columbia Hospital $300,000 for a new building, since both institutions tended to spend their government monies on better care for pay patients instead of enlarging service to the poor for whose benefit the grants were intended. The proponents of subsidized private charities, it is true, could point to the shortcomings of more than one public institution. For example, parsimonious appropriations for the new almshouse, renamed the Home for the Aged and Infirm, had forced economies in construction and a prison-like sparseness of furnishings and facilities--neither screened porches, assembly rooms, chapel, diet kitchen nor private rooms for the desperately ill or dying; by 1910 the meagre funds allowed for running the home with its 130 inmates in need of 24-hour care kept the staff to thirteen attendants. The provision for the education of colored children in the new Industrial Home School was equally thin. They got some training in domestic work, gardening, farming and good habits, but no

\[\text{Reference Sources}\]


17 Times, 22 Sep 07; D. C. Village, Fifty Years at Blue Plains, 1906-56.
industrial or vocational schooling, and the physical plant was grossly inadequate. This public institution which supplanted the Hart Farm School after 1906 was little improvement over that older subsidized private charity. On the other hand, the tuberculosis hospital opened in 1908 showed that a carefully planned, well-run public institution could perform services no private organization could equal.

It was possibly the presidential election campaigns of 1912 that revitalized the city's interest in the substantive features of social betterment; for residents could scarcely fail to remember the vigor Theodore Roosevelt had infused into the local movement, and Woodrow Wilson's "New Freedom" promised far-reaching social as well as political changes. More probably, Washingtonians learned during their years of quiescence that the admirable laws passed between 1905 and 1908 had become virtually dead letters for lack of appropriations with which to work, and that the needs of a growing population in the interim had outrun what the earlier acts were designed to supply. Public charity was sharply limited in scope; except for opening playgrounds, fighting tuberculosis, and founding several homes for the aged, private philanthropy, while no less generous than in the 1890's, had widened its field very little; urgent wants within the community still fell betwixt and between. Other than several old buildings at the Asylum the District still had no place in which to care for the chronically ill or for drug addicts, alcoholics and the "mildly insane."
The Board of Children's Guardians knew that the benefits of placing its wards with private families were imperilled by the smallness of the staff of inspectors assigned to visiting the widely scattered foster and boarding homes, --only one inspector to 360 children compared to one for a third or a quarter as many in most American cities. Over 700 feeble-minded children got no care at all. 51 And the unwillingness of white people to give more than token sums for Washington's nearly 1500 destitute colored children multiplied difficulties. No observant resident of the capital regarded Washington in 1912 as a model municipality.

Yet when the new drive for social improvements began, it again centered on alley-dwelling. The most enlightened Washingtonians adopted the creed: "Good homes make a good community." While members of the Monday Evening Club, the spearhead of the new campaign for legislation, prepared a directory of inhabited alleys, the Associated Charities, the Woman's Welfare department of the National Civic Federation, the Men and Religion Forward Movement, and the Social Service Conference of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington studied the problem. In September 1912 the three secular organizations formed a Central Housing Committee to enlist the cooperation of the press, church groups and business and civic associations in a united appeal to Congress for a federal housing commission with authority to act. 52

Help came from an unexpected quarter the following spring when Mrs. Woodrow


Wilson began to tour Washington's alleys and visit all the settlement houses. The daughter and granddaughter of slave-owners, Mrs. Wilson explained that her upbringing had taught her to accept work in behalf of Negroes as her Christian duty. Negroes themselves found objectionable. During her first weeks in the White House she attended conferences of the Associated Charities, was elected to its board and threw herself into the work of the Woman's Welfare Department of the Civic Federation with such energy that, as one associate noted, "people flocked to our standard and everybody wanted to help in the alleys. It was laughingly said that no one could move in polite society in Washington who could not talk alleys."\textsuperscript{53} Debutantes formed a Neighborhood House Auxiliary to do kindergarten work in the settlements, and by May 1913 "Automobile tours of our best people, by way of 'studying the conditions' and 'helping the poor, are now established as socially correct."\textsuperscript{54} While some of this activity was useless and essentially frivolous, citizens were aroused over alley-dwelling as they had not been since Charles Weller first showed his stereoptican views of Washington's slums. And the personal interest of President and Mrs. Wilson in a constructive program promised to produce mighty things.

Before June 1913 women had raised $8500 for the Sanitary Improvement Company, Senator Work of California, radical-minded friend of the District, submitted a bill to establish a federal housing commission, bills in both House and Senate proposed the conversion of two of the worst alleys into


\textsuperscript{54} Times, 20, 24, 27 May 13, 24 Jan 14.
parks, and another citizens' committee, this time containing representatives of the Board of Trade and the newer Chamber of Commerce, undertook to draft a measure which businessmen and large taxpayers could endorse without qualms. At this point the Senate requested a tabulation of ownership of alley property. The forty-page list revealed more than a thousand different owners, most of whom held only one or two lots, many of whom were women and a few of whom themselves lived in the alleys. Realty companies owned very little alley property. A disconcerting discovery was that title to six lots was vested in the Washington City Orphan Asylum. The battle thus could not be fought against a mere handful of villains or a few unwitting exploiters like the young man in O. Henry's Brickdust Row.

The plan that eventually emerged from the citizens' committee made no mention of public housing but called for vesting in the District commissioners' authority to condemn alley property and draw upon the District's general fund over a ten-year period, to meet the costs of conversion of alleys into minor streets or parks. By the time the proposal belatedly reached Congress early in 1914, popular excitement had died down and congressional opposition to spending federal money in the capital had grown. Nothing stirred on the Hill until mid-August. Then Congress learned that on the last morning of her life Mrs. Woodrow Wilson had told the President she would rest happier if she knew the alley bill had passed. Two months later

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56 O Doc 120, 633, 15, 2 Jul 13, Ser 6536.

what would soon prove to be a curiously unrealistic measure became law. It forbade after July 1, 1918 residence in any alley not converted to a minor street but provided no machinery and no funds for conversion and ignored the problem of where evicted families were to live. The Board of Trade was troubled at the threat to the rights of private property, but most Washingtonians were elated. Shutting their eyes to the weakness of the new law, they assumed that the alley problem would now solve itself. Congressional hearings had brought out the fact that, without benefit of publicly financed housing, the alley population had declined from the 19,076 of 1905 to 11,400 in 1912, and when a special census of 1915 showed fewer than 8,500 still living in alleys and the new Ellen Wilson Home Association preparing plans for low-rental houses on the streets, the matter dropped out of sight. At the end of 1916 consequently the condition of the families still living in the city's alley slums differed little from that of 1911.

No one foresaw that within a year the demand for housing in the war-ridden capital would consign the alley act to limbo.

While the long battle against alley-dwelling got the most publicity and engrossed the attention of some philanthropists, social betterment in other realms, notably child care, made greater lasting progress. Infant mortality, on the decline since 1900, had dropped to one in ten by 1917. Thanks in considerable degree to a Children's Council formed in November 1911,


dry nurseries, child welfare centers, public playgrounds, summer camps
and classes and clubs at the settlement houses came to be part of an
accepted program of checking juvenile delinquency before it began. 60 The
Juvenile Court, to be sure, proved disappointingly ineffectual; it had
only two probation officers assigned to it, had to function as a criminal
rather than a domestic relations court, and its policy of making short-term
or temporary commitments of children to the Board of Children's Guardians
forced the Guardians to place an increasing number of their wards in
institutions instead of private homes. 61 Yet despite the continuing
handicap of a small staff, the Guardians succeeded in providing better
care for colored children than was possible earlier, for while a smaller
percentage could be placed with private families, the quality of the homes
was higher. On the other hand, whereas good private homes had been avail-
able at the turn of the century for four out of every five of the white
children, by 1916 the Board had to put more than half into institutions,
since white families were reluctant to take temporary boarders, chances
of adoption accordingly diminished, and short-term apprenticeships were
impracticable. 62 The institutions were on the whole better run and more

60 Times, 9, 11 Sep, 31 Oct 14, 21 Jan, 8, 23 Jun, 19 Sep, 15 Nov
15, 27 Aug, 2, 17, 27 Oct 16; Rpt B of Ch, 1912, pp. 358-59; A C Rot, 1912,
p. 11; Hastings Hart, Child Welfare in the District of Columbia, pp. 3-11,
117-123, 130-132 (hereafter cited as Hart, Child Welfare); Louis G. Weitzmann,
One Hundred Years of Catholic Charities in the District of Columbia, pp. 120-
25, 122-48; Comrs Rpt, 1917, p. 19, etc.

61 Times, 1 Dec 15, 2 Feb 16; A C Rot, 1913, p. 10.

239, 240, 256-45, 1917, pp. 209-10; Times, 8 Jun 15; S Dec 207, 69C, 26;
14 Feb 27, pp. 234, 235, 8702; A C Rot, 1913, p. 15.
numerous than in the 1890's, but an institutional atmosphere hung over the best of them, even the new Episcopal Home with its spacious grounds beyond the Anacostia where the children were housed in groups of eight to ten on "the cottage system." 63

More significant, however, than the recurrent dissatisfaction with the placing of wards was the growing realization that the Board of Children's Guardians, established to handle a social problem after it had developed, could not work effectively in the field of prevention. In 1911 the Board president, B. Pickman Mann, an examiner in the government Patent Office, undertook a study of the background of the Board's charges in an endeavor to identify and find ways of eradicating the social forces that brought 1500 minors into its custody. He concluded that two obstacles stood in the way of a constructive attack upon delinquency and dependency in Washington, namely race prejudice and the lack of any means of keeping a family together when long illness, unemployment or the desertion of the wage earner caused a domestic crisis. Mann had no panaceas for racial antagonisms but he believed extensive recourse to mothers' pensions, a plan the Associated Charities had followed as best it could since 1906, would cut the roots of many problems of child care. A law passed in 1911 limiting to eight hours the working day of women in mercantile and manufacturing establishments had had some beneficial effect, but in a non-industrial generally non-commercial city where jobs in factories and shops were few and virtually never open to colored women, the act contributed little to the preservation of family life, least of all among colored people whose

children yearly swelled the ranks of delinquents. Chiefly at Mann's
instigation but with the cooperation of the judge of the Juvenile Court,
the Children's Council and other child welfare groups, in 1916 the Children's
Protective Association came into being to carry on Mann's study of how to
forestall delinquency and dependency.64

Just as tacit recognition grew that deep-seated social maladjust­
ments underlay most of Washington's child welfare problems, so an enlightened
segment of the community began to take a new look at adult unemployment and
its consequences. The fluctuations were confusing; the figures on homeless
men out of work who sought temporary refuge at the Municipal Lodging House
rose from 6800 in 1914 to 9900 the next year and again dropped to 6800 in
1916 when munitions plants in other parts of the country opened up jobs
for the able-bodied. Although the Lodging House was designed for "tramps,"
the Monday Evening Club put a new, better-equipped Lodging House high on
the list of civic needs. The ups and downs of employment for permanent
residents troubled thoughtful citizens even more. Because the building
trades and "ditch digging" provided seasonal work for both craftsmen and
unskilled labor, unemployment rose alarmingly in severe winters, but its
decline in a mild winter encouraged belief that nature must take its course;
all philanthropists could do was to try to find stopgaps when the worst
befell. Yet the point of view continued to shift subtly in the direction
of greater public responsibility. If a moral judgment seemed implicit in

64 Bpt E of Ch, (1913, pp. 121-38; See also 1909, pp. 322-23) Hart,
Child Welfare, p. 124; "LaFollette-Peters Eight-hour Bill Enacted into Law,"
Survey, XXXI, 7 Mar 14, p. 689; H Doc 11461, 62C, 35, 8 Apr 13, Ser 61460;
Times, 15 Nov 15.
the comment of the superintendent of the Gospel Mission in the late winter of 1911 that most of Washington's 15,000 unemployed men were "deserving," charitable-minded citizens were too concerned with the basic fact of want to consider moral criteria. The Chamber of Commerce urged an immediate start on all public works for which there were appropriations in order to reduce unemployment; and the District commissioners agreed. While severe weather kept the building trades idle, Walter Ufford of the Associated Charities wrote 3000 letters to householders who might have jobs to offer, but he remarked: "What Washington really needs is an employment bureau under Government auspices, without the tinge of charity." 65

Ufford went much further, for he advocated old age, sickness, accident and unemployment insurance for all wage earners and minimum pay of $2.00 a day for common laborers at a time when $1.50 to $1.75 was standard despite findings that $720 a year was below a subsistence wage for a family of five. Ufford's thinking far outran that of most of his associates and indeed would have little impact until the 1930's. The Associated Charities itself continued to approach its every case as one independent of all others, a finger in the dyke method of work which left little energy or time to plan far-reaching social reconstruction. 66

In early 1916 Senator Nolan of California, in response to a flood of petitions from government clerks,


introduced a bill setting a minimum pay rate of $3 a day for all federal
and District government employees, but as half the forty-odd thousand were
then earning less and a fourth of them less than $750 a year, the proposal
seemed unthinkably extravagant, particularly as seven hours constituted the
normal day in government offices. The bill got no more attention than the
repeated pleas of government clerks for a pension system. By and large,
influential Washingtonians, like members of Congress, still believed laws
of supply and demand must regulate wage rates. Though anxious to wipe out
unemployment, that threat to community stability, few people, trade
unionists included, thought legislation necessary to set economic matters
right. 67

Although pensions and laws of a kind a later generation would consider
essential to social security seemed in 1912 radical nonsense to most of a
nation which still thought its poorest citizens protected by the right to
homestead on the public domain, the immediate actualities of life in
America's big cities confronted humane citizens with a single alternative:
they must enlarge their efforts to help the needy. If no one in Washington
saw the situation as an either or, nevertheless public and private charity
gradually widened to narrow one by one the gaps in services. Private
giving enabled two new homes for the aged to open, one of them sponsored
by colored people. As charity reached out to the chronically ill, the Home

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67 Rpts B of Ch, 1902, pp. 207-08, 1916, p. 244; see petitions and
lttrs in folder 326, file h843, Ser VIB, Woodrow Wilson mss; Times, 9 Apr 11,
30 Apr 13, 17 Jan 14, 29 Jan, 26 Feb, 1, 17, 20, 22 Mar, 16 Apr, 25 Nov,
7 Dec 16.
for Incurables came to occupy a far larger place among the city's philanthropies than formerly and, under the leadership of Mrs. Archibald Hopkins, a close friend of Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, the project evoked wide local interest. The long debated question of a municipal hospital in turn appeared to be settled in 1914 by a congressional appropriation for plans for a new building in northwest Washington. But the bitter opposition of property-owners to having a "pauper" hospital in their neighborhood caused delays which threatened to kill the project forever. Not until January 1917, after a change of location back to the old Asylum grounds on the Anacostia and a politically adroit proposal of District Commissioner Brownlow to name the institution for the former chairman of the Senate District committee, was the building of Gallinger Hospital ensured.

Despite lingering doubts about the morality of helping fallen women, the missions for unmarried mothers also enlisted more generous support, perhaps partly because of a dramatic incident in 1914. Sentiment had long been mounting to force the closing of the houses of ill fame in the triangle below Pennsylvania avenue near the Treasury. Known as "Joe Hooker's Division" since Civil War days when General Hooker's determination to keep prostitution within bounds had led to a semi-official demarcation of a few squares along the Avenue, the red light district had spread until in 1913, according to outraged women suffragists who investigated, it stretched from within two blocks of the White House to the edge of Capitol Hill. Open

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The new importance of women in the "civic uplift" movement was well-illustrated in the battle against the Division. "Suffragettes" headed that drive, but through the non-political activities of the Woman's Welfare Department of the National Civic League anti-suffragists and women without political convictions also began to emerge as leaders in various fields of community welfare. Women had long been the chief proponents of prohibition. Whether or not they were primarily responsible for the intensification of the anti-saloon campaign in the years immediately preceding World War I, they took an active part in the fight, particularly after discovering that the District Excise Board, established by law in 1909 to supervise and limit liquor traffic, had failed to wipe out the evils attributed to the saloon. Whereas men had formerly made the policy decisions and controlled the purse strings of the city's charities, after 1912 women increasingly took things into their own hands. In 1913 one woman

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71 Star, 15 Feb 12; Times, 2 Jul 11, 16 Feb 16; S Rpt 391, 63C, 26, 30 Mar 14, Ser 6552; S Doc 911, 63C, 38, 15 Mar 15, Ser 6775.
wrote of the war against alley dwelling: "Never before have the women of
the capital risen in a body"; the victory was theirs. Success whetted the
appetite. 72

In Washington, unlike most other big cities, women's clubs were not
the mainstay of volunteer social service. In spite of the elaborate plans
of the now all but defunct Wimodaughis and the programs of the National
Professional Women's League, the Women's Suffrage League and the District
Federation of Women's Clubs, in Washington the "club woman" was a relatively
inconspicuous figure. In Chicago to be president of the Woman's Club was
to hold an eagerly sought-after position of power. Washington had no
comparable organization. Of her unusually large number of single women,
many were self-supporting; for them club life as such was more a matter of
sociability than of public service. Women not obliged to earn their own
living might join afternoon bridge clubs or literary discussion groups
but they carried on their civic activities through the churches and work
with organized charities. 73

Yet few cities had so large a group of prominent women pouring their
energies into social betterment. In many parts of America women with leisure
at their disposal would not learn much about community service until war
work drew them into it. Here the sense of obligation came much earlier,
doubtless partly through the skillful appeals of Charles Weller of the
Associated Charities and later through the example set by women with the
social prestige of a Mrs. Hopkins, a Mabel T. Boardman, a Mrs. Henry Macfarland

72 Edith Eimer Wood, "Four Washington Alleys," Survey, XXXI, 6 Dec
13, p. 182.

73 Times, 3 Nov 07; Thirteenth Census, 1910, Population.
and, above all, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson. While Dolly Madison and Frances Folsom Cleveland each in her day had participated in Washington’s charities, neither First Lady had played so direct a part as Mrs. Wilson and neither had occupied the White House in a period when social guilt ran strong in the upper ranks of American society. Miss Boardman, after serving on President Roosevelt’s Homes Commission, undertook as a director of the District chapter of the American Red Cross to teach Washington debutantes that their privileged place in the world put upon them a debt to society which they could best pay by personal service in worthy causes. Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Macfarland similarly indicated by precept and deed that for women the one justification for unearned wealth and leisure lay in good works. Debutantes quickly learned that they could combine charitable activities with the gaieties of the social season and indeed, after the Washington Junior League came into being in 1914, a disciplined pursuit of the former was likely to enhance the letter, especially for the young women of slightly insecure social background.

The heightened interest in beautifying the city and in bettering social conditions was by no means a phenomenon peculiar to Washington. On the contrary, it was country-wide. For as Americans awoke in the mid-1890’s to the realization that the United States was no longer overwhelmingly rural and that urban problems required solutions different from those offered by homesteading in the land of free opportunity, city-dwellers from coast to coast, spurred on by the muckrakers and preachers of the social gospel, early in the 20th century set themselves to find an answer. They rarely

73a Times, 10 Sep 11
questioned their capacity to reach it. Their wish to have the national capital a model met with some response in Congress and strengthened the local movement. But its growth in the District of Columbia was indigenous and in some particulars antedated that in other municipalities. The belief of Americans elsewhere that Washingtonians had little or nothing to do with the starting and carrying on the City Beautiful and welfare projects in the capital was as widespread as it was unjust. Later it would have serious consequences for the local community. Before the entry of the United States into the world war, however, Washington's civic leaders consistently displayed a magnificent faith that they could overcome every difficulty. Who took the credit was unimportant. In 1916 District Commissioner Oliver Newman told the Monday Evening Club that Washingtonians had a wider interest in community affairs than he had seen in any of the other nine cities where he had lived. 7h With a highly developed civic conscience, a cleaner municipal government than other cities enjoyed and far fewer class conflicts between capital and labor than those of industrial centers, Washington appeared to have a long headstart on achieving her ideal. Here the optimism that characterized reformers everywhere in the America of the period was especially marked. If naive and somewhat shallow, it nevertheless suffused the city with a golden warmth of hope.

7h Times, 18 Jan 16.
CHAPTER XVII

BUSINESS AIMS AND RELATIONS WITH CONGRESS

Oh, my sister cities of the land, harken to me . . . . Young and strong, fair of body, clean of mind, I have kept our faith. I live and grow, in beauty and power, in the strength of the spirit that makes for good. My feet are set in the path that leads, my hands pluck flowers by the way, my eyes leave not the shining star that is my guide. . . .

Now harken, my sisters, to what I will do. . . . I am young. . . but also I am the Capital and blood kin to our Mecca of the East. Day by day, year by year, century by century, I will grow. . . . It shall be mine, by the example that I teach, to put order in thy houses, where disorder now reigns. It shall be mine to teach thee cleanliness of body and of mind, and honesty and the municipal faith. It shall be mine to teach thee the meaning and show thee the soul of the beauty that lies within and the beauty that shines without. ¹

So the Evening Star in 1908 portrayed Washington's past and future. In somewhat less bombastic language presidents of the Board of Trade voiced similar complacency; their occasional reminders that no one must rest on his oars scarcely interrupted the flow of self-congratulation over "the grandeur of our city." ² In addition to a "delightful climate," a magnificent physical layout, an ample supply of pure water, efficient local government and moderate taxation, Washington offered "superior commercial and manufactural probabilities" and exceptional educational advantages through her universities, public and private schools, art galleries and libraries. ³

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¹ Evening Star, 1 Jan 09.
² Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1905, p. 5, 1906, p. 37, 1910, pp. 13-14, 1912, pp. 5-6, 1913, pp. 33-34.
³ Ibid., 1907, pp.
Even an experienced former District commissioner believed her blunders few: "Is it any wonder," Henry West asked rhetorically in 1913, "that during recent years there should have been attracted to Washington a most desirable class of residents—people who have acquired a competence in commercial centers and who are glad to live in a city which is attractive and well kept, where the society is cosmopolitan, where peace and order reign with freedom from political disturbance, and where the constant march of progress is unchecked?"

Real estate and its ally, banking, continued to be the mainstay of Washington's business world. Land prices rose steadily. While row houses went up in the vicinity of Lincoln Park and in Mt. Pleasant, apartment houses adapted to families who could afford only one servant multiplied in more central areas, and the expanding "millionaire colony" around and about DuPont and Sheridan circles, the newspapers reported, was making the "City of Magnificent Distances" also the "Home of Palatial Mansions." Wall Street depressions had little effect upon banking or building operations in the District; Washington real estate, on the contrary, attracted outside capital. One realtor averred that Washington in 1907 was growing faster in two months than she had in twelve during the 1890's. As office buildings and stores took over the area immediately to the north and east of the Treasury, real estate brokers developed new residential sections along upper 16th street, about Chevy Chase circle, and, for people of very modest means, along the

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1 S Doc 120, 63C, 25, 13 Feb 14, p. 11, Ser 6593.
eastward extension of Rhode Island avenue. Uneasiness about the attitude of the new administration in 1913 and then the outbreak of war in Europe lessened the volume of transactions, but prices did not fall and during 1915 apartment house building in Washington again accelerated.

Suburban expansion, though hampered for a time by lack of sewers and always by costly street paving assessments, the Board of Trade declared "phenomenal." Built-up blocks interspersed with an ever diminishing number of vacant lots stretched for a mile or more north of Florida avenue by 1907, making the formal city limits a limit only in name. Prophesies ran that before 1917 Washington's suburbs would reach into nearby Maryland. And indeed in 1910 the parts of the District outside Washington and Georgetown contained a quarter of its total population. Trolley lines passing over the Aqueduct bridge meanwhile hastened the growth of Roslyn on the Virginia shore and inspired so many real estate ventures there that in 1909 District Commissioner Henry Macfarland argued that protection of the capital would soon force the Supreme Court to pass upon federal reannexation of the southern third of the original ten-mile square. Since Washington would need that area for factories and homes for her poor, he believed the Court would find in the District's favor. The question never got beyond vague talk among Washington promoters, and by 1921 with the creation of Arlington County the region would be too valuable to the Commonwealth of Virginia to allow room for hope in the District that its bounds could again reach beyond the

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5 Post, 6 Apr, 29 Jun 02, 23 Jan, 6 Mar, 9 Apr 03, 28 Jun 10, 25 May 13; Star, 10 Jan, 30 Mar, 5 Sep 03, 26 Mar, 11 Jun, 2 Dec 05, 1 Jan 08, 1 Jan, 15 May 09, 1 Jan 11; Times, 9 Jun, 13 Oct, 3 Nov, 18 Dec 07, 9 Feb, 3 May, 9 Aug, 22 Nov 08, 9 Nov 11; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1908, p. 23, 1910, pp. 13-14.

6 Star, 1 Jan 11, 1 Jan 15, 1 Jan 16; Times, 28 Feb 13, 18 Jun 15; Comrs Rpt, 1915, p. 50, Feb 1917.
Building and loan associations financed most small householders' home-building, while the city's big national banks handled larger enterprises—entire suburban sub-divisions, new office buildings, the utility interests and the like. Surprisingly enough in a city not primarily commercial in character, banking was extremely profitable. The Riggs National Bank ranked as one of the most powerful in the country, powerful enough indeed to risk defiance of the United States Treasury in 1915 when the Controller of the Currency, John Skelton Williams, invoked the authority of the new Federal Reserve act to stop the improper practices which he charged the bank's officers of resorting to. Charles Glover, the bank president, was so incensed at what he labelled Williams' personal vindictiveness and misrepresentations that he hit the controller on the head with a walking stick when the two met by chance in Lafayette square. Glover, who three years before had struck a congressman for calling his veracity into question, was again summoned before Congress to make public apology, but the episode, once the courts had declared the bank's action legal, heightened rather than lowered the Riggs' stature in American financial circles. And insofar as the administration's campaign to weaken Wall Street's stranglehold on American business was successful, all Washington's big banks benefitted.

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7 Am. Rpts B of Tr., 1903, p. 16, 1912, p. 17; Comrs Rpts., 1906, p. 11; Ser. 5126, 1912, p. 57; Ser. 6164; Times, 9 Jun 07; Rec., 592, 29, Index, p. 267; H. B. F. Macfarland, "The Rebuilding of the National Capital," American City, I, Sep 09, pp. 11-12; Star, 1 May 09, 1 Jan 12; Post, 13 Mar 10; 8 Dec 129; 6LC., 13, 7 Jul 16, Ser. 6954; Thirteenth U.S. Census, 1910, Population, II, 291-95.

In spite of virtually unbroken prosperity and a growth that brought the District's population to over 367,000 in 1910, a part of the business community urged as insurance for the future a renewed drive to attract industry. The Chamber of Commerce, founded by small business interests in 1907, was the chief advocate of the plan which its members contended would reduce seasonal unemployment and give Washington her proper place in the American business world. They lost no opportunity to advertise her potentialities for manufacturing. On the other hand, the Board of Trade, realtors, and bankers committed to developing the city as a show place and residential center tended to shy away from the proposal. If they did not call it "suicidal," they knew it would antagonize Congress and apparently feared that industrial competition with other American cities, in the words of a writer for Scribner's Magazine, would cost "the spoiled child of the republic" the favors she enjoyed. By 1915, to be sure, the squeeze caused by rising prices in a community where fixed incomes were the rule led the president of the Board of Trade to suggest that factories in the suburbs might furnish the new revenue the District badly needed, but he admitted that the Great Falls, the one ready source of power, could not supply much, particularly as Congress had not acted on a bill of 1914 to harness the power then going to waste at the Falls.

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All businessmen, however, approved the idea of expanding Washington's commerce by improving railroad freight service, building with federal subsidies a shipping canal from the Anacostia to Chesapeake Bay and making the capital the national convention city, a goal to be achieved by providing a huge auditorium. None of these proposals, most of them bolstered by arguments familiar from the 18thC onward, produced results. If large enough, the auditorium, the Chamber of Commerce estimated, would bring $10,000,000 annually to Washington; District businessmen need put in only a quarter million dollars, leaving a National George Washington Memorial Association to raise another two and a quarter million, to erect a hall in which every big national and international organization in the United States would want to convene; the local business community would net at least 40 per cent on its investment. The $250,000 from the District was not forthcoming, and not until the 1950's when a plan to establish a "Washington Cultural Center" shifted the emphasis did the century-old dream begin to look realizable. 11 Yet yearly the flood of visitors ready to spend money in the capital rose as the fame of the architectural beauties and historical interest of the national city spread. By 1908 Washingtonians were learning to recognize the arrival of spring less by the appearance of robins than by the fleet of sight-seeing buses manned by megaphoned guides which lined up on the Hill and about the White House, and by 1916, next to government business and real estate, the tourist trade ranked as Washington's chief financial asset. 12

11 Star, 2 Jan 05, 1 Jan 09, 28 Feb 12; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1905, pp. 10-12, 51, 111, 1907; pp. 150-52, 1908, p. 20, 1910, pp. 13-14, 31, 92-98, 1912, p. 8; Times, 17 Jun 08, 22 Jan 09, 19 Mar 11.

The Board of Trade meanwhile had ceased to occupy the position of enlightened leadership it had held in 1901. Differences of opinion about what Washington should strive for contributed to the splitting off of the Chamber of Commerce in 1907, but, although explicit statements are few, the irritation of small businessmen at what they thought the high-handedness of the little coterie that set Board of Trade policies clearly counted more heavily than disagreement with any specific pronouncement of the older organization. When its president in 1903 declared that once a Board committee, the Board's directors and the full Board endorsed any proposal it immediately commanded "public attention, public respect and the support of all good citizens" as well as serious consideration in Congress, he overstated the case very slightly. Thereafter a growing tendency to regard the welfare of the city as identical with that of the thin top layer of society gradually stripped the Board of Trade of its former representative quality. For more than fifteen years its guiding lights almost without exception had served also as trustees of local philanthropies; most of the younger generation of Board directors did not. Doubtless the increasing professionalism of social welfare work accounted for much of that change, but it had the effect of divorcing Board policy-makers from close association with the social betterment leaders. Nor did the citizens' associations fill the gap; more fully than in the 1890's they concentrated upon their own neighborhood problems to the exclusion of city-wide concerns.

By 1911 the Times, Washington's nearest approach to a left-wing paper, observed that the Chamber of Commerce "represents the most advanced and most progressive thought of the community. It stands for the interests of the
people of Washington. It studied and made recommendations on questions
the Board of Trade now bypassed--utility rates, milk inspection and similar
matters important to the rank and file of humble citizens. Unhappily,
perhaps because business counsels were now divided, the Chamber carried less
weight than its parent organization had once. Some men belonged to both
bodies; after 1907 neither organization included any colored men. Even
while it was losing members, the Board of Trade never admitted that it no
longer spoke for the city as a whole. Successful campaigns to recruit
new members evidently laid to rest any doubts of the directors that they
knew best what Washington needed. They devoted their efforts to city finances
and the protection of the "half-and-half" principle from congressional
inroads. And the board of directors, composed of men linked with the great
real estate companies, the big banks and the utilities, continued to
exercise enormous influence, particularly as long as a group in Congress
looked upon investment in Washington as a sure road to fortune. That as
late as 1915 some congressmen still held that view emerges in the comment
of a representative who in congratulating a newly appointed District com-
missioner assured him he should wind up his term in the District building
with at least $1,000,000. The Board of Trade would certainly have scoffed at the notion that

13 Times, 8 Jan 11.

14 Anl Rats B of Tr, 1902-1916 inclusive, especially 1903, p. 6, 1905,
Times, 17, 30 Jan, 12 Feb, 9 Aug 08, 12, 26 Jan, 15 Mar, 12 Apr, 26 May 11,
17 Dec 13, 1 Jan 14; Star, 2 Dec 09, 1 Jan 12; interviews with Louis Brownlow
18 Nov 58, 17 Apr 59.
anyone wanted the post of District commissioner for the financial benefits it might bring; it was a position of prestige and honor. As an incumbent might, however, affect the course of Washington's development the inner circle of the Board of Trade, familiar as it felt itself to be with the city's problems, expected to name the civilians whom the President would appoint. President Roosevelt was not wholly amenable to that arrangement. He appeared to listen, but he kept in office the former journalist Henry Macfarland whom one Washingtonian later described as "a nice piece of bric-a-brac," and upon John Ross's death in the summer of 1902 the President ignored all objections to the appointment of another newspaperman. Although Theodore Noyes wrote the President: "It is not in human nature that the Star should view with any complacency the appointment to local municipal control of the employee and representative of a rival newspaper of democratic proclivities," Henry West was sworn in as commissioner in October.

During his seven years in office West while frequently disagreeing with Macfarland nevertheless served the city well.

The two colorless individuals whom Taft appointed in January 1910 were more to the liking of the Board of Trade, but satisfaction turned to alarm in 1913 when Woodrow Wilson selected two former officers of the Monday Evening Club, Oliver Newman, an experienced newspaper correspondent, and Frederick L. Siddons of the District bar. Admittedly swayed by a judgment confided to him that the District government had been "controlled by men

15 Ltr, D. H. MacLeodan to Albert Burleson, 3 Apr 13, File 84ft, Wilson MSC (L.C.).

with connections in speculative real estate, a triangle of profit and power manned by a triumvirate," the President had made clear that he wanted no commissioner tied to the local real estate "ring." In the eyes of powerful business interests in Washington both men named were tainted with radicalism. Resentment ran so strong among the old guard that one of the group brought a suit contesting the legality of Newman's appointment on the grounds of his not being a bona fide resident of the District; the plaintiff lost. Another blow awaited the former kingmakers in 1915.

President Wilson, having elevated Siddons to the District Supreme Court, chose as his successor Louis Brownlow, a thirty-five-year old correspondent for a Washington news syndicate. In time to come "Brownie" would be recognized from coast to coast as the foremost authority on public administration in America. In 1915 he was known in Washington as a competent reporter, a friend of muckrakers like Robert Wickliffe Woolley and, doubtless source of special uneasiness to ultra-conservatives, a son-in-law of Congressman Thetus Sims, the old warrior who as a member of the House District Committee had for years fought special privilege in the District.

Fortunately each of the seven civilian commissioners in turn was conscientious, and the engineer commissioners who worked with them set a


19 Times, 15 Jun 08, 20, 31 Jan 15; Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity, pp. 1-12.
high record of efficiency. If West was easy-going and Rudolph and Johnston unimaginative and intellectually timid, those shortcomings were more than offset by the qualities of MacFarland, Siddons, Newman and Brownlow. All told, the successive boards of commissioners during the fifteen years preceding the United States' entry into the war achieved a standard of public service not again equalled in the District until the 1950's.

The job was no sinecure. Ideally it meant maintaining and improving the appearance of the capital, the national show place, and simultaneously meeting the community's less immediately visible needs out of the funds Congress was willing to appropriate. It meant balancing the wants of one section of the city or one group of citizens against those of another and providing for intangibles, such as an enlarged public health service and better police protection, without curtailing public works like opening new parks and building new bridges. And always it meant, after the administrators had mapped out what they considered the wisest allotment of money, a struggle to persuade the House Subcommittee on Appropriations for the District that the figure for each item in the proposed budget was justified.

The final decision never lay with the commissioners. The prohibition on borrowing created in itself a never-ending quandary, even during the period when Congress sanctioned an evasion by authorizing the United States Treasury to advance the District money at interest for enlargement of the water distribution system, construction of the sewage pumping station and similar expensive projects. The list of public works the commissioners considered urgent in 1909 and the estimated cost of each suggests the dimensions of the problem of meeting such needs out of current income:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reclaimation of the Anacostia flats, a measure vital to the city's health</td>
<td>$2,552,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of Rock creek valley from its mouth to Massachusetts avenue, most of the stretch still an unsightly and insanitary dumping ground</td>
<td>$1,750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of the harbor front</td>
<td>$2,680,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of additional land for parks</td>
<td>$5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New buildings for the reformatory and workhouse</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation of a high-pressure fire protection system</td>
<td>$750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of suburban trunk sewers, a project to be spread out over 12 years</td>
<td>$2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of trunk water mains to the suburbs</td>
<td>$800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlargement of public hospital facilities</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination of dangerous railroad grade crossings outside the city limits</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total of some $20,282,000, even if spread over several years, would leave nothing over for new kinds of services, let alone the expansion of old, in a rapidly growing city whose local revenues had never reached $7,000,000. About twelve of the twenty million requested could be classed as aimed at embellishments rather than essentials. Then and later some members of Congress, like many Washingtonians, preferred less emphasis on stone and mortar or remote expanses of parkland and more on higher salaries for school teachers, on employment of school nurses and dentists, more sanitary inspectors and more staff for the Board of Children's Guardians, a bigger better paid police force and all the administrative machinery needed in a complex urban society. But critics on the floor of Congress rarely

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20 Comrs Rpt, 1909, pp. 57-58, Ser 5809.
succeeded in redistributing funds in the District budget as it came from committee; at most they cut the overall figure. Except insofar as the Senate insisted upon restoration of some of the sums pared by the House, the make-up of the House subcommittee determined what the commissioners could spend and for what purpose.

In spite of repeated charges that leading members of the House and Senate District committees and the subcommittee on appropriations constituted "the plunderers of Washington," the commissioners' programs before 1910 got fuller support from Congress than did their successors, for plans for the beautification of the capital aroused the interest of congressional constituents and the laws enacted to promote social betterment involved relatively little money. Macfarland and West and the three engineer commissioners of their time, while disappointed at obtaining year after year only part of the sums they asked for, managed to run the city reasonably efficiently and encountered little hostility in the "city council."22

Indeed as long as an Arthur Gorman in the Senate, a Joseph Babcock in the House committee from 1895 to 1911, and a dozen committee members had financial interests in Washington, personal concern for her prosperity would plead her cause; and stories never denied told of Gorman's making a $1,000,000 and Babcock's making $400,000 in Washington real estate and utility stocks simply by using their advance knowledge of which sections of the city were to get funds for improvements and what privileges were to be allowed the utility companies.23 At a time when senators were buying

22 Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1906, p. 20, 1908, p. 28, 1909, p. 31.

their seats from state legislatures, the tales of graft in the Capitol occasioned no scandalized astonishment. Most Washingtonians resented congressional refusals to order drastic reductions in utility rates and to live up meticulously to the 1878 commitment on sharing District expenses, but the friendliness on the Hill brought a measure of benefit to the entire community. If the entente cordiale was more useful to the well-to-do few than to the impecunious many, still small households could take satisfaction in Congress' heeding of their pleas for a compulsory education law, the removal of an upper age limit for students in the night schools, additions to the fire and police departments, and occasional increases in the allowances for charities. The District Auditor noted less than $100,000 charged to the District in 1908 for items for which Congress was unwilling to vote federal money. 24

But the honeymoon was over. Restiveness in Congress over the half-and-half arrangement had been growing for some time before Washingtonians let themselves worry. Hardened to periodic diatribes against such "extravagant" requests as appropriations for public playgrounds, local taxpayers refused to see anything especially ominous in a law of 1909 which required the commissioners thenceforward to submit their annual budgets, not as in the past in the form of estimates of needs which House and Senate would then try to meet, but as statements of expected revenue from District taxes and matching federal funds. 25 Although the innovation allowed for no

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25 Star, 22 Feb 09; Fiscal Relations, pp. 1628-39, Ser 6916; Rec, 600, 15, 1 Apr 08, p. 1908, 25, 7 Dec 08, p. 8, 13 Jan 09, pp. 818-19, 859-74.
long-term financing of major public works—the extension of water and
sewer mains into the suburbs, for example—the act otherwise looked innocuous,
simply a way of tailoring the suit to fit the cloth. New leaders in Congress,
however, were soon using the shears to snip away at the federal share of
District expenses by reducing over-all appropriations. Thus when the
commissioners estimated District tax revenues at $6,477,000, Congress
instead of voting twice that amount appropriated $10,719,000, of
which less than $4,212,000 was federal money, more nearly a third than a
half the total. By then the local community was fully aware of its
peril, for the House was considering ways not only to put upon the District
the entire cost of street maintenance but digging into records of the past
to prove that the District owed the federal government large sums of money
for such items as advances to the Freedmen's Hospital in the mid-1870's,
unredeemed bonds of 1877 and 1878 and thirty years of care for the District's
insane at St. Elizabeths.

The rights and wrongs of the District of Columbia in its fiscal rela-
tions with the federal government were—and still are—infinately complex.
Viewed from the perspective of half a century, three facts are clear about
the fight that came out into the open in the early months of 1910: first,
that the members of Congress who launched and carried on the attack believed
they were engaged in a righteous battle with that monster, special privilege;

26 Post, 15 Jun 10; Star, 15 Jun 12;

27 Lawrence Schmeckebier, The District of Columbia, Its Government
and Administration, no. 52-54; 3 Doc 103, 63C, 28; 11 Feb 11, Ser 6593; Anl
Rot B of Tr, 1912, p. 14 and Epq, "Financial Relations of the District of
Columbia and the Federal Government from 1871 to 1912."
The documentation cited

28 In the paragraphs that follow, is merely a small fragment of the
substantiating evidence to be found in the pages of the Congressional Record, the
two fat volumes on Fiscal Relations and the local newspapers.
second, that they frequently used battering rams where fly swatters would have served their purpose better; and, third, that many of Washington's self-styled financial experts unwittingly undermined her defenses by shifting ground or by taking positions they could not fortify with incontrovertible figures. Promoters who talked of the city's "moderate taxation" when they were trying to attract new business enterprises attempted at other times to prove to Congress that per capita taxes here were higher than in other cities of like size and that any added burden would be ruinous to the community. 29 Confused thinking and much misinformation in Congress about laws and practices in the District of Columbia, even its geography, complicated the struggle. Few members, whether of long standing or newcomers on the Hill, were familiar with the unique problems of the capital and fewer still understood the Treasury's accounting methods in handling District funds. Attendance during debates on District affairs was always slim; as few as fifty representatives often disposed of questions of great importance to Washingtonians, and any discussion of such matters on the floor of the Senate was rare in the extreme. Consequently congressmen could and did go unchallenged in making statements as preposterous as that the United States defrayed the entire cost of running the schools, paving the streets, supplying the city with water and installing and extending the sewage system. 30 Under these


circumstances ill temper and a sense of outrage developed in both camps.  

The changed attitude of the congressional majority sprang from a combination of factors. The increasing amounts of money the commissioners requested between 1901 and 1910 were certainly one of the first.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Commissioners Estimates</th>
<th>Recommendation to Sec of Treasury</th>
<th>Appropriations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>$7,657,773</td>
<td>$7,326,016</td>
<td>$7,532,519</td>
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<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>9,650,704</td>
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<td>8,281,850</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>10,572,198</td>
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<td>8,869,097</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>11,005,628</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,655,785</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>13,017,581</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,986,925</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>12,556,177</td>
<td>11,662,370</td>
<td>9,939,029</td>
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<td>11,625,586</td>
<td>11,299,264</td>
<td>9,190,602</td>
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<td>11,598,222</td>
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<td>13,798,126</td>
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<td>10,133,350</td>
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<td>16,176,356</td>
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<td>10,528,292</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>11,180,628</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,527,016</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>12,872,986</td>
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<td>11,809,837</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>12,954,721</td>
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<td>10,528,330</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>12,874,298</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>15,481,611</td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>15,173,676</td>
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<td>12,322,539</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>12,909,434</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,879,707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimates for the fiscal year 1910, the last budget submitted before the law of 1909 limited the commissioners to figures based on expected revenue, tell part of the story—$16,000,000 for a city that nine years before had asked for less than half that much. 33 That large sums were intended for

31 Times, 21 Jul, 14 Dec 13, 20 Jan 14; Rec, 630, 28, 16 Dec 13, p. 1014.

32 Rec, 590, 1F, 18 Apr 06, pp. 5501-06, 602, 28, 4 Feb 09, p. 1832.

permanent public works—in 1909, for example, six new school buildings—no way mollified irate congressmen who saw in these the demands of a city of millionaires battering on the taxpayers of the rest of the country.

Closely allied to the wrath evoked by the growing size of the commissioners' tentative budgets was a new indignation in Congress at the exploitation of Washington's lesser citizens practised by real estate speculators and powerful utility companies, an anger which reformers from urban constituencies shared with representatives of rural districts. Unlike some of their predecessors, after 1910 the men in control of the House and Senate District committees showed no wish to make the most of their business opportunities in the capital and instead dedicated themselves consciously or otherwise to making political hay out of standing for economy and suppression of the money power wherever it raised its fearsome head. They might have slain that dragon in Washington by revising the District assessment and tax laws, but disagreements about how to rewrite them made it simpler to advocate the cancellation of all federal contributions to the city irrespective of which group of local taxpayers suffered most thereby. A third factor derived from the determination of senators and congressmen from agrarian areas to hold the line against the march of "socialism" in any form, that insidious threat creeping out of teeming cities to engulf robust American individualism.

Thus, to name but a single example, so God-fearing and earnest a believer in the rights and duties of free men as Washington Gardner of Albion, Michigan, fought tooth and nail against appropriations for public playgrounds in

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Washington, because they represented a socialistic perversion of public obligation. Conflict between rural and urban interests was of course nearly as old as sectional controversy in Congress but neither had affected Washington as much in the late 19th century as in the early 20th when her population had grown to a third of a million souls, the admission of three western states between 1907 and 1912 and the widening recourse to direct primaries altered the balance in both houses.

Two other elements also entered into the picture, namely party politics and the mounting pressure of national business in the legislature of a country now become a world power and rapidly turning into a great industrial nation. Votes along party lines on Washington's problems were not the invariable rule, but before the election of a Democratic administration in November 1912, Democrats, though in control of the House from 1911 onward, found opposition to Republican-sponsored measures a politically useful device. Far more disastrous for the city was the frequent postponement of "District days" on the Hill and the lack of informed attention given to local bills when they at last reached the floor. In retrospect, the time committees of both houses devoted to hearings on reorganization of the Board of Education, city planning, proposed Jim-Crow bills and in 1915 on District finances seems surprisingly generous and testifies to the conscientiousness of the "city council." But for citizens who had seen a

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35 Rec, YOC, 15, 3 Apr 08, p. 1353; 1 Apr 08, p. 1383-85.
series of constructive local acts passed between 1902 and 1908 the summary dismissal or destructive amendment of District bills thereafter was profoundly disturbing. Badly needed social legislation sneaked through, if at all, only by the skills of its supporters in tying it to an appropriation bill. More than a few Washingtonians recognized before World War I the unsuitability of requiring men elected to legislate for the United States as a whole to study and act intelligently upon purely local municipal problems, but that realization did not ease the situation and the powerlessness of enlightened residents to change it heightened their discomfort.37

That they did not despair and, on the contrary, during 1916 regained much of their earlier confidence indicates again the pervasive optimism of the entire pre-war period.38

Indeed by 1916 the community had reason to draw freer breath. By then the money borrowed from the Treasury after 1901 had been fully repaid and the funded debt reduced to $4,000,000. Real estate reassessments that corrected most inequities and added $40,000,000 to over-all valuations further cooled the heat of critics in Congress; some of them were still incensed at the number of "tax dodgers" in the District, people accused of choosing residence in Washington in order to escape state inheritance levies and taxes on intangible personal property, but a District law passed in 1916 imposed the latter and the workings of the new graduated federal income tax


38 Times, 7 Jan 16; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1916, p. 10.
promised to catch up with other "malfactors of great wealth." At the same time Washingtonians who had felt themselves victimized by the public utility companies were gratified by the creation of a District Public Utilities Commission, made up of the three District commissioners, ex officio, authorized to fix rates and control the sale and emission of utility stocks and securities. The labor involved in arriving at just valuations of the companies' property, the basis of the rates to be set, delayed final rulings until after the war, but the essential first steps in protecting consumers had been taken during 1914 and 1915. Wealthy taxpayers in turn were relieved at the outcome of lengthy congressional hearings held in November 1915 on the District's fiscal relations with the federal government, for the principle of federal sharing of expenses survived officially, and formerly aggrieved property-owners admitted the fairness and thoroughness of the joint committee in charge of the investigation.

The record of the fiscal hearings gives an exceptionally detailed view of the intricacies of the problem and the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of the argument. In proposing the formation of the joint committee, Senator Gallinger had pointed out that no one could judge the extent of District obligations by a reading of District appropriations acts, since Congress yearly authorized federal officials not responsible to the District

39 H Rpt 937, 63c, 28, 9 Jul 11, Ser 6560; Rec, 63c, 3&, 11 Jan 15, pp. 1335-37; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1910, pp. 57-58, 1915, pp. 7-8.
41 See n. 38.
commissioners to spend local funds voted "in the sundry civil and legisla­tive appropriation acts, in deficiency acts, public building acts, extension and widening of the streets and for other purposes." Similarly Senator Works' final report for the committee noted how much he and his associates had had to learn about the city's difficulties. Both opponents and defenders of the system of matching federal and local money for running the capital city were guilty of presenting some data of dubious validity, figures assembled too long before to be applicable or faulty comparisons with the taxes of other cities, but the testimony, if occasionally colored by passion, was illuminating. The assumption was general that the United States should contribute something to the city's annual revenues. Several witnesses reverted to the arguments of the Southard report of 1835: national obligation arising from the 18th century agreement with the original proprietors of the land. Other men indicated that since manufacturing plants and great commercial houses such as supplied the bulk of taxes to other big cities would interfere with Washington's main business of national government, the United States with its extensive tax-exempt property must make some monetary compensation. The main question thus was how much and by what method. Everyone agreed that Congress would never permit taxation of federal holdings. Proponents of rigid adherence to the half-and-half

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1 Rec, 63C, 25, 11 Jan 15, p. 1348; Fiscal Relations, pp. lxiv, Ser 6915.

2 Bureau of the Census, Statistics of Cities Having a Population of
over 30,000, 1907, pp. 330-33; Fiscal Relations, pp. 106-07, Ser 6915, pp.
1639-16, Ser 6916.
rule insisted that a sliding scale of federal payments would leave the city in a constant turmoil of uncertainty. As they saw it, a proposal endorsed by the House of using all local money first and relying upon federal funds to fill gaps in the budget foretold the end of true sharing, a judgment in which many experienced members of Congress concurred; routine operating expenses would gobble up all city revenues and federal appropriations for long-term needs would not be forthcoming. The same objection applied to a similar plan advanced as early as 1901 by Senator Hoar of Massachusetts, a scheme of having the government foot all the bills but collecting from District property-owners levies equal to but not in excess of those paid by residents of other like-sized cities. Both civilian commissioners thought some change inevitable and inclined to favor the Hoar plan. Louis Brownlow believed it sounder than the "legislative fiction" of half-and-half, and as he demonstrated the impossibility of separating the costs of services to the local public from those primarily benefitting the national government, he urged prompt adoption of a juster and more realistic division of the financial burden. In spite of Brownlow's exposition of the inseparability of federal and local needs, the committee concluded that District taxes should be used solely for the District, and all local revenues be spent before drawing upon the United States Treasury; "half-and-half" sharing was no longer either feasible or necessary. Since congressional parsimony toward Washington seemed to be wearing thin, the national city would not suffer. The Senate ignored the committee's findings and in fact they included no recommendations for legislation. But the report left the door open to future readjustments which, Senator Works remarked, should take into consideration the restoration
of some authority to the community over its own expenditures and the relieving of Congress of some of its aldermanic responsibilities.\textsuperscript{16}

Local self government and "half-and-half" were so tied together by the Organic act of 1878 that, quite apart from anxieties about allowing Negroes political power, the most influential Washingtonians before 1916 were loath to contemplate an elective city government lest it result in killing federal financial aid. Full voting representation in Congress, on the other hand, got increasingly wide support from 1909 onward, in spite of occasional Board of Trade warnings about the dangers involved in seeking any change.\textsuperscript{47} At a dinner given for President Taft by the Board of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce in May 1909 Chief Justice Stafford of the District Supreme Court made an eloquent plea for District enfranchisement, at least for national elections:

Strip men of the ballot and you take away from society the most powerful inducement that can prompt selfish human nature to educate and elevate its helpless and its poor.

In a scarcely veiled attack on white fears of Negro voting, he asked:

Shall we say we fear the suffrages of ignorance and vice . . . that could not last a generation if we did our duty by our fellow-men? . . . Never until the men of wealth and education have spent their last surplus dollar and exhausted the ingenuity of their brains in the effort to make their fellow-men worthy to be sharers in the government, never until then will they have a right to hide behind an excuse like that.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{16} Fiscal Relations, pp. 1-lx, Ser 6915.

\textsuperscript{47} Star, 23 Nov 09; S Doc 684, 60C, 28, 26 Jan 09, Ser 5008; S Doc 1136, 627, 35, 1 Mar 13, Ser 6365.

\textsuperscript{48} Star, 9 May 09.
The President derided Stafford's arguments, but a number of citizens' associations outside wealthy northwest Washington endorsed them. In 1912, a straw vote conducted by the newly organized District Suffrage League polled 10,816 ballots favoring local suffrage to only 944 against. Three years later, after the joint congressional committee report and Senator Works' statement appeared, the Board of Trade also decided the city had more to gain than to lose by asking for a modification of the Organic act. Residents felt little or no dissatisfaction with the commissioners' administration; even sectional complaints from East and Southwest Washington largely ceased when Newman and Siddons and then Brownlow took charge. But the disadvantages of rule by congressional committee were emerging with a clarity not to be ignored. To much of the local public the surest remedy seemed to lie in having an elected District senator and representatives on the Hill, although opposition to accompanying that change with an elected city government continued to sound loud in some quarters. Congressmen who discussed the matter at all tended, on the contrary, to think Home Rule desirable, if only to lighten their duties, but were more than doubtful about giving the District virtual statehood. In short, what the community believed most beneficial was what Congress was least likely to grant. Yet the restoration of some measure of good feeling between the city and the United States Congress encouraged belief that together they would work out a satisfactory solution.

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49 Ibid., 5, 10, 12, 15 May 09, 1 Jan 10, 1 Jan 11; Times, 12, 29 Apr, 5 Jun, 8 Dec 13, 28 Dec, 14 Oct 14; Archibald Butt, Taft and Roosevelt, pp. 29-31; Post, 16 Feb 13.

CHAPTER XVIII

"THE CITY OF CONVERSATION"

Men and women born and bred in the District, like visitors, believed Washington the most sophisticated and agreeable city in the United States. On the eve of World War I, as for years past, neither exasperation over missing services nor distress at the bitter poverty of the lower classes detracted sharply from the day by day pleasures of living in the capital. Even families constantly hard pressed to make ends meet apparently enjoyed the privilege of being envied by outsiders. Certainly no one, however lowly his status, admitted to thinking life as drear here as it would be elsewhere. If his participation in the world of society and affairs was purely vicarious, seeing it pass by directly under his nose brought compensations. Government clerks as late as 1911 still paid at rates set in 1853 had probably the greatest cause for complaint as the cost of living in Washington reached a height unknown elsewhere, but the addition of a half hour to their working day in 1913 still left them more leisure than clerks in commercial establishments commanded or farmers or factory hands in the rest of America. Indeed only the rare person who, though well up the economic ladder, took exception to the false values he felt pervading a city in which snobbery of money competed with snobbery of rank found fault with Washington as a place to live. And where in the United States of the early 20th century were fortunes and professional or family distinction not vying with each other?

When H. G. Wells in 1906 wrote of "Washington as Anticlimax," his
American readers could put his comments down to the crotchettiness of a gifted but bumptious Englishman. Wells himself, picking up Henry James' epithet "The City of Conversation," remarked:

Washington, indeed, converses well, without awkwardness, without chattering, kindly watchful, agreeably witty. She lulled and tamed my purpose to ask about primary things, to discuss large questions... Washington remarked and alluded and made her point and got away.


Chapter XIV

Every-day Life and the Amenities in the White Community, 1878-1901

Proud as Washington was of her civic improvements and her charities, it was the orderliness of daily routines and the charm of her social life that endeared her to her white residents and to visitors. The larger the city grew and the wider the sweep of government activities, the more complex became social relationships, but the tensions that marred life in other American cities were relaxed in Washington. Personal anxieties endured at every social level from that of the underpaid school teacher and the government clerk without a civil service rating who was harassed by "the uncertainty of office tenure which makes the young woman of twenty-five have the wrinkles of forty," to that of a Henry Adams obliged to watch his gifted wife sink into a melancholia that ended in suicide. Yet English travelers critical of most things American were delighted and astonished at Washington's agreeable serenity.

Compared with New York or Chicago wrote the Dean of Rochester, Washington, although it is full of commotion and energy, is a city of rest and peace. The inhabitants do not rush onward as though they were late for the train or the post, or as though the dinner hour being past they were anxious to appease an irritable wife. . . . The ear is not deafened by the clanging of bells, the roll of the cars, and the trampling of feet which never seem to pause. It was a busy day . . . on which we arrived, the first day of the meeting of Congress . . . but though there was a great gathering of Representatives, there was no commotion or din.

Another Englishman spoke of the impression Washington gave "of comfort, of leisure, of space to spare, of stateliness you hardly expected in America. It

1 Cleveland Leader, 3 Apr 81.
2 The Very Reverend S. Reynolds Hole, Dean of Rochester, A Little Tour of America, pp. 309-10.
looks a sort of place where nobody has to work for his living, or, at any rate, not hard." 3

By mid-20th-century standards, people did not work hard, or at least not under high pressure. In reassuring her brother that her new job in the Dead Letter branch of the Post Office Department was not excessively onerous, Virginia Grigsby wrote in 1883:

We are fixed with every convenience, long desks, easy revolving chairs, footstools, plenty of servants and no specific amount of work to be done. ... There are all ladies in this room, and therefore they do as they choose, most of them bring dressing gowns and put them on to work in. Some even take off their corsets. You know Mama never wears any at home, perhaps she may be able to do all this in the Land Office. 4

The "servants," that is government messengers, seldom hurried. Government offices closed at four in the afternoon and only common laborers, artisans, clerks in stores, and domestic servants worked longer hours. Office workers breakfasted at eight or nine, had a cup of coffee, a "dairy lunch" or a sandwich at noon, and at four o'clock went home to a hearty dinner or dined in one of Washington's numerous restaurants. "The lunch rooms of Washington are a characteristic of the city," wrote "Carp" in the early 1880's. "I know of no place in the world that has their like. They are found in every block and usually keep excellent coffee and delicious rolls. ... There are places where you get a common cup ... with three rolls and butter for ten cents." A dairy lunch room opposite the Treasury much frequented by government clerks served coffee in "pint shaving mugs"; customers helped themselves to sugar from two "holy water basins chained to the wall" and then relaxed in the wicker chairs about the room while they ate the sandwiches they had brought with them. 5

4 Ltr, Virginia Grigsby to Hart Grigsby, Jul 83, Gibson-Humphreys mss (SHC).
5 Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan 83.
Save in the closing days of a congressional session, the pace of life was equally leisurely at the Capitol, "a little city in itself" peopled by "the busiest, wittiest and brainiest men" in the United States. Senators and congressmen took their time over their business and pleasures. In the House of the 1880's members talked and laughed, feet frequently propped on desks above the ever-present cuspfidors, in an atmosphere as easy as that of a hotel barroom. Along the corridor leading from the House to the Senate, the chief street of the miniature city, stood small shops selling photographs, candy and newspapers, a telegraph office ticking out messages, and at one end invariably a crowd of lobbyists, politicians, strangers, deadbeats and bogus pension lawyers. But the most skillful seeker of favors knew that undue haste was self-defeating. He might well find his best opportunity during an evening of billiards at one of the hotels where congressmen played or watched "as though they were Monte Carlo gamblers." Early in the nineties shops and stands were cleared out of the Capitol and greater decorum came to prevail on the floor of the House, but the heightened sense of propriety did not hasten the tempo at which the directly elected representatives of the people conducted their affairs. Senators, as if to stress their greater importance, made a point of behaving with more punctilio but, like their lesser associates, they were not driven to hurry their deliberations or their sociabilities.

In the last decades of the 19th century few congressmen still lived in boardinghouses, but representatives who found the capital too expensive to warrant

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6 Ibid., 22 Dec 82; A. Maurice Low, "Washington, the City of Leisure," Atlantic Monthly, LXVI, 759-71.

7 Cleveland Leader, 29 Jun, 23 Nov 83.

8 The Outlook, CVI, 7 Feb 11, pp. 317-18.
moving their families to Washington generally patronized hotels and ate at
restaurants, although "thirty-five or fifty cents is the least for which one
can get a passable breakfast or dinner." There was a considerable choice of
places to dine; some of the most famous are still favorites—the formal dining
room opening off Peacock Alley in the Willard Hotel, the Ebbitt House across
from the Willard, Harvey's Fish House, and Hall's near the river front where a
magnificent bar surmounted by a huge painting of a nude Venus added a special
attraction. In the 1880's "Carp" informed his Cleveland readers "it would take
the best part of a Congressman's salary $5,000 to pay his board and whiskey
bills, if he did not take a high room above the second story and leave his
family at home. One New York Congressman paid $600 a week for his rooms at one
of the hotels." A decade later the pinch of hard times cut down that kind of
extravagance.

As "private board" at a minimum of $5 a week seemed high to most people,
boardinghouses remained a Washington institution. At the end of the century,
generals' and statesmen's widows ran many of the most select. Though these did
not necessarily serve the best food, the seating arrangements followed protocol
as carefully as the White House would at a state dinner. Young men and women on
their way up in the world occupied livelier places than the eminent "has-been",
and the head of the establishment exercised scrupulous judgment about who outranked
whom in between top and bottom. As late as 1901 Louis Brownlow, then a little
known young newspaperman but destined to become a District commissioner eleven
years later, felt himself privileged to be assigned to the bottom table at Mrs.
Bocock's boardinghouse on Q street; she accepted him only because he came properly
recommended. Boardinghouse table mates, if frequently boring or slightly pompous,
at least exposed the newcomer in Washington to a conic-sectioned view of the city's

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9 Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan, 30 Nov 83.
inhabitants ranging from salesmen to people "in office," the phrase government clerks used to describe their status. 10

Another Washington institution was the public market, patronized by society matrons as regularly as by boardinghouse keepers and economy-minded housewives. On market day elegant ladies descended from carriages driven by stove-pipe hatted "darky" coachmen and, trailed by a retainer carrying a basket, made the rounds of the stalls at the Centre Market to select the fresh fruits and vegetables, the eggs and chickens, or the woodcock, wild duck and other special delicacies of the season. There rich people and poor rubbed elbows while chatting with the vendors and remarking on the weather to acquaintances. The true Washingtonian regarded marketing in person as much part of well-ordered living as making calls or serving hot chocolate to morning visitors.

For the government clerk with a family to raise in Washington, life was likely to be less eventful than for the temporary resident. "We rarely go to the theatre or to concerts," regretfully remarked a federal employee with a wife and three children to support on his $1,600 annual salary. As his rent was $30, wood and coal bill $8, the gas bill $1.50, milk $2.30, groceries $15, perishables bought at the market $25 and the servant's wages $8 a month, there was little left over for entertaining guests or for expensive amusements. Thousands of families were in a comparable or worse position, since $1,600 was a handsome salary even in 1900 and placed a man well up in the ranks of government service.

The men who earned $2,000 expected and was expected to give occasional formal

10 Ibid., 3 Apr, 30 Nov 83; Louis Brownlow, A Passion for Politics, pp. 336-40.

dinner parties complete with soup, fish, game, roast, savory and appropriate
wines with each course. Government pay rates remained at the levels set in the
1870's, but any hardship caused by a rise in the cost of living was mitigated
by the fact that everyone knew exactly what his neighbor earned and therefore
what the proprieties demanded of him. 12

Regardless of income, a good many people spent some money on outdoor
diversion. Athletics and organized sports took on new importance as suburbs
ate into the open country and cut off city-dwellers from the fields and streams
that had once made hunting, fishing and picnicking universal pastimes. Bicycling
on Washington's smooth asphalt pavements had an early and long-lasting vogue,
among women as well as men. Bella Lockwood, the first woman lawyer to be admitted
to practice before the Supreme Court and the only woman ever to be a party nominee
for President, created a mild sensation in the early 1880's when, with an un­
cconcerned showing of her bright red stockings, she pedalled down Pennsylvania
avenue at ten miles an hour. More conservative ladies arrayed in elaborate
cycling costumes soon took up the sport. In the nineties when smaller circum­
ferenced wheels replaced the high front-wheeled models, a male dare-devil made
sporting history by riding down the long flight of stone steps from the Capitol
to the Mall. While boating on the "silvery Potomac" lost none of its appeal,
the Columbia Boat Club turned itself into the Athletic Club in 1887 and, in
addition to its boathouse in Georgetown, opened tennis courts, a running track
and a lacrosse field on Analostan island. Young ladies, again in specially
designed costume, occasionally played tennis or tried their hands at archery, and

12 Star, 4 Dec 84; U.S. Register, 1886, 1900; Day Book of Carrie Angell
Collier, ms in possession of the author. See also Brownlow, A Passion For
Politics, p. 316.
old and young of both sexes joined in playing croquet. After the commissioners
opened a public bathing beach in 1891, swimming in the river drew thousands of
people every summer. Golf, necessarily a sport confined to the well-to-do,
became fashionable when links opened at the country club in the late eighties.
Amateur football, however, awakened more general enthusiasm. Interest in pro-
fessional sports divided almost equally between prize fights and baseball until
the National League cut its terms to eight, and the Senators, which for years
had ended the season at the bottom of the League, dropped out of sight. 13

Fortunately some forms of entertainment cost little or nothing. Custom
had not staled Washingtonians' pleasure in Saturday afternoon gatherings in the
White House grounds:

Then the lawn is filled with a well-dressed crowd as cosmopolitan as you
will find anywhere and the big Marine Band, one of the best in the world,
clad in their flaming suits of red and gold, give forth the finest music. . . .
Among the crowd you will find the best dressed and finest looking Negros in
the world; you may bump against a treasury clerk or a cabinet officer, and
you may discuss the toilet of Frau Van Nirgends, the chief lady of a foreign
legation, or of pretty little peachy Miss Smith whose father is a messenger
in the Treasury, and then the nature, the flowers, the trees and the long
stretch of beautiful scenery away on the Potomac beyond the big white
monument, make a combination of which any country may be proud. 14

National celebrations, moreover, periodically swept citizens into "the great
stream of current political and governmental events which makes Washington the
news center of this continent." One of the most memorable was the dedication
of the Washington Monument on February 21, 1885, a day for which old inhabitants
had waited thirty-six years. While children skated on Babcock pond to the north
of the Monument, shivering adults cheered Senator John Sherman's opening announcement

13 Star, 30 May 79, 16 May 80, 1, 26 Jan 89, 1 Jan 94, 1 Jan 98, 2 Jan 99,
1 Jan 01, "Rambler," 27 Mar 21; Cleveland Leader, 11 Apr, 5 Sep 84; Comrs Rpt,
1899, p. 10, Ser 2:30, 1901, p. 494, Ser 1:118. See also Mrs. John Logan, Thirty
Years in Washington, p.

14 Cleveland Leader, 30 Sep 83.
that men might keep their hats on during the formal exercises. The bitter cold weather shortened the ceremony and reduced the prayer of the rector of Christ Church to a mere ten minutes, but that night the fireworks reflected by the snow covering the city made a magnificent spectacle. Every fourth year increasingly elaborate presidential inaugurations created a holiday mood in the city. For President Garfield's inaugural parade grand stands for the first time lined the Avenue, and the newly finished National Museum, scene of the inaugural ball, resembled "a crystal palace," its rotunda and dome sparkling with "the whiteness of electric lights" while the rest of the building glowed with "the yellowness of the thousands of gas burners." In brilliant sunshine on March 4, 1885 nearly 100,000 people watched Grover Cleveland take the oath of office as the first Democratic President since James Buchanan. Men climbed to the roof of the Capitol and into the lap of Horatio Greenough's statue of Washington, and afterward, as a 25,000-man parade marched up the Avenue, "even the flags and streamers seemed to be affected by the general contagion which filled the air." Still larger crowds welcomed the next two Republican Presidents. A downpour of cold rain obliged President Harrison to stand under a dripping umbrella as he gave his address, but President McKinley in 1897 had the "Cleveland weather" which a snow storm had denied the Democrat at his second inaugural.

Washingtonians on their own staged several impressive celebrations. In October 1887 the city arranged an elaborate welcome for Alexander Shepherd when he returned on a visit. The demonstration had curious over-tones, for of the

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15 Ibid., 4 Dec 82; Post, 22 Feb 85.
16 Star, 28 Feb, 5 Mar 81, 4 Mar 85; Cleveland Leader, 1 Mar 85.
17 Post, 9 Oct 89, 4 Mar 97.
hundreds of people who contributed to it, many had been sharply critical of the
Boss only fifteen years before. But it was good advertising for "the city which
he slucked from the mire and set as a jewel in the sight of men," and most of
his former enemies, their anger quenched by the prosperity of the immediate past,
now accepted Shepherd as a symbol of "the new Washington." Three stations of
fire works on Pennsylvania avenue provided brilliant illumination for an hour-long
evening parade. The entire District militia turned out to march. In the wake
of "mounted marshals with white sashes charging about" came some five hundred
muddy-booted, overalled workingmen representing the street department. Two
hundred men on bicycles rigged with wire frames on which hung lighted Chinese
lanterns formed another section of the procession. Every section carried "trans-
parencies" with inscriptions such as "Population 1871, 80,000; 1887, 250,000," or
"Washington suggested; Congress sanctioned; Shepherd made it." The city held
another home-coming celebration at the end of the Spanish-American war when the
regiment of the District militia returned from Cuba. Flags and bunting draped
from "windows, doors, and sashes and even chimney tops" set the scene for a
"reception that surpassed anything of a similar character ever before known in
the history of the District of Columbia."

Two years later the city outdid herself in honor of her centennial.

Carefully planned in advance to be solemn rather than boisterous, the celebration
combined customary features with innovations. In the parade from the White House

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18 Star, 7 Oct 87.
19 Sentinel, 8 Oct 87, 25 Feb 88; Star, 10, 22 Sep 87.
20 Star, 7 Oct 87.
21 Bee, 15 Oct 98; Star, 2 Jan 99.
to the Capitol the governor of Rhode Island and his staff rode in automobiles instead of driving in open carriages behind stove-pipe-hatted coachmen. Following the formal procession came "a number of real centennial-looking vehicles, manned by the inevitable darky, with 'Express for Hire' scrawled in white chalk over the sides of the forlorn wagons, and in them the weary found repose for 'Only 10 cents, lady.' Some view de great cent'ry parade fo' 10 cents."

At the Capitol, the "Avenue entrance to the House gallery was lighted by a suspended device, bearing the words, 'Capital Celebration, 1900,' in blazing incandescent lamps. Beneath this was a mammoth American flag in colored lights, which was made by a mechanical device to pale and brighten, to give the flag the appearance of waving."

The celebration played up the theme of miraculous change: a city, for years a grubby village unworthy of the United States, now the embodiment of national greatness, a place of absorbing interest to every American.

Official society over the years largely kept to its long-established regime except insofar as the lengthening roster of government officialdom gradually forced a paring of invitation lists by a stricter observance of the canons of rank. In the early 1880's a good-naturedly derisive definition of high society divided it into three, first the official class, the President and executive officers, the Army, Navy and Congress, "second the quasi-official class" and the diplomatic corps, and "third, the official class including residents of Washington, strangers and visitors." Any well-mannered white person, in short, who meticulously followed the "cast iron" rules about making calls could be a part or hover on the fringes of Society. How far he and his wife got beyond the

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22 Post, 11, 12, 13 Dec 00.
23 Star, 13 Jan, 15 Dec 79, 12, 18 Nov 61, 16, 25 Feb, 15 Mar, 11 Nov 82, 26 Jan 89; Cleveland Leader, 5 Sep 84.
circumference was only partly a matter of rank. Some leisure and money for clothes and servants were necessary adjuncts, but wealth was not essential.

When Senator H. A. W. Tabor, the Vermont stonecutter who late in life struck it rich in Colorado silver mining, cast off a first wife and in a sumptuous wedding at the Willard Hotel married a glamorous-looking little blonde, neither his senatorial rank, his ostentatious spending nor President Arthur's presence at the ceremony enabled the new groom and his bride to cut a swathe in Washington; had his term in the Senate lasted longer he perhaps might have made progress.

Distinguished family connections helped open doors, but distinction tended to rest less upon ancient lineage than upon post Civil War achievement. And whereas a cabinet officer took precedence over his chief clerk, a politician's social status, particularly after the Civil Service act and repeal of the last sections of the Tenure of Office act had cut in upon his patronage, might depend almost as much on his wife's social skills as upon his own place in the governmental hierarchy. "Society women" remarked the acridulous Emily Briggs, "have politicians for husbands, but not all politicians have society wives."

If the character of politicians did not change, at least observant wives learned that a display of wealth was a poor substitute for rank, and rank without suave manners might be a bruised reed upon which to lean. Non-alcoholic state dinners did not endure after Mrs. Hayes left the White House, but the days when eighteen to twenty toasts were the normal accompaniment of formal dinners did not return, and the quiet tastes of succeeding first ladies, without laying down fixed rules of behavior, helped to place emphasis upon elegance rather than

24 Star, 31 Dec 84, 16 Mar 85, 11 Dec 88; Sentinel, 6 Mar 86, 29 Dec 88; Olivia Letters, p. 413.
lavishness in official entertaining. The rich outsider intent on becoming an insider in Washington discovered the uses not only of the Elite List and the U.S. Register but also of Mrs. Dahlgren's Etiquette of Social Life in Washington. Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren, daughter of a noted congressman, widow of a distinguished admiral and from the early 1880's till her death in 1898 a self-appointed doyenne of Washington society, doubtless saved many a parvenu from unforgivable blunders. "No dinner," she warned, "however superb in prandial show, can be agreeable if the convives are dullards .... No sordid computation of dollars can buy or measure the Promethean light of conversational effect. The 'glad circle' then, must have this highest requisite." If such advice was needless for proper Bostonians or Philadelphians, they too might welcome reminders of how to address a Russian count or her Britannic Majesty's minister to the United States.

For inevitably the diplomatic corps shed a brilliance that lured to Washington not only the socially ambitious nouveaux riches but also the most securely established families of America's upper class. By the standards of St. Petersburg or Vienna or London or Berlin or even the Paris of the Third Republic, official fanfare was slight in Washington. In the 1870's the newly appointed young Danish minister had felt disconcerted at his reception when, arrayed in his scarlet dress uniform and covered with decorations, he had presented his credentials at the White House. Instead of the battery of gold-encrusted

chamberlains he had expected to have usher him in, a Negro by the door hastily donned a coat and, with an encouraging wave of the hand, said: "Come right along in, sir. I'll let them know you're here, sir." After a considerable interval the President and the Secretary of State appeared. "Mr. Grant was dressed in a gray walking suit and wore a colored tie; and Mr. Hamilton Fish had evidently just come in from a walk, as his turned-up trousers signified."

The formalities exchanged, "Mr. Fish at parting casually observed that the weather was fine." Yet once the young baron had recovered from the shock, he enjoyed his Washington sojourn. Scarcey greater formality reigned twenty years later, and foreign dignitaries, so far from taking offense at the thinness of ceremonial, usually found it refreshing.

Yet subtle changes occurred before 1901.

The opening nineties saw the old regime, Anglo-Saxon, conservative, making its last stand at the White House. The Harrisons gathered around then a five best-families group; women who could give all their time to social perfections undisturbed by suffrage, divorce, interior decoration or other extranities... We still exchanged recipes, had not yet begun to discuss diet, except as a delight, changed our dresses exhausting-often during the day, and were altogether, as conventional as a sideboard. It was a nice period.

The first signs of change came in 1894 when Great Britain and France acknowledged the growing importance of the United States in world affairs by elevating their legations in Washington to the rank of embassies. In 1897 Italy followed that example, and at the end of the Spanish-American war the emergence of the United States as a prospective colonial power hastened the process which gradually


27 Foraker, I Would Live It Again, p. 185.
turned Washington into one of the most sophisticated as well as one of the most agreeable capitals in the world. Senators, conscious of the new prestige attaching to the men who ratified or rejected international treaties, abandoned the broad-brimmed felt hats and string ties of yester-year and adopted high silk hats and frock coats as standard day-time attire. Foreign diplomats came to look upon a tour of duty in Washington as only less desirable than assignment to one of the five or six great courts of Europe, while wealthy Americans wanted as never before a taste of Washington's delights. Not every debutante could marry a Lord Curzon as had Levi Leiter's daughter, and the growing dearth of bachelors in Washington all but put an end to holding balls; but riding, drinking tea and dining with titled foreigners was part of the social round and added to its dazzle. New York's Four Hundred could rarely produce more eligible lords in a season than could Washington hostesses. Moreover, as improved printing techniques enabled magazines to publish photographs of silk-hatted big-wigs and everyday scenes in Washington, popular interest in the life of the capital heightened. It took on simultaneously a visible reality and a new romantic aura that encompassed not only political personages but everyone privileged to live in the city.

Americans unfamiliar with Washington were prone to be curious about the relationship between "resident" and official society; those whose memory reached back into Civil War days were likely to have heard that self-styled local aristocrats disdained the society of officials. The Mr. Bonynge's of Henry James' story Pandora, though in actuality a character based on Henry Adams, doubtless seemed to readers in 1881 a portrayal of the Washington blue blood when he suggests

28 Ibid., pp. 187-200; Mrs. William Howard Taft, Recollections of Full Years, p. 27; Louis A. Coolidge, "On the Streets of the National Capital," Cosmopolitan, XXVIII, Feb. 00, pp. 365-76.
to his wife that for once they ignore the social niceties in preparing their
guest list: "Hang it . . . let us have some fun--let us invite the President."  

Certainly, old Washington families had had little social intercourse with the
politicians who took over in the capital during the war and the post-war era of
bitter partisanship and vulgarity. But even then the line separating families
firmly rooted in the community from the temporary office holders had not been
drawn sharply and in the course of the next fifteen to twenty years it faded out
almost entirely.  

In 1881 Mrs. Dahlgren told her readers that "in real solidity
of social importance, the resident society must . . . be classed as of the very
elite." She added, "the old families of Washington have an interest for us which
none other in the land may claim, for their social life has gone hand in hand
with that of the nation."  But how old was old? By the end of the century
uncertainty blurred the distinction. Third-generation families who from the
first had had money enough and the cultivation to move in upper class circles
were extremely few and, in striking contrast to cities like Philadelphia and
Washington and Georgetown together could muster scarcely eighty well-
established second-generation families. The prominent Washingtonian of the
1890's was as likely to be a native of a northern state as of the District of
Columbia. Although four out of every five native American whites in the District
were born below the Mason-Dixon line, in the upper social brackets Southern
background had ceased to weigh heavily. (See Table III).

29 Henry James, "Pandora," in Stories Revived, I, 105; F.E. Mathiassen, ed.,
Henry James' Notebook.

30 A. Maurice Low, "Washington the City of Leisure," Atlantic Monthly,
LXXXVI, 777.

31 Dahlgren, Etiquette . . . in W., pp. 33, 69. The figures of "old families"
are based on a 20 percent sampling of the Washington Social Register of 1900
checked against the City Directory of 1846.
When the first Washington Social Register appeared in 1900 it contained the names of about 2,100 families. Some 820 were those of Army and Navy officers, high-ranking departmental officials, members of Congress, foreign diplomats and Americans listed in one of the five other Social Registers who chose to transfer to Washington for the season. Among the twelve-hundred-odd others named a number were "temporary-permanent" residents—Henry Adams, for example, and the diplomat John W. Foster, Secretary of State under Benjamin Harrison and grandfather of a later Secretary of State—who had lived in the city at intervals for twenty to thirty years without identifying themselves as Washingtonians. Over four hundred of the fixed residents listed were widows or single women. Of all the permanent residents included perhaps two-thirds had been relatively new to the capital when Mrs. Dahlgren wrote of "the very elite." Yet the omissions from the Register of 1900 illustrate as well as the inclusions the uncertainty and flexibility of social status in Washington. The cultivated Ohio-born John Joy Edson, a Washingtonian from his Civil-War school days onward, head of a dozen civic enterprises and president of the Board of Trade in 1900, was left out, whereas Brainard Warner, whose career in the capital was no longer or more notable and whose bank account was probably little larger than Edson's, was admitted. Since the publication of the New York Social Register in 1884 and of later counterparts for Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Chicago, socially ambitious Americans had come to look upon a Social Register listing as a key to the pearly gates on earth; family position, fortified by money but untouched by scandalous notoriety, was at least theoretically a prerequisite. But inasmuch as expediency necessitated naming all high-ranking officials in the capital, including every senator irrespective of his forebears, the rules of selection in Washington lost some of their normal rigidity. The hope, however illusory, of
### Table XI

**Population of the District of Columbia, 1870-1900**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>131,700</td>
<td>177,621</td>
<td>230,392</td>
<td>278,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to D.C.</td>
<td>88,276</td>
<td>116,006</td>
<td>151,695</td>
<td>191,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to Maryland</td>
<td>77,207</td>
<td>101,026</td>
<td>136,178</td>
<td>172,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to Virginia</td>
<td>46,889</td>
<td>55,987</td>
<td>70,943</td>
<td>87,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to North and West</td>
<td>11,865</td>
<td>20,389</td>
<td>29,384</td>
<td>37,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>16,171</td>
<td>16,980</td>
<td>18,517</td>
<td>19,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>8,218</td>
<td>7,810</td>
<td>7,224</td>
<td>6,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1,798</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>2,777</td>
<td>2,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negro</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to D.C.</td>
<td>13,161</td>
<td>24,715</td>
<td>40,600</td>
<td>66,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to Maryland</td>
<td>11,720</td>
<td>12,215</td>
<td>15,015</td>
<td>15,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to Virginia</td>
<td>16,705</td>
<td>19,933</td>
<td>24,003</td>
<td>38,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native to North and West</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>1,529</td>
<td>1,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro of total pop.</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% foreign-born of total pop.</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% foreign-born whites of white pop.</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% whites native to D.C. of total Negro pop.</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro native to D.C. of total Negro pop.</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Negro native to Md. and Va. of total Negro pop.</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase total pop. in 10 yrs.</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>34.87</td>
<td>29.71</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase white pop. in 10 yrs.</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% increase Negro pop. in 10 yrs.</td>
<td>203.2</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2/ Negroes only; Census subtotals on nativity include 5 Indians in 1880 and 31 Chinese, Japanese and civilized in 1890.
3/ Includes native to five Southern States.
4/ Includes native to South, exclusive of Md. and Va., of total native white pop.
5/ Includes native to North and West, exclusive of five Southern States.
exploiting that flexibility to squeak through the sacred portals drew to Washington people who knew they could not successfully storm the doors elsewhere. 32

Newcomers tended to think Washington and Georgetown one and the same, as officially the two indeed were after 1895. But old Georgetowners, while sharing many of Washington's pleasures, felt themselves differentiated from their neighbors by a longer history and closer family ties. The sense of dignified antiquity which prevailed in Georgetown beyond the debris-strewn banks of Rock Creek was fortunately not a divisive factor in the larger community; residents of the city on one side of the creek admired the 18th-century houses of those on the far side without resenting their air of detached superiority. 33 If Georgetowners preferred Sunday afternoon visiting with each other to mingling with the elegant throng which promenaded along Connecticut avenue to the accompaniment of a dozen different languages, Washingtonians took no less satisfaction in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the capital.

If few people considered Washington a center of creative art, fewer still found her barren of opportunity. Certainly nowhere else in the United States could sculpture be seen in such profusion—at the Capitol in the Hall of Statuary, in the Senate chamber adorned after 1886 with a growing array of busts of former Vice Presidents, in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and in L'Enfant's spacious circles and squares where, emplaced on imposing pedestals, equestrian bronze or stone generals and marble statesmen looked out over the city. Vickie Beam Hoxie, who when an inexperienced school girl had modelled from life a head of President

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32 Social Register, 1900. See also Mariette Minnigerode Andrews, My Studio Window, pp. 101-02.

Lincoln, was the only Washington sculptor whose work received recognition; her statue of Admiral Farragut stands in Farragut square. Most of the sculpture unveiled in the last decades of the century fell short of great art, but very little of it was patently inept and none of it was so ludicrously bad as Horatio Greenough's togo-clad twenty-ton Washington which by the late eighties public ridicule had consigned to limbo in the basement of the Smithsonian. When Henry Adams' memorial to his wife was unveiled in Rock Creek cemetery in 1891, the beauty of St. Gaudens' simple tranquil figure, which Adams called "The Peace of God," led connoisseurs to declare it the finest sculpture in America. At the Corcoran Gallery of Art both the paintings and the sculpture attracted visitors, if only because exhibits open free to the general public were still a rarity in America. Some 90,000 people frequented the gallery in 1880 alone. William Wetmore Story, the American expatriate who executed the John Marshall statue on the west terrace of the Capitol and supposedly was Hawthorne's original for the sculptor in The Marble Fawn, when lecturing in Washington in the mid-eighties remarked upon the rapid improvement in Americans' aesthetic taste. Had he lived till the end of the century, he might have shared the astonishment of the Corcoran trustees at the results of an experiment in opening the gallery on Sunday: a long queue of "wage-earners" formed at the entrance long before the doors opened, and few left before the closing bell sounded. Among the paintings "Charlotte Corday" commanded most attention; of the sculpture, Hiram Powers' "Greek Slave." 34

Meanwhile the enthusiasm of the amateurs who flocked to the gallery to copy its pictures and to benefit from the free tutelage of Eliphalet Andrews

34 Charles Fairman, Art and Artists of the National Capitol, pp. 251 ff; Star, 8 Jan 79; Cleveland Leader, 23 Jan 84; Post, 1 Mar 97.
led the trustees in 1883 to offer a gold medal for the best piece of work and, four years later, to pay Andrews a small salary to conduct classes such as he had taught as a volunteer for nearly a decade. The Corcoran School of Art came formally into being in 1888 for upon W. W. Corcoran's death in February a memorandum came to light among his papers setting aside $100,000 for an art school to be attached to the gallery. Plans for a new building on 17th street therefore included spacious studios for classes. When the new white marble gallery opened in 1897, Andrews was able to persuade the artists who had been teaching paying students at the Art League to join him and his assistant at the Corcoran. By the end of the century the consolidation had secured the city an art school that would in time rank with those in New York, Boston and Chicago. 34a

Architects and laymen joined in admiring the classical lines of the new Corcoran Gallery although a segment of the local public preferred the ornate Renaissance style of the newly finished Library of Congress and in domestic architecture the heavy solidity of the Romanesque exemplified in the houses H.H. Richardson built on Lafayette square for Henry Adams and John Hay. Formal schools of architecture had not yet appeared in the United States. Young men learned the profession by serving virtual apprenticeships in the offices of established firms, just as a generation earlier young men read law in the offices of older men as preparation for the bar examinations. For the aspiring young architect the public buildings of the capital served as a kind

34a Olmsted, "The Corcoran School of Art," ms in possession of Corcoran Gallery.
of case book. If, like General Sheridan, who regretfully noted that the red brick mass of the Pension Office was fire-proof, others found much to object to in Washington's public architecture, her awful examples as well as her fine doubtless served a useful purpose.

In music Washington lagged behind other big American cities. A week or at most a fortnight of opera presented by companies on tour was her quota for the season, and occasionally a well-known instrumental soloist gave a concert, but professional performances were few, and brass bands, church choirs and choral societies still provided most of the music. Composers, like performing artists, found little encouragement in a city that lacked a public concert hall. That handicap was surmounted only by the organist and later the pastor of the Congregational church who composed a number of hymns and by John Philip Sousa, leader of the Marine Band. Sousa won local fame as a popular composer in 1890 when he conducted the first performance of his Washington Post March for a gathering of the Washington Amateur Authors' Association on the Smithsonian grounds. Later played at the Chicago World's Fair and at European courts, the gay March came to be known the world over, but, unhappily for Sousa, before then he had sold the score for $35 to a Philadelphia publisher and, unhappily for Washington, he left the Marines in 1892 to start his own band in New York.35 Gifted amateurs could only partly fill the gap created by the absence of professional talent. The Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, starting in 1882 with thirty-one instruments, worked up to a hundred before 1901, and several churches, notably the Asbury and St. Luke's Negro churches and the Congregational church, had exceptionally well-trained choirs. For a number of years the German Saengerbund gave an annual Lieder concert, and, until the death of the gifted

35 John Philip Sousa, Marching Along, pp. 115-17; Washington Post History, pp. 339-40; Post and Times Herald, 3 Jul 58.
"Harry" Sherman in 1896, the Washington Choral Society under his direction sang oratorios, including on one occasion the Elijah without an orchestra. Beginning in 1886 a group of women with some leisure and a serious interest in music formed the Friday Morning Music Club, meeting at each others' houses to study and give private concerts. By the end of the century, the Club had begun to achieve professional stature, but only members and guests could hear the concerts. In 1897 some twenty Negro women organized the Treble Clef Club along similar lines and attained equal competence. In an era when recordings and Edison phonographs were still an expensive innovation most people had little chance to discover that listening engendered a taste for music. The city as a whole remained lukewarm to the art. 36

Literature and writing, however, occupied an important place in Washington's life. The newspapers made much of the city's literary lights, perhaps partly because some of them were journalists who turned out an occasional novel or play in addition to their regular columns. Since the Associated Press and United Press services had not yet replaced correspondents for dozens of independent newspapers, numbers as well as talent kept reporters much in the public view. In 1889, having offended the Administration and thus somewhat weakened their own position, the leaders of the fraternity organized the Gridiron Club dedicated to giving an annual dinner which only members, all newspaper men, and three or four specially invited politically powerful guests might attend; yearly thereafter an anonymous skit, its authorship carefully concealed, neatly and good-naturedly

36 Frank Metcalf, "History of Sacred Music in the District of Columbia," CHS, Rec, XXVII, 175-202; Star, 15 Dec 79, 12 Apr 82; Cleveland Leader, 2 May 84; Post, 3 Nov 89, 1 Mar 97; Hagermann-Lindencrone, Sunny Side of Diplomatic Life, v. 16; Brief History of the Friday Morning Music Club of Washington, D.C., (Music Div., L.C.); programs and notices filed under heading "Washington" in Music Div, L.C.
roasted the guest of honor, and the pledge of secrecy about what went on was sufficiently well-kept to enable the victim to laugh with his tormentors. Public uncertainty about who wrote the lines and what punches they had delivered served to endow all correspondents with a reputation for Rabelaisian wit. 37

While congressmen and retired generals penned memoirs and treatises on politics and the Civil War, a flood of verses, essays, short stories and sketches of life in the capital poured out of Washington into the pages of popular magazines. Most of it left little permanent mark. Even Joaquín Miller, whose Songs of the Sierras and tales of the wild West seemed to ensure him lasting fame, might have dropped out of memory had his log cabin on Meridian Hill not survived as a physical landmark long after he had departed. With a host of writers ready to participate "literary evenings" became part of the social routine. The Shakespeare Club, the Circle des Précieuses Ridicules, the Unity Club and a dozen others held readings and listened to endless lectures. 38 The Boston-born wife of the Danish minister to the United States in the late seventies had described a meeting of the Washington Literary Society where "les élus des élus" discussed the evening's topic: "The Metamorphosis of Negative Matter." While Mrs. Dahlgren "who as president, sat in a comfortable chair with arms to it" called for comments, Mme. Lillie Hegermann-Lindencrone, impaled upon a hard cane-bottomed chair, thought agonizedly of the consequences for her blue velvet gown and "wondered if negative matter would comprise that." She felt the evening only

37 Theron C. Crawford, "The Special Correspondents at Washington," Cosmopolitan, XII, Feb 92, pp. 351-60; Richard V. Ouelsen, "Literary Bookland, the Gridiron Club of Washington," The Bookman, XXIII, Apr 06, pp. 146-52.

38 Star, 8 Jan, 30 Jun 81, 6 Feb, 12 Apr, 1 Nov 82, 9 Jan, 27 Feb 83; 20 Jan, 25 Nov 84; Post, 4 Nov 89. See especially the list of "literary works in progress," Cleveland Leader, 3 Mar 84.
partly redeemed by the introduction of positive matter in the form of scalloped oysters and chicken salad. But in 1880 when General James A. Garfield supplanted Mrs. Dahlgren as president of the society, the "enchanted circle of the Brain Club" encompassed less pretentiousness and the literary exercises became livelier.39

By no means all of Washington's literary figures were dilettantes or their writing of ephemeral interest. Government scientists turned out enormously valuable studies, some of which, like Clarence King's Geologica] Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel and John Wesley Powell's Geographies of the Colorado river valley are still classics in their field. In 1883 Lester Frank Ward published his epoch-making Dynamic Sociology, much of it written at his desk at the Geological Survey; the work of a distinguished, albeit still relatively obscure, paleobotanist and paleobiologist, Ward's presentation of the case for a planned society and his insistence that "ideas rule the world of men" struck with telling force.40 In the 1890's his Psychic Factors in Civilization and the Outline of Sociology further developed his social philosophy. Simon Newcomb, head of the Naval Observatory, produced not only lucid expositions of complex scientific problems but two books on political economy and, for good measure, a romance.

Historians, following in the wake of George Bancroft, made wide use of the archival materials in the Library of Congress, over which the bibliophile, author and scholar, Ainsworth Spofford presided. During the 1880's, Bancroft himself, then an octogenarian, wrote the History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States and, for relaxation, tended the "American Beauty"


rosebushes he had bred in his garden on H street. From Henry Adams' study at 1603 H street came in 1881 the anonymously published novel Democracy, a satirical commentary on Washington society, and in 1890 his history of Jefferson's and Madison's administrations. Next door his intimate friend John Hay took time out from his collaboration with John Nicolay to write the Breadwinners, a novel attacking organized labor as he had seen it in Cleveland during the railroad strike of 1877. After the appearance in 1890 of Nicolay's and Hay's monumental ten-volume Abraham Lincoln: A History, Hay confined his writing to letters and a few pieces of verse, and, while Adams wandered over the South Seas and Europe, the houses on H street ceased to be a source of distinguished literature.

The number of literary women in Washington frequently astonished visitors. "One of the lions of the capital" was the petite auburn-haired Frances Hodgson Burnett who in creating Little Lord Fauntleroy imposed black velvet knee breeches and lace collars upon a whole generation of rebellious small boys. James G. Blaine's sister-in-law, the short, stout, rather homely Abigail Dodge, still using the pen name Gail Hamilton, in the 1880's was still turning out widely read columns on politics and politicians. The sketches and stories of Mary Clemmer Ames, best known today for her book, Ten Years in Washington, Emily Briggs' Olivia Letters, Kate Field's witty pieces appearing under the title "Kate Field's Washington" and the writings of half a dozen other newspaperwomen in turn commanded respect. Forty years of turning out saccharine tales had shrunk Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth's literary standing but in the nineties the works of newer women novelists in Washington had not yet obliterated the little Georgetown widow's work from memory. Her little frame cottage on the
bluff looking out over the Potomac remained a point of interest to aspiring younger writers. Several of the younger authors drew on their own intimate knowledge of Washington society for background. If Grace Denio Litchfield's poems and the plays and stories of Jennie Gould Lincoln, wife of an eminent Washington physician, sold the better for being the products of society matrons, they merely shared the benefits Mrs. Dahlgren enjoyed in writing novels which spoke of high society with authority if not much originality. For the community at large the quality of what Washington women wrote was perhaps less important than the recognition the rest of the country accorded them as authors. 41

Feminists, pointing to the successful professional careers of women in the capital indeed proclaimed Washington, "a special center for women."

Where else in America were the works of women artists so prominently displayed as were Vickie Reams' and those of the Ohio sculptress Caroline Ranson who modelled two of the busts for the Senate chamber? In 1890 a group dedicated to "the elevation of women" organized the "Wimodaughsis." The society, its name chosen to represent wives, mothers, daughters and sisters who believed the "Dawn of Woman's Era" at hand, planned to open a building in which the National Woman Suffrage Association could convene, or the WCTU, the Red Cross under Clara Barton, the Women's National Press Association, the Federation of Women's Clubs and others. Women employed in government offices perhaps welcomed the proposal, although the young and attractive undoubtedly preferred the company of the bachelors with whom their jobs or the "dairy lunches" brought them in contact, and many older women, like Virginia Grigsby's mother with or without her corsets at the Land Office, were too tired at the end of the day's work to care.

41 Cleveland Leader, 4 Aug 83; Etta Ramsdell Goodwin, "The Literary Women of Washington," Chatauguan, XXVII, No 6 (Sep 98), pp. 579-86.
about elevation. Ladies with an established place in the social world of the capital showed little interest in the idea. The "career woman" was still a novelty, Bella Lockwood and the lady newspaper correspondents notwithstanding. Yet women of all conditions and kinds could lead a fuller life in Washington than in almost any other American city of the time.⁴²

Among men it was perhaps the scientists and scholars above all who found Washington congenial and who added most to the variety of the city's intellectual interests. While generals and bankers gravitated toward the Metropolitan Club, notables in a dozen fields of learning gathered at the Cosmos Club, in the house in which Dolly Madison spent her last years. Founded in 1878 in John Wesley Powell's parlor by men who had had a part in launching the Philosophical Society seven years before, the Cosmos Club quickly became the rendezvous of some of the most interesting men in America. After the remodeling of the house in the mid-eighties the learned societies of Washington usually held their fortnightly meetings there. A few members of the faculties of the Columbian and National Universities made up part of this group, but scientists in government service in Washington were its backbone. For in spite of some congressional opposition and even more from university scientists like Alexander Agassiz of Harvard who, imbued with laissez faire doctrines, objected passionately to a wider role of government in scientific research, programs of government bureaus expanded steadily during the eighties. Under the imaginative leadership of the men in charge, basic research not infrequently became the accepted accompaniment of the search for solutions to practical

⁴² Wimodaughsis, leaflet in Bowlman ms; ltr, Susan Grigsby to Sarah Humphreys, 1 Aug, 5 Oct 84; Gibbon-Humphreys ms, (SHC).
problems. By refusing to interfere, Congress endorsed these activities.

The challenge of the work possible in the bureaus in Washington and the
projects underway attracted brilliant men: geologists and paleontologists
at the Geological Survey, headed first by Clarence King and then by John
Wesley Powell; marine biologists pursuing oceanographic studies under the
guidance of Spencer Baird and George Brown Goode of the Fish Commission;
 geneticists, plant and animal pathologists, and chemists of the calibre of
Harvey Wiley in the Department of Agriculture; mathematicians and astronomers
working with Simon Newcomb on the Nautical Almanac and at the Naval Observatory;
and in the 1890's bacteriologists, Captain Walter Reed among them, brought
together by Surgeon-General George Sternberg in his reorganization of the
Army medical service. Partial reversal of congressional policies clipped the
wings of some of these agencies in the last decade of the century, but new
regulations and reduced budgets did not put an end to much of the work.\h3

The intellectual vigor of these men permeated the community; Their
versatility was in itself stimulating. The many-faceted Clarence King, for
example, an intimate of Henry Adams and John Hay, was an inimitable raconteur,
as well as a learned man and an explorer; he left the imprint of his vivid
personality upon Washington long after he resigned from the Geological Survey
in 1881. John Wesley Powell, a bluff, daring, one-armed, red-headed giant,
was not only the first white man to traverse the length of the dangerous
Colorado canyon, an able geologist and the author of the famous report on the

\h3 Dupree, Science in the Federal Government, pp. 149-270; Star, 11
Feb 79, 30 Jun 81, 27 Feb 83; "Scientific Research and the National Government,"
The Dial, XXII, Feb 97, pp. 73-75; Newcomb, Reminiscences, pp. 123-27, 216-
23; George Mallery, "
arid lands of the West, but was also so well versed in Indian languages and tribal mores that as head of the Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology in the 1890's he laid the groundwork for a considerable expansion of the science of cultural anthropology in America. Simon Newcomb, the most eminent American astronomer of his day, combined personal charm with scientific erudition; the initiator of a new system of computing the position of the stars and the mass and motion of the planets, he was also an inspiring lecturer, a lucid teacher and a prolific writer. The frail-looking, self-effacing but illustrious naturalist Spencer Baird, who followed Joseph Henry as secretary of the Smithsonian, was at the same time the initiating force behind the Fish Commission's extraordinary program of marine research. At his death, thesecretaryship of the Smithsonian passed to Samuel Langley, whose measurements of the radiant heat of the sun were of major importance and whose aeronautical experiments stirred the public imagination even while doubting Thomases ridiculed the idea of human flight. 43a

From these men and their only less famous associates came the spark that brought six learned societies into being in Washington between 1879 and 1893. Unlike the Philosophical Society which aimed at investigation of "the positive facts and laws of the physical and moral universe," several of the newer societies were concerned primarily with the popularization of science. The Anthropological Society admitted "antiquaries" as well as serious students to membership and the Biological Society took in "amateur naturalists" but Lester Ward and several other eminent members of the Philosophical Society were active in all three societies and learned mathematicians and physicists were not above joining the National Geographic Society which made no pretense of nurturing erudition. Indeed, the enthusiastic participation of laymen in the affairs of most of these societies, so far from weakening them, was a source of strength, binding much of upper-class Washington into an informal fellowship of intellectual interests. Through their published transactions, moreover, their influence reached far beyond the local community into cities where similar organizations did not exist. In order to pool resources for publication and public lectures, in 1888 a tentative federation evolved, and ten years later when the Philosophical Society concluded its utility greater than its threat to pure science, the Washington Academy of Sciences was born. Significantly, its first president was Gardiner Hubbard. For Hubbard, though a man of great cultivation and an exceptionally well-informed student of the physics of acoustics and aeronautics, was not a trained scientist but an amateur in the best sense.

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The financial genius behind the Bell Telephone Company, he and his son-in-law, the inventor Alexander Graham Bell, founded the National Geographic Society in 1888 to promote scientific exploration and through the pages of a non-technical, profusely illustrated magazine to educate the American public about remote parts of the earth. Other private citizens, if possessed of fewer attainments than Hubbard and Bell, swelled the ranks of the gifted and fascinating men who gave life in Washington much of its peculiarly satisfying quality.

At the turn of the century Washington was a city of many anomalies: the voteless capital of a republic, a center of scientific research which lacked a great university, a book-reading community, with only a tiny ill-equipped public library, a spacious city in which newcomers crowded into boardinghouses and in which business opportunities were so limited that ambitious nineteenth sons of well-to-do families had to seek careers elsewhere leaving behind them an urbane society with a taste for the arts but with little creative genius, and perhaps most startling, though least mentioned contradiction of all, the first locality below the Mason-Dixon line to see slavery abolished and black men enfranchised, yet where thirty years later most white people successfully ignored the colored third of the population except as a source of menial labor. White residents were more delighted with Washington's charms than disturbed by her lacks. Non-elective officials kept the broad avenues clean and the city orderly; her intellectual vigor was undeniable and her universities were growing; Congress at long last had set aside Mt. Vernon square, Andrew Carnegie had given $350,000 for a building and within a year or two an adequate free public library would be a reality.

temporary residents usually became permanent members of the community and then moved out of the boarding houses into homes of their own; and the absence of commerce and industry which drove young men away created an aura of leisure that was one of the city's chief attractions. The slow pace of life in the capital left people time to enjoy it. In 1901 white Washingtonians whole-heartedly subscribed to the view Dr. John Billings had expressed in 1886: "We live in a fortunate time and place—in the early manhood of a mighty nation, and in its capital city, which every year makes more beautiful, and richer in the treasures of science, literature and art."

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"Quoted in Dupree, Science in the Federal Government, p. 230."
dispassionate factual studies came the recommendations which Congress wrote into law in 1971 creating an executive accounting system and the Federal Bureau of the Budget. Under the direction of the hard-working, rather dow-looking William F. Willoughby, one-time financial adviser to the Chinese Republic and a former member of the Princeton University faculty, the Institute then moved on to the preparation of other monographs. The best known of these, an examination of the government's handling of Indian affairs, resulted in the reorganization of the Indian Service.7

Brookings meanwhile concluded that the economic problems facing the world—war debts, reparations and labor questions—above all demanded the scrutiny of "trained scientists, avid of facts, suspicious of assumptions and detached alike from personal prejudice and from any obligation to score points in the name of patriotism."8 With funds obtained from the Carnegie Corporation and generous contributions from his own pocket, he succeeded in launching the Institute of Economics in 1922. Perhaps his single most notable feat lay in convincing the competent but wary Harold G. Moulton of the University of Chicago that, if he accepted the preferred post of director of the new institute, he and his staff would not be subject to interference from the outwardly domineering "manufacturer-turned-educator." Brookings kept his promise. As might perhaps be expected from a board that included men of the calibre of Frederic A. Delano and the paleontologist John C. Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institution, the trustees also pledged themselves to give free rein to every scholar participating in the institute's work. It was a commitment of more than ordinary

7 The Brookings Institution, A Consideration of the Application of Research in the Social Sciences to the Problems of Modern Civilization, 1931, pp. 8-12; Herman Hagedorn, Robert C. Brookings, s Biography, pp. 21-22, 252-57.

8 Hagedorn, Brookings, p. 261.
importance to American intellectuals, for while the public, despite Tennessee's rejection of evolution at the Scopes trial, was ordinarily ready to accept the tenets of natural science, studies in the human sciences, especially of touchy economic questions, still seemed to most Americans to be matters of opinion. The independence given the men at the Institute of Economics heightened their responsibilities but also enormously strengthened the case for academic freedom throughout the United States.

Moulton, a round-faced, strong-jawed extrovert possessed of such athletic prowess that he had once considered a career in professional baseball, was at the same time a scientist intent on getting at the truth and seeing it presented in lucid non-technical language. He gathered about him a group of people as intellectually alert as he and as dedicated to the pursuit and unemotional interpretation of factual data. Their findings laid the analytical foundation upon which the Dawes Plan for German reparation was built and so molded public opinion that a settlement of allied war debts to the United States became possible. The long-enduring post-war agricultural depression led to Edwin G. Nourse's thought-provoking studies, The Legal Status of Agricultural Cooperation and The Cooperative Marketing of Livestock which served as practical guides to people seeking new forms of economic organization. An ingenious method of publicizing the contents of a new monograph early became standard procedure: congressmen, federal executives and independent scholars in the field were invited to a formal dinner at the Brookings headquarters. There the author of the study outlined his central thesis and answered questions about it. The result was that quotations from the book, duly accredited, not infrequently found their way into the Congressional Record and government reports.9

Brookings himself, eager to ensure a constant flow of young scientific experts into government service, in 1921 enlisted the financial aid of George Eastman of the Eastman Kodak Company and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund in order to open a graduate school in which discussion and direct exposure to the practical workings of the government would enrich students' book research. But despite hand-picked students and distinguished teaching, the school disappointed its founder. By 1926 he believed it was doing "the old cut and dried sort of thing which we find in every college"; students, instead of apprenticing themselves for careers in civil service and statesmanship, prepared for teaching posts. Brookings and the trustees had no wish to duplicate the work obtainable at any good university. Consolidation of the school with the two institutes promised to prove more effective. The unshot in December 1927 was the chartering of the Brookings Institution "devoted to public service through research and education in the social sciences." The graduate school as an agency granting Ph.D. degrees disappeared, and thenceforward training, lifted to a "super-graduate level," went on concurrently with the research programs in government administration and economics. Envisaging the addition of institutes of international relations and industrial psychology, the aging philanthropist expressed his faith "that in the field of the social sciences, the Institution may become a kind of cap-stone to the educational arch of the country." If the hard-headed economists and political scientists who carried out the research and writing and schooled younger scholars in their own exacting methods considered Brookings' dream over-ambitious, they nevertheless felt their work was important. If not all of it

brought about major administrative reforms, or affected public policy-making or altered the modes of American thinking, by 1930 the trustees and the staff of the Institution could announce that it was no longer an experiment, the first of its kind, but a firmly rooted organization the influence of which should spread.\footnote{Hagedorn, op. cit., p. 290; Brookings Institution, p. 16.}

Washington's reputation as an intellectual center perhaps gained even more from the American Council on Education than from the Brookings institutes, if only because it brought together here at least once a year leading figures in American higher education and because the information the council's standing committees assembled, evaluated and published in summary form in *The Educational Record* reached into every university and college town in the country. The council worked on the principle Woodrow Wilson had once enunciated: "Find out what you want in a college graduate and let the ways of getting it work themselves out"—that is, through the initiative and efforts of local communities rather than by government fiat bolstered by federal subsidies. The headquarters staff was small—in the mid-twenties a director, the tall, thin, sharp-featured, keen-witted Charles Mborg Mann, a former University of Chicago physicist who had served during the war as civilian adviser to the War Department; Assistant Director David A. Robertson, a pleasant-looking, genial, mild-mannered English scholar who also had been a member of the Chicago Faculty; one, sometimes two other trained educators, and five or six secretaries.\footnote{Ltr, David A. Robertson, Assistant Director American Council on Education, 1921-1930, to the author, 15 Apr 60; *The Educational Record*, I, No. 1, np. 33-36, and No. 3, passim.} Yet this handful of people performed various services for the teaching profession, the government,
industry, and occasionally foreign universities; whatever members of the permanent staff could not do, they found competent people to do for them. A sample of a task benefitting both the State Department and several American colleges was a study prepared under the supervision of Mann describing the manifold duties which foreign service officers had to perform and hence what colleges should teach men training for these careers; the factual basis of the Record of Usage was the day-by-day notations kept, at President Coolidge's request, by some three hundred foreign service officers. When the American Telephone and Telegraph Company requested a similar analysis for top executives, objections rose in some quarters that the intangibles of an executive's work would preclude a useful study, but the Council on Education proved its ability to resolve the problems by preparing and publishing a description of the work of the chief executive of the United States, based upon a record of the things President Coolidge did over a thirty-day period; the President himself instructed his secretary to provide the list. When two delegates of the International Student Union, a Pole and a Hungarian, wished to be presented at the White House, their respective embassies in Washington enlisted the help of David Robertson to take them in charge. Among a long array of more time-consuming and perhaps ultimately more significant undertakings were the council's studies of the teaching of modern languages in American colleges and of educational relations between universities and the federal government.13

The American Council of Learned Societies Devoted to the Humanistic Sciences, though less well-known outside academic circles than the Council on Education, also contributed to Washington's standing in the world of learning. Founded in late 1919 as the body to represent the United States in the Inter-

13 Ltr, Robertson to the author, 15 Apr 60; Educational Record, III-X, passim.
national Union of Academies, the federation of fifteen independent societies functioned for some eight years with no headquarters other than a room lent for the purpose by the Carnegie Institution's Department of Historical Research.

But in that interval the directors laid the groundwork for inter-disciplinary research in which archeology, history, philosophy, modern European and Oriental languages, anthropology and other branches of knowledge might all have a part.

Like the National Research Council, the Brookings Institution and the Council on Education, the humanists drew upon foundations for financial support. Among the council's early projects was a series of conferences on "the gifted student," a topic that stirred a response from the general public only thirty years later.

A more immediately effective undertaking was the compilation of the Dictionary of American Biography. With funds for publication obtained from the New York Times and articles prepared by experts in every relevant field, an editorial board of competent historians produced the first volume in 1928. Meanwhile recognition of the variety of services the Council of Learned Societies could perform led it to establish a full-time staff with its own headquarters in Washington. The post of permanent secretary fell to Waldo C. Leland, a fragile-looking, sparkling-brown-eyed little New Englander, whose pleasant dry humor mellowed his erudition and whose twenty-four years experience in archival and historical research for the Carnegie Institution prepared him for this new task. His assistant was Mortimer Graves, another spare-framed New Englander, whose vigorous intelligence and special interest in oriental culture quickly gave him a special place in the organization, inasmuch as an important function of the "ACLS" came to be the awakening of American scholars to the importance of understanding oriental civilization. From 1930 onward conferences on various aspects
of orientalists would proceed under council sponsorship. 11

Why humanists should choose Washington for their headquarters rather than the seat of one of the great universities is at first thought puzzling. On closer examination the answer is obvious. International relations were involved from the first. Furthermore, the council virtually from its beginning worked closely with the National Research Council and the Council on Education in scrutinizing plans for research in new areas and in making occasional grants-in-aid. Moreover, although the Carnegie Institution by the mid-twenties was focusing its energies primarily upon the physical sciences, its interest in archeology persisted. But, above all, the Library of Congress drew scholars in the humanities to Washington.

The Librarian of Congress, the brisk, perceptive, sandy-haired Herbert Putnam, looked upon the collections in his charge as a national library rather than a legislative tool. Over the years he had won the complete confidence of Congress by the temperate character of his requests; when he asked for funds the House Appropriations Committee accepted his word for the need. He had built up the accessions by drawing upon his exceptional knowledge of books and manuscripts in many realms of learning with and by exercising intuitive judgment about those he did not know; his decision was final. In the opinion of his subordinates he seldom made a mistake. Autocratic though his manner toward them was, his high standards of performance and his never-failing sense of justice robbed his rebukes of any sting. No library in America had so devoted a staff

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The Chinese collections and the method by which the Library of Congress acquired them are a case in point. First credit goes to Walter T. Swingle, plant pathologist and "plant explorer" of the Department of Agriculture, for in the course of his travels collecting seeds and cuttings in remote lands of the oriental East, he learned of rare books dealing not only with Chinese agriculture but also Chinese philosophy and Chinese literature. From 1913 onward he wrote long detailed descriptions of these finds to Putnam, and Putnam unhesitatingly acted upon Swingle's advice. Yet neither man could himself read any oriental language. Swingle accepted the judgments of learned Chinese friends; the librarian accepted Swingle's, even to the point of paying $1000 for a 1590 edition of a Chinese herbarium, the only one known to exist, but huge volumes of ideographs that scarcely fifty men in the United States could read. A colored man, Armstrong Claytor, who unpacked the shipments of orientalia, taught himself enough Chinese to identify and catalogue the materials, while the courtly and persuasive Swingle induced the Department of Agriculture to employ an elderly Irishman, Michael Haggerty, to translate the books so that students of agriculture as well as historians could benefit. So distinguished had the library's Chinese accessions become that in 1928 Putnam obtained appropriations to establish a division of Chinese literature headed by the gentle and learned sinologue Arthur Hummel. Japanese and Tibetan materials also multiplied, while the Freer Gallery, under the wing of the Smithsonian, furnished magnificent examples of oriental art. In that fashion Washington became the one place in the western world where the student of civilization could find the resources he needed.

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15 Interviews with various staff members of the Library of Congress of the 1920's, 5 and 7 Apr 60.
16 ACLS Bulletin, No. 11, Apr 29, pp. 33-58; First Librarian of Cong. 1926, pp. 1-2, 6-7, 272, 287-316; interviews, Arthur Hummel, 5 Apr 60, and Joseph Filitier, 6 Apr 60.
The scientists and scholars made no pretense of belonging to the "lost generation" that produced the distinctive literature of the 1920's; neither they nor the city's newspaper correspondents turned out a Main Street or a This Side of Paradise or a Farewell to Arms. Measured by such a gauge Washington had no notable literary figures. On the contrary, even the Gridiron Club skits took on a rather pedestrian quality. The Literary Society, although putting as much stress upon social acceptability as upon original talent, included, however, a number of people whose writings redeemed it from pure dilettantism. Most members were in fact only incidentally writers. Thus the essays of Judge Wendell P. Stefford come from the pen of a jurist. The paleontologist John C. Merriam of the Carnegie Institution wrote of "The Living Past" in rock formations. Tyler Bennett of the State Department discussed American relations with the Far East, William Penn Presson of the Foreign Service such themes as the experiences of the murian diplomat Francis Dane at the court of Catherine the Great, while the botanist William E. Safford told of "The Romance of the Potato." The octogenarian Gen. Adolphus W. Greeley, in the early 1880's head of the ill-fated arctic expedition from which only seven men returned, still attended the society's meetings and still wrote of the arctic and his far-flung adventures. Washington's literary output was informing rather than creative, but it kept interest in books and ideas very much alive.

While steadily increasing enrollment in the Corcoran Art School and streams of visitors at the Freer and Corcoran galleries indicated a growing appreciation of the fine arts, informed Washingtonians early realized that neglect was restricting the potentialities of the National Gallery of Art. In

17 Nicolle, Sixty Years of the Literary Society; Thomas Sprulding, The Literary Society in Peace and War, pp. 23-32; interview, Albert Atwood, member 1926-, 3 May 60.
1920 Congress for the first time appropriated a small sum of money for it, but the pictures were still crowded into a few rooms of the National Museum where only part of the collection could be displayed and lack of space forbade accepting new accessions.  

"We are the only civilized nation that has not risen to a realization of the real value of art and of important functions of a National Gallery," wrote the Secretary of the Smithsonian in 1922. No important art work has, for art's sake pure and simple, ever been purchased with the approval of the United States Government. The Nation has received as gifts and bequests, art works amounting to more than ten millions in money value, and has expended on their acquisition and care possibly one two-hundredth part of that amount.

Unless Congress were willing to meet the cost of erecting a new building, only private efforts could give the national collection a suitable gallery and opportunity to expand, since the endowment of the Smithsonian was no longer adequate even for its scientific programs. Faced with that dilemma a committee of fifteen leading citizens headed by Mrs. William Jorcioran Gustis, wife of W.W. Corcoran's grandson, arranged a special loan exhibition to promote interest in the gallery, while several Washington business firms joined with the regents of the Smithsonian in a campaign to enlarge the Institution's endowment. By 1929 the Secretary could report:

The year has been gratifyingly and unexpectedly rich in progress... The National Government and many friends of the Institution have added materially to its income—Fr. John Gellatly, of New York, has made the gift of his extensive collection comprising classic American and European paintings, outstanding specimens of jewellers' art, tapestries, furniture, and oriental art, valued altogether at several million dollars, to the Smithsonian for eventual exhibition in the National Gallery.

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18 Star, 3 Jul 20; Rpt Fine Arts Comm, 1921; Anl Rpt Smithsonian, 1921, p. 16, 1922, p. 6, 1923, p. 6, 19; Frederick P. Keonel and F. L. Duffus, The Arts in American Life, p. 67.

19 Anl Rpt Smithsonian, 1922, p. 43.

20 Ibid., 1924, 3-4, 1925, 18-19, 1926, 3-4, 7, 21, 1927, p. 25; Exhibition of Early American Paintings, Miniatures and Silver, Assembled by the Washington Loan Exhibition Committee, December 3, 1925-January 3, 1926.

21 Anl Rpt Smithsonian, 1929, p. 2.
The impending depression would check that progress, but in the thirties the gift of Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon would turn hope into reality. Meanwhile belief that "the sense of well-being and enriched capacity for living which art can give" should be "a privilege of the many as well as the technically trained and sensitive few," inspired Duncan Phillips, a discriminating private collector and experienced art critic, to open to the public in 1920 what one admirer called an "Art Gallery for Delight." The paintings, ranging from an occasional 16th century piece to works of French impressionists, James McNeill Whistler and a few 20th century American artists, were never all put on display at one time, but were changed or regrouped periodically to illustrate particular ideas and themes. Housed in two rooms of the family residence, the pictures in the Phillips Gallery gained in charm from the intimacy of their setting. While a perceptive local public enjoyed the gallery, it came to be known also to connoisseurs the world over.

The theatre still suffered from competition with dinner parties and evening receptions. During the "little season" in the autumn, new plays sometimes had trial runs at the Pellerco and Broadway hits of the previous season came occasionally. But once the full social season opened, theatre-going fell off. In April 1921 when the Howard University Players presented a magnificent performance of Eugene O'Neill's 'Emperor Jones' at the Pellerco only two hundred people attended; whether the time of year or the race of the actors explained the half empty house is uncertain. Negroes were ordinarily barred from white theatres. A large part of the year both races in Washington substituted movies, vaudeville, burlesque and occasional amateur performances for legitimate

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In some measure what the would-be theatre-goer lost the devotee of music gained, since, in the absence of a large concert hall, visiting symphony orchestras and soloists often used the National Theatre for concerts, while touring opera companies from time to time rented Poli's or Keith's vaudeville houses. The auditorium at the Central High School, ball rooms at hotels and other halls were also pressed into service. But despite arrangements, and despite the city's long-persisting reputation for indifference, Washington in the 1920's provided what an astonished Bostonian termed, "a veritable feast of music." In one week of 1925, for example, Louise Homer sang at the Washington Auditorium, Marian Anderson, the already famous young Negro contralto, at the First Congregational church, Sophie Freslau at National Theatre, the New York symphony played at Poli's, the American pianist Charles Cooper at the Masonic auditorium, the organist Henry Seibert at the Washington Auditorium, and the Davison Glee Club performed at the Masonic auditorium. Many if not most of the big concerts were held in the afternoon. Two years after Mrs. Lawrence Townsend, herself a composer of some note, launched a series of morning musicals at which leading artists made their Washington debuts, Mrs. Frederick Sprague Coolidge inaugurated an evening chamber music festival "in the Congressional Library, in the new little auditorium, necessarily limited in seating capacity and high in ideals musically." From that beginning came in time the famous

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23 Star, 2 April 21, 11 Oct 23; interview, Mrs. Charles Warren, 28 Apr 60.

24 Star, 8 Nov 25. Issues of the Sunday Star of October and November when the concert season opened carried yearly full notices of what was to come.

Library of Congress concerts of the Budapest string quartet. Friends organized the Washington Chamber Music Society. The Knights of Columbus opened an Evening School of Music and societies like the Arts Club and the United Art Society offered concerts once a week. With such a profusion of music available to people of leisure, the lack of a local symphony orchestra mattered only to the person unable to attend day-time concerts. At night dance music poured out of private houses, country clubs and restaurants.  

In colored Washington music was a cultural cement. Negroes excluded from white concerts provided their own. Until the demise of the Bee in 1922 the paper regularly devoted a half page to events "In the World of Music." The Tribune born in 1921, for years followed much the same course. Here was a realm in which the Negro community knew it excelled. Colored bands played at white debutante balls, but the orchestras apparently reserved their most notable performances for their own people. The "Snowden Diamond Jazzologists" and other bands made the city "known for its syncopation" even if as innovators they did not rank with New Orleans' players. Thirty years later Washington would proudly claim jazz artists of the fame of Louis Armstrong as native sons. Nor did the colored community neglect its church music and other classical forms. Upper class Negroes cultivated all music as an art and trained their children in its practice. Unknown to most white Washingtonians, least of all to the "smart set," the Mus-o-lit Society occupied a very special place in the life of the "Secret City."  

If frequently startled to find the capital far richer in artistic life  

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26 Ser n. 2; and programs, 1920-1930 under "Washington" in Music Div files, L. e.; interview, Mrs. Warren, 9 May 60.  

27 Bee, 19 Feb, 12 Mar 21; Tribune, 21 May 21, 21 Jan 22; Crisis, XXIX Jun 32, p. 185.
than he had supposed, the discerning newcomer was invariably struck by Washin-
ton's persisting village-like quality. Its unexpectedness entranced most people.

Here was a bucolic Cleopatra whose wiles seduced the "good home-spun citizen."
World capital though she was, "the chief official personages who people the
scene are villagers with a villager's outlook and a villager's background."

A sense of intimacy pervaded all strata of white society irrespective of the
position an individual might occupy. More than thirty years later one man
recalled a spring evening when, as he and his wife, en route to a dinner party,
boarded a trolley, the long fringe of his wife's Venetian shawl caught on the
conductor's sleeve button; instead of yanking it free the conductor followed
her into the car, and, slowly disengaging the strands said very courteously:

"Madam, you certainly have me on the string to-night."

Even the critic who
considered the city "rootless" and "without ambition," a place in which "material
barrenness... [is] matched by its own cultural barrenness," admitted that
a "dance is a pleasanter place than a factory or a laboratory or a study; con-
forming travelers on the broad path are easier on their fellows' elbows than
angular men of ideas and purposes."

The popular press of the twenties portrayed the city in more vivid colors.
The picture of Washington that emerged for the great American public was that of
a city given over entirely to dances, teas and dinner parties, incessant social
climbing and, as a way to the top, jockeying for political preferment. The
canvas was narrow; the arts occupied little space, the world of learning even
less. Political commentators, including radio broadcasters, it is true, talked

28 David A. Robertson to the author, 15 Apr 60; Edward G. Lowry, Washington

29 John W. Owens, "A City without a Fain Street," Nation, CXX, 6 May 25,
no. 513-11; Edward S. Lowry, Washington Close-Ups: Intimate Views of Some Public
Figures, pp. 74-9, 15-19.
of congressional responses to national and international problems. But Washington
society with a capital S appeared to have wider appeal. In the new Babylon,
In the new Babylon, once the scandals of the Harding administration had blown over, politics lost much of its one-time
fascination, except insofar as high-ranking government officials were inevitably
still part and parcel of the social scene; and Coolidge's biographer insisted
that official society was still "the only society in Washington." Month after
month women's magazines carried descriptions of what the well-dressed senator's
wife was wearing or what etiquette demanded in the capital; metropolitan dailies
seized upon Washington gossip as mana from heaven. The raw material lent itself
admirably both to derisive and reverential treatment. But bathtub gin and
bootleg whiskey, sleek sports cars, backbiting and competition over precedence,
short skirts and Zulu-like bushy permanents on nine debutantes out of ten held
the limelight.

The local newspapers, so far from disparaging the doings of high society,
usually adopted a worshipful tone; but, by publishing little more significant
news, the local press contributed to a one-sided view of the city's life. The
Times, which ten years before had championed civic causes deserving public
support, had changed hands after the war, and the once liberal editor swung far
to the right. In the opinion of the fiery Oscar Garrison Villard of the Nation,
the Times then became, like the Herald, a "noisy and insincere" Hearst paper.
Under the editorship of the irresistible "Cissy" Paterson, the Herald, at one
time promised to provide more substantial fare, but it tooapsed into offering
a bland diet only occasionally spiced with biting, politically loaded comments.

of the entries under the heading "Washington" in the Reader's Guide to Periodical
Literature from 1920 to 1929 consists of articles about "high society."
Newspapermen described the Washington Post, a "colson sheet" without moral integrity. The News, a tabloid of which the courageous and gifted Lowell Mellett was the backbone, carried valuable items on its inside pages but hid its light under a bushel by spreading trivia like the "Marble Championship" across its front page. The Star, one of the biggest money-makers in the newspaper business, trod such a wary path lest an editorial or news item offend Congress or an important advertiser that every column appeared swathed in cotton wool. Theodore Noyes, one of the Star's principal proprietors, was popular, generous to his employees, and unquestionably dedicated to Washington's interests as he saw them: those he obviously believed best protected by discretion. Certainly the consistently non-controversial tone and the home-y "small-town gossip" of the Star kept it a wide local public.\(^\text{31}\) Readers naturally were not happy to learn that in driving her own car Mrs. Herbert Hoover in 1929 made history of the kind The New Yorker might have picked up: for the first time "the wife of a President has operated a car while in the White House."\(^\text{32}\) Such items were safer than opinions, even those well right of center. For, as Villard noted, there is "no such hide-bound conservative in all the world as your retired civil official or retired army or navy official," and Washington was full of them. People who wanted to follow public affairs other than the "shifting social pageant" read the New York Times or the Baltimore Sun or the Christian Science Monitor.\(^\text{33}\)

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\(^{31}\) Oscar G. Villard, "Washington: A Capital without a Thunderer," Nation, CXVII, 5 Sep 23, pp. 232-35. Independent albeit negative testimony to the meagerness of news in Washington papers may be observed by the paucity of references to them in the documentation of chapters covering the 1920's.

\(^{32}\) Star, 4 Apr 29.

\(^{33}\) Villard, Some Newspapers and Newspapermen, p. 175; anon. (Robert Allen), Washington Merry-Go-Round, pp. 322-358.
Perhaps the shortcomings of the local press could be seen as a result as well as a cause of the city's small town atmosphere.

By no means all outsiders admired the most publicized element in the city. Washington's was "the most temporary Society in America," exclaimed a New Yorker in 1921:

Near the top of the ladder stands the set that Washington terms with reluctant reverence "the Cave Dwellers." These are the native aristocracy, frequently of unimpressive lineage as most eastern cities rate such matters, but with a background of two or three generations of residence in the capital which gives them an air of hoary antiquity when compared to the rest of the city's transitory Society.

The Truxton Beales, the Montgomery Blairs, the Joseph Leiters, the Woodbury Blairs and perhaps a dozen other families are the most patrician clans in that august group. Either definitely in that set or hovering upon its borders is a swarm of wealthy widows. When a millionaire goes to heaven, his wife takes up residence in Washington. Mrs. John B. Henderson and Mrs. William J. Poorman are among the most prominent of these dowagers.

Since cave-dwellers were the descendants of the families whom Mrs. Dahlgren had labelled "the very elite," the old established "residential society" of antebellum days, anyone of less ancient vintage, millionaire's widow or otherwise, could never properly be included among the group, but by the 1920's the term was loosely used. The Massachusetts avenue house of the Patten sisters, three spinster ladies, was a "shrine for the non-political world of fashion." Emphatically not cave-dwellers and with only one generation of moderate wealth behind them, "they long ago set out to rule Washington by giving great tea parties at which one's presence was the sign manual of society. Their tireless energy in unearthing obscure facts raised gossip to the plane of research." In


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the popular phrase the way to spread the news in the city was "telephone, telegraph, or tell-a-Patten." Their all-knowingness, fortified by their quick wits, was simultaneously terrifying and fascinating. Scores of people panted to be invited to a Sunday afternoon tea that might furnish stories on which to dine out for the rest of the season, provided, of course, that fellow dinner guests had not also attended the Patten parties. Made up partly of social climbers but also of minor functionaries of the diplomatic corps and young married couples versed in the official etiquette they chose to ignore, the gay irresponsibles had a dash which "the rest of the capital envies and deplores." Washington Merry-go-Round, written by a competent newspaper correspondent but published anonymously shortly after the Jazz Age had ended in the crash, took a less tolerant view. The bungling of the welcome prepared for the "Lone Eagle" illustrated the city's ineptness: the dinner in Lindbergh's honor wound up with a recording of "They're Hanging Danny Dever in the Morning." Here was a "humdrum capital" in which the diplomatic corps was "starched futility" and "boiled bosoms" served as the brittle front for the emptiness of society leaders. "One of the most charming things about Washington," the author added sardonically, "is that it is almost never without a social, diplomatic or matrimonial war." Society itself was divided between "those who want to get their names into the papers and those who want to keep them out." Alice Roosevelt Longworth's memoirs bear out some of these judgments. She herself obviously found many of the party-goers boring and their heavy drinking obnoxious in a supposedly dry capital.


37 See n. 34.

38 Washington Merry-go-Round, pp. 10-33, 50, 65-87, 100-02, 262, 265; Longworth, Crowded Hours, pp. 313-17, 328-30, 336-37.
In being well supplied with bores and over supplied with bootleg liquor, Washington differed little from other American cities of the period. Perhaps therein lay the chief indictment against a community whose society, Americans liked to think, represented the best in the country.

Neither the admulatory nor the derogatory descriptions of the Washington scene hinted at any complexity in the social structure. By implication, there was nothing to see below the top. Since every small town in America had its lower classes and only the capital had an official society, popular writers chose to ignore most of the population—the army of "regimental" government clerks, the 130,000 colored Washingtonians, the businessmen of modest means and the tens of thousands of obscure people who earned their livings supplying services to the community. But the assumption that "the world of fashion," the diplomatic corps and the highest ranking government officials comprised the sole elements that gave Washington society its special flavor derived from an oversimplification. More than one person with social entree might have replied to the snob's inquiry about what "book" he was listed in—that is, the Social Register, the Green Book, successor to the Flite List, or Who's Who in the National Capital—"Oh I'm in the telephone book." Who was a cave-dweller, who merely a person seeking to don the cloak as protection against intrusive curiosity or, conversely, as an advertisement of his superior inaccessibility, was a question only the true cave-dweller could answer. Some of that group had gone to seed; some kept to their caves as the only way of concealing the meagerness of their personal attainments. Georgetown, particularly, contained a number of odd characters, products of intermarriages within their own small circle, eccentrics whose prestige hinged upon remaining aloof from everyone without local antecedents going
back to the 1840's and 1850's. Moreover, not all descendants of the resident aristocracy of sixty and seventy years earlier had escaped the contamination of "trade." For example, the fifth and sixth generation of the Hegner family, sprung from the Peter who came as a clerk with the War Department in 1800, served as advisers on etiquette to newcomers, published the money-making Green Book, or sold real estate. The outlander who in Washington was obliged to point out lower that before 1924 the Chevy Chase Club had slipped so far as to have the bars several times, leaving only the Grasslands Country Club and the fifty-member Alibi Club untainted. The fact that no Jew was allowed even as a guest in the country clubs too was presumably obvious to mention. But the interpretation of Washington's social hierarchy as built upon "wealth and an imported aristocracy either directly or indirectly political" left out of account the variety of individual talent in the city and the ease with which doors barricaded against the social climber opened to the genuinely gifted newcomer.

The attitude of Washington bluebloods after World War I was not unlike that of the post-Civil-War era. Then they had wanted no traffic with a "galaxy of diamonds with Mrs. Fernando Wood attached to the back of them" but welcomed the scientists who took on assignments in the new federal bureaux. The cultivated long-time resident in Washington of the Jazz Age preferred to disregard the "smart set" but displayed cordiality to the new arrival whose accomplishments and good manners qualified him for membership in the Cosmos Club. Indeed in the eyes of discriminating Washingtonians election to the Cosmos Club probably constituted an open sesame as effective as membership in the Metropolitan or the Chevy Chase Club.

39 Interviews, Ralph W. E. Shoemaker, 21 May 60.
41 Olivia Letters, p. 320.
clubs. Certainly snobbish exclusion from delightful and interesting social gatherings, official and non-official, was rarely the lot of the charming albeit not infrequently impecunious scholars and scientists who came in the 1920's, sometimes as government employees, sometimes not. Social mobility was perhaps more pronounced in Washington than in any big city of a nation marked by the fluidity of its social classes.

The Golden Calf had its worshippers in Washington as everywhere in the United States, but neither wealth nor antiquity of family nor important public office was an essential prerequisite for social acceptance. Curiously enough during an era in which business rode high in America, Washington's businessmen commanded little social prestige, although the heads of the Riggs bank, fortified by sixty to seventy years of controlling the credit of people ostensibly more powerful, were listed in the Social Register; and once in, a person was usually safe for an indefinite future. After mid-1923 Washingtonians, old and new, like thousands of other Americans, poked fun at the occasional gaucherie of the farmer's son in the White House, just as they would have if he had once been a hardware salesman, and just as they later took malicious delight in the elbowings of Dolly Gann, the Vice-president's stout, loud-spoken sister and hostess, in her determined and successful efforts officially to outrank Mrs. Longworth, the wife of the Speaker of the House. But pontificators on precedence, the socially secure and the status seekers alike tacitly admitted by 1929 that they could not deny position to the intellectuals who little by little were transforming Washington from a provincial city into a capital of world-wide distinction.

\[1^2\] Based on a series of interviews with people in Washington during the 1920's. See also discussion in Rowland Perloff, "The American Social Order: A Conservative Hypothesis," American Historical Review, LXIV, Apr 60, 499-514.

\[1^3\] See n. 38.
President Hoover's "business administration," which seemingly should have given new stature to all businessmen, leaned heavily upon the scientists and social scientists in Washington. The President's brusque zeal to put everything on a fool-proof, businesslike, scientifically efficient basis thus gave unexpected importance to men versed in research. Hoover wanted no traditional fol-de-rol to interfere with scientific management, although science that failed to produce the formulae he expected was in his eyes not scientific; he lashed out at some of the monographs prepared by the Brookings Institute of Economics which he contended had cost the United States a million dollars yearly. Yet he inaugurated during his first months in office the studies that culminated in the many-volumed Recent Social Trends, an invaluable detailed analysis of American resources and modes of life. In attempting to act upon his conviction that government was a task for specialists, he strengthened the position of the expert in Washington. Unwittingly he thus paved the way for the New Deal brain-trusters.

During the post-war decade cave-dwellers and the less self-consciously elite among old residents could observe the gradual change in the city but could neither hasten nor halt it. They could endorse warmly the recommendations of a Frederic A. Delano and admire the clear thinking of a Harold Moulton, but in a city of nearly half million souls their own wishes no longer counted. Washington was no longer theirs.

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Interview, Edwin G. Nourse, 15 Apr 60.
CHAPTER XXII

THE ADJUSTMENT OF LOCAL AIMS TO NATIONAL GOALS, 1920-1929

A presidential election year always stirred a flutter of excitement in voteless Washington. If the Senator Blair prophesied in the 1890’s, long-enforced political irresponsibility had bred in her residents considerable apathy about governing themselves, certainly indifference did not extend to the outcome of a national election, for it was likely to affect every taxpayer, every wage-earner and, by enlarging or shrinking the clover fields, every social butterfly in the District of Columbia. In 1920 hope without confidence marked the months preceding November. Irrespective of his convictions or lack of convictions about the League of Nations issue and other national problems, almost every adult in Washington first and foremost wanted peace, preferably peace with plenty, but in any case an end of turmoil. With the collapse of the Red Scare in mid-summer, that desire looked more attainable than it had earlier. Wages in the building trades were still at war-time levels—unhappily was the meagre pay-scale of permanent Civil Service employees—and business, though declining as some 16,000 temporary war-workers were dropped from federal payrolls, had not yet suffered. ¹

District officials struggled along on inadequate salaries but managed to carry out essential services for a city of approximately 25 percent more populous than the Washington of three years before. The commissioners, acting ex officio as a Public Utilities Commission, after prolonged

¹ Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1921, p. 99; Comrs Rpts, 1920, 1, 29, 296, 1921, p. 18; Paul H. Douglas, Real Wages in the United States, p. 376; Star, 1 Jan 21.
negotiations with corporation officers and lawyers and a fight in the courts, succeeded in establishing an acceptable cost basis for each utility company and then fixed rates. More extraordinary feat, Commissioner Brownlow and General Kutz, formerly Major Kutz, who in 1919 again became engineer commissioner, drafted and put into effect a zoning ordinance; thanks to frequent consultations with white citizens' and Negro civic associations while the maps were under preparation, it satisfied everyone and indeed won the endorsement of real estate firms from whom fierce opposition had initially seemed inescapable. Moreover, although hearings held in December 1919 ended in limiting the federal share of District appropriations to 60 percent instead of the theoretical former 50 percent, the new fiscal act provided for a sliding tax rate that permitted the commissioners later to lower the then rate of $1.95 on every $100 of assessed valuation. The Board of Education, on the other hand, encountered bitter criticisms during the spring of 1920 for not reappointing Superintendent of Schools Edward Thurston, a well-meaning but ineffectual, unimaginative native Washingtonian, and for retaining Roscoe Conkling Bruce as Assistant Superintendent of the colored schools in spite of Negro Parents League demands for his ouster. The animosities aroused reached such lengths that a Clifford Berryman cartoon in the Star depicted a city too engrossed in a Senate resort on the school fight to read the forecasts of national convention results. The controversy unfortunately

entered into the question of who was to succeed Gwynne Gardiner as District commissioner. Gardiner had resigned late in 1919; in May the Senate refused to confirm President Wilson's nominee for the post, the public-spirited Dr. John Van Schrick, a former president of the Monday Evening Club and of the school board. A victim of the Moons affair, the President's candidate was also unwelcome to conservatives in the business community. Although he possessed many of the qualities of a John Joy Edson, Van Schrick was a Universalist minister, not a banker, and not, as his detractors pointed out, a Washingtonian of forty years' residence; and he was tainted, Senator "Pet" Harrison argued, with a fearsome brand of Monday Evening Club "radicalism."

But the Republican Senate's rejection of all President Wilson's nominees for all offices left the board of commissioners minus one man at a time when problems were many.

A more serious loss befell in September: Louis Brownlow resigned to become city manager of Petersburg, Virginia, a city of 30,000 souls, where he would receive a salary of $10,000, twice the sum Congress allowed the administrative head of a city of 426,000 and the capital of the nation. One of his last acts as commissioner was to appoint an Interracial Committee of eminent citizens to explore ways of improving communication between white and colored Washington; after Brownlow's departure the committee fell apart. Since the Senate was not in session that autumn, two interim appointees, Miss Nebel Boardman and J. Thilmans Hendrick, accepted office as commissioners.

Miss Boardman, a rather over-power-looking woman whose high composure added

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3 Star, 19, 23 Feb, 12, 13, 17, 20, 21 Mar, 19, 22 Apr, 26, 27 May, 6, 7, 10 Jun 20; Dec, 17 Jan, 13, 20 Feb 20; S Jones on D.J., Argus, "The Combination of Dr. John Van Schrick, Jr., to be a Cow of the D of C," passim, and especially pp. 5-9, 56-59, 80; interview Brownlow, 19 Sep 59.
to her Victorian wife, was a one-time member of President Roosevelt's Housing Committee but in 1920 was best known as the chief organizer of the women's Volunteer Services of the American Red Cross; Hendrick was a Washington stockbroker scarcely known at all outside the city's financial circles. Every Washingtonian, Commissioners Boardmen and Hendrick probably as keenly as anyone, felt that a stalemate obtained in District affairs. Meanwhile, in a bedroom at the White House behind closed doors, an ailing President, how ill scarcely a dozen people knew, waited with dreadful anxiety the decision of November 4.

The election of Warren Gamaliel Harding snipped much of the tension in the capital. Staunch Democrats were naturally badly disappointed and perhaps more then a few knowledgeable Republicans secretly shared the opinion of Mrs. Longworth later expressed: "Harding was not a bad man. He was just a slob." But most Washingtonians were glad at least to have the waiting over.

A Board of Trade spokesman probably described the general state of mind correctly:

A feverish uncertainty, a reluctant looking for something that every man and woman hoped might never come, has been the condition attendant upon the passing days of the year. We are looking forward to the happy time, when, under new and settled conditions, the business and pleasures of our people, their thoughts, hopes and aspirations may once more be along normal lines; and unrest and I.W.W.-ism may become unknown in the universal endeavor to unbuild our industries and manhood, and curtail our all too large national debt.

Workingmen and government clerks were undoubtedly less concerned with

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4 Brownlow, op. cit., pp. 96-99; interview Brownlow, 23 Feb 00; Comrs Rpts, 1920, p. 5; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1920, pp. 51, 131.

5 Longworth, Crowded Hours, p. 325.

6 Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1920, p. 131.
reduction of the national debt than with earning a decent living, and a number of local businessmen for a time tended toward pessimism, but all classes of society, white and colored, appeared to relax visibly as the winter wore on. 7

With the approach of the inauguration an air of almost forgotten festivity settled over the city. It was dampened but not extinguished by an "economy howl in Congress" which persuaded the President-elect and the inaugural committee to cancel plans for an elaborate parade and an inaugural ball. The business slump and the consequent drop in employment which had struck most of the country had not yet affected the capital; gratitude for that reprieve--except, the unwary could call it--heightened Washington's enjoyment of the golden sunlight flooding the city on March 1, 1921. Shock at sight of the wasted figure seated beside the ebullient, handsome Harding when the presidential limousine rolled down Pennsylvania Avenue silenced the on-lookers momentarily, but pity and regrets yielded quickly to interest in what lay ahead. The new President's inaugural address contained nothing startling unless it were his statement that "the Negroes of America . . . have earned the full measure of citizenship bestowed; that their sacrifice in blood on the battlefields of the Republic entitle them to all freedom and opportunity, all sympathy and aid that the American spirit of fairness and justice demands." Negroes were elated; "lily-whites" 8 were not disturbed. That night, while colored society celebrated at a large reception and a dance at "Convention Hall," two other non-official balls took place, one a benefit for the Child Welfare Society sponsored by the

7 Ibid., p. 104.
8 Par., 5, 12 Mar 21.
wife of the newly deposed Vice President, Mrs. Thomas Marshall, the other a private dance given for some six hundred GOP merrymakers by "Ned" McLean, chairman of the inaugural committee. If on that occasion Mrs. McLean wore the famous Hope diamond, its reputed evil powers may have seemed to the superstitious to account for the ills that two years later overwhelmed several of the party. Mrs. Harding herself, an arch believer in the rightness of the clairvoyants she sometimes consulted, apparently had no forebodings.\footnote{Ibid., 5 Mar 21; Sullivan, Our Times, VI, op. cit.; Longworth, Crowd ed Houses, pp. 327-24; Star, 6, 9 Mar 21.}

Springtime in Washington, along whose tree-lined streets in 1921 people still walked for pleasure, exercised peculiar charms that year. For the first time the war receded into the distant past. The very sight of the open gates of the White House grounds inviting the world to walk and drive in and out freely lightened the atmosphere; on Easter Sunday children and Easter eggs again dotted the lawns. "Balloon men," wrote a Senator's wife, "with their rainbow-colored balls floating lightly above them in great clusters, and vendors of flowers stand on every corner; the Japanese cherry blossoms, a mass of fragrant bloom, border the basin and speedway above the Potomac River; the starry dogwood scatters its petals in Rock Creek Park; and wisteria, drooping and feathery, hangs over doorways and porches, and clouds the rotunda at Arlington." Newly appointed federal officials took up their duties with leisurely zest, while with still greater enthusiasm wives new to Washington society set about mastering the mysteries of etiquette in the capital.\footnote{Star, 20, 28 Mar 21; Frances Parkinson Keyes, Letters from a Senator's Wife, p. 191.}
Nor did the pervasive gaiety evaporate when the country-wide business depression reached Washington in the early summer. "National Music Week" in June brought together on the Ellipse an assembly of school children such as the city had not seen since the home-coming welcome for the Army of the Potomac in May 1865. The chorus of more than 50,000 children's voices carrying the strains of the Star-Spangled Banner from the elm-bordered rim of the Ellipse to the flag-draped grandstand near the Monument evoked emotion in everyone from the dignitaries surrounding the President and Mrs. Harding to the humblest parent on the outskirts of the audience. Week after week the baseball diamonds and tennis courts laid out on the Ellipse and the Monument grounds and the new nine-hole golf course in East Potomac Park were filled with light-hearted players, although dark-skinned citizens, by order of the North-Carolina-born commissioner of public grounds, were allowed to play only on Tuesday afternoons and were never permitted to use the equally popular bathing beach at the tidal basin. But few people, white or colored, were ready to plunge into the arduous task of remaking the city's social order. Official Washington, on the contrary, in delighted dedication to normalcy embarked that autumn upon a whirl of parties abnormal even by pre-war standards.

The business community, however, faced troubles. President Harding's appointment of Cuno Rudolph and the stolid, bushy-mustached James F. Oyster as District commissioners, it is true, pleased the Board of Trade: both were local merchants whose orthodoxy ensured greater consideration of Washington's business interests than could be expected from men imbued with Monday Evening

Clubs ideas. The very phrase "social betterment" dropped out of Washingtonians' vocabulary. But pronouncements about the right to work and the necessity of reducing wages in the building trades failed to prevent a precipitous decline in building operations, the appearance of unemployment and the rise of bootlegging. The commissioners' report that building permits for new construction in 1921 had dropped by some 7½ below the 1920 figure caused real estate brokers uneasiness. The growing improbability that Congress would reestablish the equal sharing of District expenses was far from reassuring to taxpayers. Furthermore, the newly established federal Bureau of the Budget had already pared the District commissioners' estimates more ruthlessly than the House subcommittee on District appropriations had in the past. Even the commissioners' annual reports were cut from five volumes to one in order to save money. Discussion among businessmen about bringing light industry into the District produced no tangible results, and lack of sufficient hotel space threatened to defeat endeavors to recapture the convention trade. Unless Congress were to adopt a large-scale federal building program and increase the purchasing power of government clerks by a reclassification of salaries, the city's economic future looked perilous.

Confronted with that situation, the Board of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce undertook a reappraisal of their goals and methods of pursuing them. Strident demands for larger appropriations were obviously futile in view of congressional stress upon economy and efficiency. The one way to safeguard
Washington's future, businessmen apparently concluded, was to select carefully objectives that would appeal to national pride in the national capital and to discard at least temporarily all projects that might seem to nonresidents to benefit Washingtonians exclusively. Congress must be wooed assiduously, citizens' complaints even about taxes must be toned down, and private enterprise must yield gracefully to whatever Congress decided national interest required. The business-minded commissioners and the Board of Trade still felt its committees well qualified to offer the "city council" on the Hill constructive recommendations, but after 1921 the querulous note disappeared from the reports and proposals submitted by business groups. The list of what Washingtonians should seek, presumably arranged in order of importance by President Thomas Bradley of the Board of Trade in 1922, is in itself suggestive: first, a better understanding between people of the District of Columbia and members of Congress, second, a thorough restudy of fiscal relations, third, the completion of a second aqueduct and the installation of a high pressure water system, fourth, adequate school facilities, and then a half dozen desiderata ranging from extension of parkways and upkeep of the streets and avenues to District representation in Congress and votes for presidential electors. The omissions from this list are as revealing as the relative importance assigned to the goals enumerated; welfare services and alley-dwelling received no mention at all.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1922 a sudden upswing in business dispelled property-owners' latent anxieties. Whether the subtle shift in attitude exemplified by the Board of Trade gave birth to the city's widespread material prosperity of

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Anl Rpt B of Tr}, 1922, pp. 37-38.
the next seven years or whether it was merely a by-product of the country-wide boom was a question leading citizens rarely put to themselves. Results were what mattered and those, by and large, were gratifying. For, with the exception of the handful of people who worked closely with the welfare agencies, few upper class Washingtonians realized that in the mid-twenties bitter want again ruled in some neighborhoods. Taxpayers were disappointed at the adamant refusal of Congress to restore the half-and-half fiscal relationship, and by 1925, with the fixing of the federal contribution at the flat sum of $9,000,000--about 27 percent of the District's total budget--permanent residents were put to it to swallow their indignation. But cries of poverty sounded hollow in a city in which private property was rising rapidly in value, unemployment was no longer obvious and the bonded indebtedness of 1878 had been paid off. Moreover, by raising the federal scale some 10 percent in the upper brackets of the Civil Service and as much as 50 percent in the lower, Congress in 1923 eased the pinch for about 80,000 government employees in Washington and contributed in that way directly to the city's well-being.

The value of building construction in 1922 doubled that of the year before, in 1923 reached a new high, and by 1925, with nearly $63,000,000 of private building recorded, stood at over four times the figure of 1921. Accompanying this expansion came a new and obviously profitable method of developing real estate; instead of the individual prospective homeowner's buying his lot, negotiating his loan and then erecting his house, companies

11 Minutes, Board of Managers, Associated Charities, 13 Jan 26, no. 3-l, 10 Mar 26, p. 1., 12 Jan 27, p. 5, typos in possession of D.C. Family Welfare Society (hereafter cited as AC-Mgrs-Minutes).

or contractors planned, built, planted the grounds about new residences and then sold them. While apartment houses multiplied, new luxury hotels sprang up not only in the heart of the city but also in areas like that in which the Wardman-Acorse, localities too remote to attract patrons until private automobiles and taxis had become commonplace. Encouraged by the reviving popularity of the capital as a convention city, the Washington Auditorium Company completed in Foggy Bottom a high-sheltered structure designed to serve as a convention hall. Between 1925 and 1929.

Some fifty-eight schoolhouses, police and fire department stations and other municipal edifices, erected within four years, signified Washington's new importance in the world to non-governmental national organizations which also took visible form in stone and brick and mortar. On the site of the old W. W. Corcoran

mansion facing Lafayette Square rose the new headquarters of the United States Chamber of Commerce; constructed, the Board of Trade noted approvingly under "the American Plan . . . on the basis of the open shop." Nearby on Jackson Place the philanthropist Robert C. Brookings put up an office building to provide revenue for a recently founded center for economic research.

Not far from the Union Station plaza the Acacia Insurance Company erected its handsome offices, and next to the famous Old Fidditt House the National Press Club's new ten-story building added metropolitan dignity to the business district while destroying some of its pleasant small-town aspects. If many an old Washingtonian mourned the demolition of the red-brick houses Richardson had built for Henry Adams and John Hay and the substitution of the stone

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Hay-Adams hotel towering above Isetrope's "Church of the Presidents" across the way, satisfaction at this proof of modernity tempered the dismay of people less concerned about historic and literary landmarks. 17

For some of this burgeoning growth the Board of Trade took credit. With the New York stock market offering strong counter-attractions to investors, the board's carefully organized advertising of Washington's unique advantages may well have made a difference. Copies of a profusely illustrated, bound Book of Washington were sent to all congressmen and placed on all Pullman trains coming into the city; in addition, in a single year the board mailed out 25,000 "booster" pamphlets. A convention bureau formed in cooperation with other business associations reaped its first disconcerting rewards in a gathering of some 25,000 hooded white-robed Ku Klux Klansmen in the summer of 1925; fortunately the showy parade and the ceremony held on the Monument grounds occasioned no anti-Negro or anti-Catholic demonstrations. More was a pageant held; satisfactory advertisement of the city commenced in the spring of 1927 when the Japanese cherry trees around the tidal basin were in full bloom; the success of that first Cherry Blossom festival, albeit minus queens and floats, made it an annual event thereafter. Board of Trade directors and committee members cultivated close ties with the United States Chamber of Commerce; the board's counselor to the national body became a coveted and influential post. The informal alliance strengthened the force of recommendations the two groups made jointly to Congress but at the same time, by focusing attention on national questions, tended to weaken interest in Washington's civic affairs. To have never been here, the local press, as if taking

17 Anl Rpts B Office Tr., 1923, no. 31-32, 1928, p. 44; StPr, 31 Dec 27.
its cue from the Board of Trade, gave such matters scant space; only large-scale operations were worthy of the capital, particularly at a time when, despite the Teapot Dome oil scandals of 1923, "big business" was commanding the respect as well as the envy of millions of Americans, including their representatives in Congress. 18

The Board of Trade took special pride in its dealings with the legislature. In 1924 after the national election promised the continuation of "Coolidge prosperity," the board secretary called "particular attention to the rapidly growing friendliness on the part of Congress toward the District of Columbia, especially when its needs are presented to them by representatives from the Board of Trade. Members of Congress realize that our organization is working unselfishly for the broad development of the city as a whole, and are ready and willing at all times to give us every consideration." That senators and congressmen elected by urban constituencies were able to appreciate urban problems better than did a Pat Harrison of Mississippi or a Ben Johnson of Kentucky was probably a more significant factor than the blandishments of any Washingtonian in winning that consideration, but that it did increase notably in the mid-1920's was undeniable.

And after all from 1925 onward, increases in appropriations for the District would not cost the federal Treasury anything additional.

However exaggerated the ideas of the Board of Trade may have been about its own accomplishments, it was the most powerful local organization in the District. As the prestige of the Washington Chamber of Commerce


slowly shrank for want of publicity, the influence of the parent organization rose. Nevertheless individual members stood out far less prominently than in the early years of the century. With the possible exception of the warm-hearted, public-spirited Edward F. Colladay, board president in 1924, no official of the younger generation achieved the stature in the community of a John Joy Edson, a Charles Glover, an S. W. Woodward or even a Brainerd Warner; very few took an active part in guiding the city's charities and even fewer in promoting her cultural aspirations. Only three of the directors under fifty years of age were listed in the Social Register. The board was a business organization, increasingly dominated by men distinguished only in the field of business. A half dozen charter members still served occasionally on committees, but leadership passed to younger and less colorful men, many of whom showed no discernible feeling for "old Washington," although twenty-one of the fifty-one directors elected between 1919 and 1927 were native sons or born in the immediate vicinity. 20 The merchants, builders, real estate brokers, lawyers and bankers who determined board policies undoubtedly believed to a man that they were "working unselfishly for the broad development of the city as a whole," but as a group they aimed at objectives at once narrower and broader than those of Citizens' Associations, the Monday Evening Club, and church societies. In seeking, for example, to lower living costs by reducing wages, especially in the building trades, to "keep government out of business" and simultaneously to persuade Congress to authorize the cutting of main highways through the land set aside for the

Walter Reed hospital and through the grounds of the Soldiers Home, the
board betrayed its shortsightedness: in vigorously endorsing the zoning
ordinance, in fighting to prevent pollution of streams, promoting projects
for the "City Beautiful" and in underscoring the wisdom of including the
Maryland and Virginia suburbs in future planning for the capital, the Board
of Trade showed long-range vision.

The report between the business community and the District com-
missioners endured with scarcely a serious break. When objections arose to
the reappointment of Rudolph and Oyster from people who believed both men
were using their office to promote their own business interests, the Board
of Trade upheld them. Probably as a gesture of conciliation, in 1925 the
commissioners agreed to the establishment of a Citizens Advisory Council
to represent the Citizens and Civic associations, but its members had no
authority. Upon Oyster's death his successor ran into trouble. Fully
substantiated charges in Congress that he was guilty of exacting exorbitant
legal fees for routine services to District patients at the Veterans'Hospital and St. Elizabeths forced him to resign in 1926. But his replace-
ment, Proctor L. Dougherty, an insurance company executive, and Sidney
Talliafero of the Riggs bank, who succeeded Rudolph later in the year, restored
a large measure of public confidence. When asked thirty years later about
the commissioners' chief problems between 1926 and 1930 Dougherty replied,
"There were no problems." Although he and his associates evinced less social
consciousness than had the journalists whom President Wilson had appointed.

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the disappearance of agitation for Home Rule and the gradual slowing of
the drive for representation in Congress indicated a general acceptance of
the existing regime. Unusually long tours of duty for the three succes-
sive engineer commissioners ensured a continuity of construction experience
important to a city in which a five-year back-log of badly needed public
works had accumulated during and after the war. As seen from the District
building everything ran smoothly. The Board of Trade expressed its wishes,
Congress authorized larger expenditures of local taxpayers' money, and the
commissioners were able to increase the police force, in 1925 launch a five-
year school building program, gradually extend the sewage system into
rapidly building-up sections of the city, and enlarge the water supply by
completing another reservoir and a second conduit.

The ever-rising volume of private cars, trucks and buses hurtling
along the streets constituted the nearest approach to an insoluble problem.
In 1921 and 1922 a good many people still walked to and from work, but as
a growing population spread out further and further, more and more people
drove or rode. The rush of moving vehicles and the menace to life and limb
they represented for pedestrians took most of the pleasure out of walking.
Agreement that the automobile had come to stay did not lessen horror at
"vehicular casualties,"—in 1921 alone 65 people killed and 70 seriously
injured—all in spite of a new regulation requiring applicants for driving

23 Interview, Proctor L. Dougherty, 11 Apr 67; Anl Rpts B of Tr,
1923, pp. 33-34, 77, 1925, v. 16, 1926, pp. 15, 52-53; Lowell Fallett,
"Why Can't These Taxpayers Vote?", Collier's Magazine, LXXIII, 19 Jan 24,

24 Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1923, pp. 117-18, 126-31, 144-50, 1924, pp. 21-25,
107-08, 116, 1925, pp. 6, 32-33, 121, 1926, pp. 70, 94, 1928, p. 76; Comrs
permits to pass an examination. Installation of additional traffic lights and somewhat stricter enforcement of the 22-miles-an-hour speed limit gradually reduced accidents until the nearly 9,400 recorded for 1925 fell to 1,138 for 1928, but in the interval District motor vehicle registrations rose to 118,550 and two years later topped 133,600; the tally of course did not include Maryland and Virginia commuters' cars nor those of the endless stream of tourists. In order to ease the flow of traffic District officials widened arterial highways and downtown streets, in the process cutting hundreds of miles and even shrinking off the map of the District of Columbia.

Drivers unable to find legitimate parking spaces in the heart of the city left their cars all day on the Ellipse below the White House or on the Mall about the tempo. "The entire Mall Park, [including the Smithsonian grounds]" protested the Fine Arts Commission in 1929, "has become an open-air garage; in the Department of Agriculture grounds automobiles are parked on the grass." And a large area of Potomac Park was fenced off for cars. Yet the inadequate service afforded by the trolley companies and the lack of a subway system seemed to justify the use of private automobiles even while motor bus lines multiplied. Until a merger of the street railway companies received congressional approval in 1930, no one had high hopes for improved public transit. In 1929, of the people who rode to work in downtown Washington, only 31.3 percent used public conveyances, whereas in Kansas City and Milwaukee, cities with the next smallest number, the figures stood at 45.5 and 50.3 percent respectively. "Widening Washington's...

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Every big American city had her share of them, but what the Board of Trade called the "best municipal government" in the United States was unable to provide an answer for Washington. 27

In the meantime indirect pressure upon Congress to resume the purchase of land for parks and carry further the execution of the McMillen commission plan came from many sources. The campaign began as soon as President Harding was installed in the White House. The war had not cut off all appropriations for such work as drainage of the Anacostia flats, but the sums of money had been small, only drablets had gone into extension of the park system and since 1916 no proposal for construction of new departmental buildings other than temples had received serious consideration. 28 In the early post-war years congressional determination to reduce the national debt before embarking upon fresh expenditures to beautify the capital alarmed people fearful lest inaction continue until costs became so high that important features of the original plan could never be realized. Members of the Fine Arts Commission, it is true, declared that they were not "concerned with the rate of progress; they are vitally concerned that the progress shall be always toward the goal set in 1792 and again in 1901." But they also recognized the dangers of delay. "All sorts of suggestions are being


28 Comre Rpts, 1927, v. 55, 1918, p. 61; Rpts Fine Arts Comm, 1918 (1 Jul 16 to 1 Jen 18), pp. 5-10, 27, 1919 (1 Jen 18 to 30 Jen 19), pp. 16, 18, 24-25; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1919, p. 29, 1920, pp. 116-17, 1921, pp. 87-90, 120.
made for improvements and changes. Many of these new projects are based on the desire of individuals to exploit themselves. Others are due to ignorance of the existing plan and the progress of work being done in accordance with it." There was cause for anxiety.

The architects, sculptors and landscape architects who composed the Fine Arts Commission, while unhappy over the course private building was taking, knew that their assignment limited them to advising Congress on the utilization of the public domain in the District and the location and architectural design of government buildings and monuments. In June 1921 the commission listed the public projects it believed wise to start promptly, generally giving priority to completion of the Mall as the park commission had envisaged it twenty years before. The long-talked-of bridge across the Potomac beyond the still unfinished Lincoln Memorial was an integral part of the Mall plan. Although the "factory-like" tempos produced "a depressing air of slovenliness," their removal could wait, if need be, until the bridge was built. Congress had created a memorial bridge commission as early as 1913 and authorized the expenditure of $25,000 for surveys and drawings, but in the intervening eight years the appropriation had never materialized. Further postponement seemed folly!

The Highway Bridge connects Potomac Park with a little race track, with marshes lately used as the city dump, and with Agriculture Department barns, so designed and constructed as to thrust their ugliness upon one's attention with all the insistence of a spoiled child at table. Through this variegated area a narrow, tortuous dangerous road winds its uncertain way to Arlington National Cemetery. The bodies of the Nation's dead take this path to their last resting place.

30 Ibid., 1917, p. 27, 1921, pp. 21-22; Comr Rep, 1921, p. 46.
31 Rpt Fine Arts Comm, 1921, p. 22 and passim, 1929, p. 31; U.S. Stat., Ch 117, Sec 23, 42, 38, 1 Mar 13, p. 165.
A humiliating episode that autumn bore independent testimony to the consequences of protracted parsimony. Government officials had planned a solemn Armistice Day ceremony to mark the interment of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery. But the procession from the Capitol, where the flag-draped casket had lain in the Rotunda, ran into such a traffic jam in crossing the river that official cars were immobilized for two hours and more, and some important guests did not reach the cemetery at all. Foreign statesmen gathered in Washington for the opening of the Naval Disarmament Conference the next day were unlikely to be impressed by the power of a nation unwilling to spend money for a suitable approach to a national shrine. Late that afternoon the Fine Arts Commission met to recommend immediate enactment of the necessary legislation. The formal dedication of the Lincoln Memorial on Decoration Day in 1922 also quickened public interest. Where gulls had once swept over the marshy land bordering the tidal basin and the river front, dignitaries now assembled before a marble temple from which the bronze of the Great Emancipator looked out over a pool reflecting the shaft of the Washington Monument. It required little imagination to see how much the setting, impressive as it was, would gain from bridging the Potomac at that point and landscaping the shore line. Congress voted the $25,000 appropriation a fortnight later.

The proposals submitted in 1921 embodied most of the features of the original.

32 Star, 13 Nov 21; Forty Years of Achievement Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Nat. Gen. of Fine Arts, 1910-1950, p. 25 (hereinafter cited as Fine Arts Comm, Forty Years).

park commission plan for the river end of the Mall: a stone bridge of simple
flowing lines placed very slightly below the Lincoln Memorial, above it a
water-gate for boats and a plaza with park roads radiating from it, the
extension and improvement of north B street—renamed Constitution avenue in
1931—and on the far shore a second bridge over the Virginia channel and
the intervening Columbia island to an imposing entrance into the cemetery.
Congress signified its approval with generous appropriations. Work began
in 1926. When finished in the early thirties at a cost of nearly $15,000,000,
the results apparently reconciled the most economy-minded congressman to the
expenditure.

People eager to see the capital become the most beautiful city in
America turned in the interim to other phases of the task. By 1923 it was
evident that, successful application of Washington's new zoning ordinance
notwithstanding, private enterprisers were gobbling up land needed for
parks and erecting buildings that threatened permanently to scar the looks
of the city. As a first move to check further architectural aberrations,
the advisory council of the American Institute of Architects collaborated with
a Board of Trade committee and District officials to revise the District
building code and then, at the request of the commissioners, offered free
suggestions to applicants for building permits about how to improve
the design of the projected structures. A few months later a truly

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34 S Doc. 95, 68th Cong., 1st Sess. 21 Apr. 21, Ser. 8240; U.S. Stat. 68th Cong., 2nd Sess., ch 313,
revolutionary proposal came from the recently formed Washington Committee
of One Hundred on the Federal City, namely the creation of a board of trained
architects empowered to regulate all private building in the District. One
of fifty committees organized in various parts of the country by the American
Civic Association to promote the artistic and orderly development of the
national capital, the local group contained a number of persons eminent in
public life. Few members of Congress at that time would have dared suggest
so "socialistic" a scheme, and in fact it was never adopted except for
buildings adjacent to public edifices; but the recommendations of a body
that included Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes, Secretary of Commerce
Herbert Hoover, William H. Holmes, director of the Smithsonian National
Gallery of Art, several of the best-known artists and architects in Washington,
District officials and a score of well-to-do businessmen made some impression.

The preliminary report of the Washington committee pointed out that
the McMillan Commission of 1901 had not provided for city-planning as the
term had since come to be understood. In the 1920's urban planning must
take into consideration such problems as transporation and recreation
facilities. In hammering away at the urgency of extending the District
park system before construction companies obliterated the natural beauty of
areas like Klingle Valley and sewage then polluted every stream, the committee
made itself heard. Six months after its preliminary report appeared, Congress
established the National Capital Park Commission vested with authority to
acquire land in the District of Columbia, nearby Maryland and Virginia for
parks, parkways and playgrounds, subject only to the approval of the Fine
Arts Commission on the sites selected. Half the purchase price was to come
from the federal government, the other half from District taxpayers.36

Here was progress, or so it seemed. Unhappily authority to buy did not provide cold cash. With less than a third of the expected appropriations voted by congressmen immune to the pleas of colleagues like Senators Ball and Coppper and Representative Frederick Zehlman, the new commission was all but helpless.37

Indignation stirred in the American Civic Association, already distressed at the ravages the steam shovel and the ax had wrought during the preceding five years. District officials had cut the city's shade trees right and left in order to widen arterial highways and downtown streets and thus ease the flow of traffic. By 1925 devastation threatened every section of the District of Columbia.

Only a remnant of the Ellicott stream was left (noted the American Civic Annual) and the parkway connection was absolutely blocked by cutting, grading, and building. The beautiful Broad Branch and Piney Branch valleys are now but pitiful stubs adjoining Rock Creek Park. Their waters are confined to underground sewers. Their wooded banks are laid desolate. Rectangular house lots take the place of shady slopes. Rows of shabby, uninteresting houses perch precariously on the deep fills of yellow clay which flank the axial boulevard of 16th street. The stately Tiger Bridge, erected at great cost to span the stream, is now nothing but a street extension over a dry culvert. These tragedies have happened. They cannot be remedied. Nor can much be done about the scars of land which, since the war, have been plastered over with the wrong kind of houses set in the wrong kind of lots, served by the wrong kind of streets.38

Enlightened private citizens had done what they could. One group bought

36 Preliminary Report by the Washington Committee of One Hundred on the Federal City to the American Civic Association, 3 Jan 2h, passim and especially pp. 2-5, 11-14, 27, 35-36 (hereafter cited as Prelim Rpt Comte of 100).

37 Anl Rpt B of Tr, 192h, pp. 68-69; Civic Comment, 8 Jun 2h, p. 8.

land to hold until the park commission had money available. Charles Glover and Mrs. Anne Archbold gave outright a stretch of woodland along Foundry Run above Georgetown. 39 Put individual efforts manifestly were not enough.

The American Civic Association appeared to be the one body with sufficient influence throughout the country to bring order out of laissez-faire anarchy. Founded in the heyday of the muckrakers, the association had quickly concluded that it must awaken to a sense of public duty citizens whose wealth, social standing or artistic perceptions qualified them as leaders in their own communities, men and women willing to share in wresting control of municipal affairs from unscrupulous and ignorant political bosses and then ready to introduce efficient city government and launch a systematic program of civic improvements. Chicago, scene of the World's Fair and its embodiment of Daniel Burnham's vision, had been one of the first places to feel the force of the planning mystique if not of full-fledged municipal political reform, but neither Chicago nor any other city had as yet seen the execution of more than a fraction of her over-all plans. Washington seemingly needed little political house-cleaning but obviously required "external aid" if the McMillan plan of 1901 were to be expanded to cover the now very much larger city and if some measure of public control over the use of privately owned land were to safeguard public interests.

From the beginning the avowed purpose of the committees on the federal city had been the creation of an official body able to develop and carry out "a comprehensive, consistent and coordinated plan for the national Capital and its environs." It was an undertaking that ought to concern all.

Americans, a Boston landscape architect averred, for if "our Federal City shall become an inspiring example of sustained interest and intelligent action in city planning, the benefits will spread in some measure to every city in the land." As the modest hopes pinned on the National Capital Park Commission proved vain, in the autumn of 1925 Frederic A. Delano, president of the American Civic Association and by then a resident of Washington, arranged a series of conferences. Representatives of half a dozen national professional societies answered his call to meet with interested government and District officials to evolve a planning bill with teeth in it.\textsuperscript{10} Congress passed the Capper-Gibson act the following April. It was disappointing in some respects. It changed the park commission into a National Capital Park and Planning Commission, authorized the President to appoint for six-year terms four civilian members in addition to the federal and District officials of the former commission, and greatly enlarged the responsibilities of the new body; it was not only to prepare plans for the District but cooperate with Maryland and Virginia authorities in making feasible the harmonious development of Greater Washington, preventing the pollution of the streams and preserving the region's natural scenic beauties. But like its predecessor, the new commission had no way of enforcing acceptance of its recommendations. Its purchasing powers depended upon uncertain congressional appropriations. State legislatures might or might not collaborate.\textsuperscript{11}


Nevertheless recognition of the regional aspects of planning for the capital was a long step forward. Maryland set up a Maryland National Capital Planning Commission in 1927 and, although Virginia failed to take effective action, officials of Arlington county, which the Commonwealth had sliced off from Alexandria in 1920, were ready to cooperate as far as they could. In fact, in the opinion of Lieutenant Colonel U.S. Grant, 3rd, the handsome young grandson of President Grant and the federal commission's first secretary, the legal powerlessness of the planners was a minor handicap; inasmuch as the federal executives and members of the Senate and House District committees who were in a position to reject or drastically amend every proposal were either themselves members of the commission or represented thereon, plans adopted in conference with them usually had an excellent chance of receiving congressional blessing, if not large appropriations.\(^{12}\) Hence money and the stipulation that prices paid for land never exceed its assessed valuation by more than 25 percent remained the big stumbling blocks to rapid action. Unable to persuade Congress to sanction borrowing, the commission had scarcely four million dollars to spend during its first four years, but the undertaking was still young.\(^{13}\) Members deliberately chose to postpone a campaign for political machinery that could function for the metropolitan area as a whole until they could present a carefully studied regional plan to which Maryland and Virginia would subscribe whole-heartedly. Thirty years


\(^{13}\) Anl Rpts National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 1928, p. 28, 1929, p. 29, 1930, p. 45 (hereafter cited as Anl Rpts NCPC).
later thoughtful people might regret that a Washington Metropolitan Regional Authority had not come into being before the depression of the 1930's laid its cold hand on so forward-looking a political innovation. In 1926 and 1927, however, responsible men believed on a regional plan more urgent than the launching of an administrative experiment likely at best to take precious time to set up and at worst to result in serious or even fatal mistakes.

The not inconsiderable successes achieved before 1930 were due above all to the efforts of Frederic A. Delano. An aristocrat imbued with a strong sense of civic obligation, an admirer of Daniel Burnham and an active participant in launching the Chicago plan and the New York Regional plan, Delano, though a railroad executive and a financier rather than a landscape architect, had the background, the enthusiasm and the persuasiveness to make him an invaluable member of the commission. He became its first civilian chairman in 1930. His very presence bespoke leadership. With deep-set brown eyes under heavy black brows, a straight patrician nose and a firm mouth, his face was at once strong and gentle; his powerful well-built figure was commanding. On every job he undertook, and they were many even when he was in his seventies, he gathered about him "top technical talent." His "modus operandi" consisted of bringing men together--frequently at Cosmos Club luncheons--to pool their talents, even when their views and their interests were in opposition. Antagonisms faded out in his presence and never a tart rejoinder was spoken in his direction. His tact, his

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personal charm and his social prestige were as great an asset to the planning
cause as the authority the Army engineers represented and the special skills
the commission staff provided.

Yet without the insights and some measures the initiating force of
key members of the House and Senate, progress must have been slowed, and
without the unflagging support of constituents, the congressional majority
might well have remained indifferent. In the Senate, besides Arthur Capper
of Kansas, chairman of the District committee, the most powerful advocates
of improvements for the capital were Reed Smoot of Utah, chairman of the
Public Buildings committee, and Lawrence J. Philips of Colorado, chairman
of the subcommittee on District appropriations; representatives Frederick
Zihlman of Maryland, Richard N. Elliott of Indiana, and Frank Funk of
Illinois, chairman of the corresponding House committees, were equally as
strong proponents of the program. Congressmen Louis Creighton of Maryland and
R. Walton Moore of Virginia fostered both federal and state legislation
helpful to plans for Greater Washington, and half a dozen others worked
determinedly for appropriations for completing the Mall, relocating and
enlarging the Botanic Garden and other undertakings within the city.

When the planning commission presented its first formal "Progress
Report" in January 1930, the audience that nearly filled the DAR Constitution
Hall included members of Congress, the Secretary of the Treasury, the
governors of Maryland and Virginia, the legislature of Virginia and many
notables from the rest of the country. Colonel Grant believed the approach-
ing bi-centennial of the birth of George Washington a stimulant to Americans'
eagerness to perfect the city whose site he had selected and over whose
original lay-out he had watched lovingly. Probably an even stronger impulse sprang from the growing awareness that sensible solutions to the manifold problems of extending metropolitan areas in a nation no longer predominantly rural must depend upon intelligent advance planning. The federal capital, under the aegis of the federal Congress, was a logical place to begin.

Because the planning commission had to purchase land piecemeal at constantly rising prices, progress on developing Washington's periphery was considerably less then on beautifying public property within the city. Acquisition of the missing link of land between Potomac and Rock Creek parks permitted work to begin in 1926 on building the road and landscaping the terrain, but several of the commission's other major projects were doomed to remain paper plans for the next quarter century. Particularly disappointing to Mr. Delano and to humbler citizens in time to come was the gradual abandonment of an early plan for "a system of neighborhood centers," each encompassing a twenty-acre site and containing a school, a library and playground as well as park facilities. Only three small playgrounds materialized. The circumferential drive connecting the twenty-four Civil War forts that ringed the District and the parkways skirting both sides of the Potomac as far as Great Falls would still be under discussion in 1959.
Arlington bridge southward along the Virginia shoe of the Potomac would become a completed reality, and, when passage of the Carper-Cromton act of 1930 enabled the Maryland commission to obtain advances from the federal Treasury, extension of the District park system into Montgomery and Prince George's counties would make some headway. In the interim, however, the improvements taking form along the Mall and the large-scale federal building operations, for which Congress appropriated $50,000,000 in 1926, lessened impatience at the relative slowness with which the park program moved forward.

The magnitude of the building program might well have proved self-defeating, since scores of officials of the executive departments, members of Congress, both the planning and the Fine Arts commissions and a host of architects, private citizens and real estate firms had an interest in it. It was able to move forward with astonishingly few hitches by reason of the Federal Public Buildings Commission which Congress had created in 1916 but which had had no opportunity to function during and after the war. The composition of the commission went far toward ensuring cooperation between the legislative and executive branches of the government; the minority as well as the majority party in House and Senate was represented and shared in every decision; the federal Commissioner of Public Buildings, the Architect of the Capitol and the Supervising Architect of the Treasury supplied administrative and technical knowledge and, through the Secretary of Treasury, access to the President. Even so, conflict of opinion and costly delays seemed all too probable. Yet the record of the building commission

in the late 1920's, in the words of one official, "affords an example of how coordination of action ... can be and was achieved." 49

Buildings for the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Commerce Department began to rise below Pennsylvania avenue late in 1927, and government purchase of virtually the entire stretch of land from the Treasury to the foot of the Hill between the Mall and the "Avenue" foreshadowed the location of additional departmental offices in the "federal triangle." A Board of Trade committee headed by a housing expert warned against overcrowding the triangle with massive government structures, but for the time being no one believed that likely to happen; the tentative plan published early in 1927 showed open perk-like spaces between each building and each group. 50

Milton B. Medary, then President of the American Institute of Architects and a member of the National Park and Planning Commission, proposed the method adopted in developing the triangle: a board of experienced architects to draft/harmonious composition and each man individually to design one building of the group in order to avoid monotony in treatment. Since by law the Supervising Architect of the Treasury was responsible for the designs, the Medary proposal became feasible only because Andrew Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, enthusiastically endorsed it and contrived the necessary legislative authority. With justifiable satisfaction the Fine Arts Commission in mid-1929 pointed to other work afoot: the removal of the World War I dormitories and the landscaping of the Union Station plaza, nearby a new District municipal center, the

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50 Anl Rpt B of Tr., 1928, pp. 62-65; see plate facing p. 5, 5 Dec 24h, 69c, 28, Fer 5707.
relocation of the Botanic Garden and the beginning of the arboretum, a new Department of Agriculture building adjoining the old, extension of tree-lined drives along the Mall and the selection of a site for a Supreme Court building facing the Capitol. Not since the early years of the century had old residents seen so much permanent federal construction. 51

If a few citizens would have preferred less emphasis on public building and more on land purchase as a safeguard against further despoliation, and if some hearts stood still at the felling of trees along B street preparatory to making it a "great ceremonial avenue," Washingtonians by and large felt elation at the new outward grandeur the city was attaining. 52 That they themselves had not produced most of it, that it was rather an expression of national pride in the capital, did not matter. Indeed by 1930 few people differentiated between a Washingtonian and any American temporarily living in the District of Columbia.

51 See n. 49; Anl Rpts B of Tr., 1926, pp. 56-57, 1928, pp. 13, 51-57; Star, 31 Dec 26, 31 Dec 27, 1 Jan 30; Rpt Fine Arts Comm., 1929, pp. 4, 31; Fine Arts Comm. Forty Years, pp. 25-26; Herbert Hoover, Memoirs, p. 250.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL CLIMATE, 1920-1929

A decade variously called in contemporary and later writings the "New Era" of science and technology, the "Age of the Golden Calf," the "Jazz Age," the "hard-boiled era," and the "Era of Wonderful Nonsense." was a period of contradictions, the response of people disillusioned with the results of a war to end wars and determined to put painful experience to use. Less sharply etched in the American capital than in many American cities, the inconsistencies nevertheless manifested themselves in Washington. She did not, it is true, produce a bevy of flag-olee sitters, or a Scott Fitzgerald, a Don Passos and an Ezra Pound, or a school of avant garde painters, sculptors and composers. Nor was the juxtaposition of the optimism of big business and the discouragement of organized labor as evident here as in Detroit, Pittsburgh, Gary and a score of other industrial centers. In the capital whose most influential residents came from every section of the country the contrasts characteristic of the 1920's appeared chiefly in the upper ranks of society. While learned men, many of them newcomers, carried on research, joined with other cultivated people in fostering the arts, and enjoyed an agreeable unostentatious social intercourse, a more publicized segment of high society indulged in the shallow frivolity that marked the Jazz Age everywhere.

Changing views about the place of science in American life gave birth

to the "New Era" of the twenties. It accelerated the forces which through interest first in the City Beautiful movement and then in a more inclusive form of urban planning had slowly been turning Washington into a national city.

Unobserved by the casual visitor and by no means evident to the rank and file of her residents, the position Washington came to occupy in the country as a center of scientific research was a direct outgrowth of the world war. Even before the fighting was over the American intelligentsia had realized that the United States could no longer draw upon Europe for the discovery of new basic scientific principles and at least for years to come for fresh studies of social phenomena. National production records could not conceal from industrialists, government officials and university faculties how ill-equipped the United States was to fill the gap. Consequently after the war while big industrial corporations began to establish their own laboratories, national concern for better organization of national brainpower brought into being new bodies to coordinate and direct research in both the natural and the humanistic sciences. During the 1920's, American faith in the wonder-working powers of science reached the point of "superstition in another guise."  

Initial uncertainty about whether the government should take charge early yielded to belief that private organizations would do better. Foundations, industry and wealthy individuals should

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2 Leuchtenberg, op. cit., p. 221.
universities of the country would furnish the scientists and scholars. Washington's universities did not rank high, but government needs, government records, the accumulated experience and wisdom of government scientists, and the national scope of the undertakings made the capital a useful location for several of the new organizations. In the post-war decade they supplemented rather than competed with the Carnegie Institution of Washington and older federal bureaus.¹

One of the first changes came about with the revitalizing of the long moribund National Academy of Sciences. Chartered in 1863, it had never had a central headquarters and its fifty members had prepared studies for the government only when asked to investigate particular problems. In response to a question about what the Academy actually did, according to the story the reply had run: "The members write obituaries of each other and it is a pity they have so little to do."² In 1916 the Academy had appointed the National Research Council; in 1918 by presidential executive order it acquired permanent status. Charter amendments then sanctioned enlarging the Academy to 300 members and permitted it to function independently of the government. Thereafter money came from private sources. When a gift of $5,000,000 from the Carnegie Corporation enabled the Academy to erect a handsome building at the far end of north E street opposite Potomac park, a permanent staff there added to Washington's scientific potentialities, even

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though its members gradually lost close touch with the work of the federal bureaux. The National Research Council established eleven divisions covering such diverse disciplines as anthropology and psychology, medical science, geology and geography, and "Educational Relations." Fellowships and grants awarded to young scientists encouraged research in all these fields. In some measure the council in fact replaced the Smithsonian Institution in the American scientific world, for an insufficient endowment and the growth of the National Museum had gradually transformed the Smithsonian's main function from exploration of new frontiers of knowledge into guardianship of the past.

Distrust for everything military in the post-war decade cut War and Navy Department research, although the Navy in 1923 obtained appropriations for a laboratory whence came radar in the late 1930's. The Public Health Service under the aegis of the Surgeon General managed to carry on some investigations in the control of venereal disease and developed a vaccine for Rocky Mountain spotted fever. But even the famous Army Medical Library fell upon hard times. Bureaux in the departments of Agriculture, Commerce and, on a smaller scale, the Interior, on the other hand, continued to carry on scientific programs. No one wanted to curtail the work of the Weather Bureau or limit the operations of the plant explorers who had introduced to the United States such crops as avocados, dates and soy beans. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, wedded as he was to private enterprise, assiduously fostered research in the bureaux under his control. In order to establish simplified labor-saving practices and commercial standardization

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in all American business, he instituted a cooperative program at the Bureau of Standards where representatives of private firms worked alongside government employees. He hoped to see industrial corporations contribute $20,000,000 to a national fund for basic research, but, while waiting vainly for that to materialize, he encouraged strictly utilitarian government projects. Scientists in government service then played a lesser national role than they had in the 1870's and 1880's, but the value of their work in the 1920's was far from negligible.

The new emphasis upon the social sciences, however, was a greater departure from the past. The Institute for Governmental Research had opened the way in 1916 when a group of men familiar with the usefulness of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research had established a somewhat similar body in Washington to show the federal government how to improve upon its haphazard and cumbersome procedures. The path had then widened as the troubles of wartime agencies in assembling precise information brought home to officials and dollar-a-year men the urgent need of a clearer understanding of the principles of political and business economy within the federal government. Robert A. Brookings, a wealthy St. Lou's manufacturer who had served on the War Industries Board and later represented the public at the Labor Conference in Washington, took the lead. In 1919 a slim, handsome, white-haired, trimly bearded man of 69 whose formal education had ended in 1866 but whose intellectual interests had deepened as his fortune grew, Brookings virtually singlehandedly raised the money to prevent the threatened demise of the Institute for Governmental Research. From the Institute's

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6 Dupree, op. cit., pp. 332-43.
January and February 1917 came and went in Washington amid uncertainties about what President Wilson would consider sufficient provocation from Germany to force America into war. Perhaps after all the sharpening tone of State Department notes to the Imperial German government would take effect and enable the United States to keep out of the fight. In mid-February the Central Committee of the American National Red Cross instructed its regional offices to prepare for war emergencies. The City of Conversation meanwhile talked with more passion than urbanity. On March 1st three regiments of infantry and Troop A of the cavalry of the District National Guard returned from the Mexican border to be mustered out and to return to civilian life; guardsmen were soon applying to the District employment service of the Labor Department for jobs. On March 3rd Congress enacted a local prohibition act to go into effect on November 1st. President Wilson's second inauguration took place before a large but undemonstrative crowd, and within a few days, as the grand stands along Pennsylvania avenue came down, visitors departed, dance parties broke up, and the city returned to normal routines. Then on March 18th came word of the torpedoing of three unarmed American merchantmen. People who had watched unhappily the mounting anti-German feeling in Washington agreed: "If the sinking of these ships is not war, it inevitably means war."1 Everyone reassured his

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1 Star, 1, 11, 16 19 Mar 17; Bee, 17 Feb 17.
neighbor and himself: "This will only be a war on paper or at most a war at sea."

During the next fortnight the capital burst into frenzied, if at times slightly ridiculous, activity. Bell hoppers at the New Willard drilled daily on the hotel roof. Two thousand boy scouts prepared to mobilize at thirty minutes' notice "for first aid work, police and detective duty." Superintendent Thurston introduced daily salutes to the flag in the District public schools, and members of the Board of Trade met to condemn "German militarism," each man supplied with a flag to wave to show that "there was no hyphen in the citizenship of Washington." While the War and Navy Departments increased the guard about government property and stationed infantrymen at bridge heads and cavalry along the road to the reservoir, the District naval militia readied itself for a call to board "fighting ships" within twenty days, and recently mustered out national guardsmen prepared to return to active duty. Young men flocked to the enlistment stations opened in various parts of the city. As rumors spread about impending arrests of disloyal German-born citizens, the Chief of Police refused to permit a loyalty or a peace parade. But when pacifists hurried to Washington to plead with the President and Congress, serious disorders threatened; members of the District National Guard daubed yellow paint on the headquarters of the Emergency Peace Foundation and talked of "smashing the building." The declaration of war on April 5th, somewhat sobered the most loudly belligerent but was the signal for a chorus of high-sounding, earnest pronouncements of the sort a cynical later generation would deride: "Our war is of the kind which God sanctions. . . . The call to arms in such a war hardens and strengthens the muscles, inspires the spirit and thrills the soul of every loyal American."
Virtually overnight Washingtonians long accustomed to the placidity of the pre-war capital were caught up in the turmoil. "Life seemed suddenly to acquire a vivid scarlet lining," wrote Helen Nicolay.

Old prejudices gave way to passionate new beliefs. Old precedents were wrecked in an endeavor to live up to the duty of the hour. The one invariable rule seemed to be that every individual was found doing something he or she had never dreamed of doing before. The rule worked even in those somnolent parts of Georgetown that seem under the spell of a Rip Van Winkle sleep. 3

With decentralization of the government still a novel concept, the capital bore the brunt of the confusions attending the creation of a war machine, setting it in motion and keeping it running. In the process the city lost most of her identity as a community and turned into a national war center. People eager to be useful began pouring into Washington during the first week of the war and the flow did not lessen until after the Armistice in November 1918. Here were the headquarters not only for the armed services but also for the Liberty Loan drives conducted by the Treasury, for the Food Administration headed by Herbert Hoover, the War Industries Board under Bernard Baruch, the Fuel Administration under James Garfield, the American National Red Cross, and, when the United States government took over the railroads in January 1918, the railroad administration under William McAdoo. At Fort Myer across the Potomac 1200 student officers at a time were in training and several hundred engineering trainees occupied the long-empty buildings of American University; within a radius of 25 miles some 130,000 soldiers were stationed, most of whom spent their leaves in Washington. The city was host to a dozen foreign missions and uniformed representatives of all the Allied nations, for, as an Englishman remarked, "this newest and rawest of the capitals, which, yet in some sense in these straining

times becomes the chief capital...is the fountain of capacity for war and victory." A city of some 350,000 inhabitants in April 1917 acquired about 40,000 new residents before autumn and a year later estimates based upon street car fares raised the total to over 526,000. These and the uncounted transients strained the facilities of the District to the bursting point. 4

Thanks to the foresight of Commissioner Brownlow and several federal officials who believed some form of military conscription inevitable, the draft forms for the District were in print and maps showing registration stations were ready for posting several days before the National Selective Service Act passed Congress on May 18, 1917; run by volunteers among the District government's employees, registration then moved swiftly and smoothly and, although agitation about "rounding up slackers" went on for months, citizens were proud of having 10,000 inductees and nearly 7,000 voluntary enlistments before the Armistice to add to the 2,000 men in service when war broke out. 5

Given a quota of $8,500,000 in the first Liberty Bond drive, Washington raised more than twice that amount, in the second drive four months later nearly $23,000,000 and oversubscribed her quotas in every later campaign. 6 Some of the

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5 Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity, pp. 56-64; Comrs Rpt, 1917, pp. 5-6, Ser 7416, 1918, pp. 8, Ser 7552, 1919, p. 9, Ser 77th; Star, 21 Jun 17.

6 Star, 15 Jun, 21, 26 Oct 17, 9 May 18, 1 Jan, 12 May 19.
subscriptions came from wealthy people in the city only on war jobs, but the local response was nevertheless remarkable because by 1918 the spiralling costs of living in the overcrowded capital had reduced by about 30 percent the purchasing power of federal and District employees, already shockingly underpaid.  

Volunteers appointed to a District Council of Defense cheerfully and with surprising efficiency took charge of projects they "had never dreamed of" before; under the inspiration of one committee, citizens raised in some five thousand war gardens over a $1,000,000 in foodstuffs during 1918; another group, working first under the direction of the Chamber of Commerce and then under the Defense Council, cooperated with the Travellers Aid in assisting thousands of newcomers to find places to live. The Union station swarmed, day and night. Washingtonians contributed more than double their quota of money for the Red Cross, and here, as throughout the United States, women knitted the often-sung knobby socks for soldiers, organized camp entertainments and manned canteens for "the boys." Journalists made fun of some of the privations "war workers" in Washington complained of, for example, the sacrifice of cocktails before dinner and only Pol Roger, 1904, served with every course. But nobody saw anything humorous in the plight of 5,000 families without heat in sub-zero January weather in a city in which even at strict ration levels less than a day's coal supply was on hand.

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8 Comrs Rpts, 1918, pp. 5-6, 1919, pp. 557-67; Star, 8, 12, 13 Apr, 12 Aug 17, 1, 5, 22, 24 Jan, 5, 6 Feb, 28 May, 1 Sep, 11, 17, 20 Oct 18; Jesse Lynch Williams, "Country Life in War-Time," Country Life in America, XXXIV, Jul 18, pp. 41-42; Nicolay, Capital, p. 516.
other city or village on the continent, there were "tears and cheers; sudden marriages and sudden farewells... And endlessly there was the suspense of waiting for the next war news."

Of the unique problems war imposed on the District government, perhaps none was more troublesome than keeping order in the war-swollen capital. Initially difficulties arose because the national government lacked machinery to provide for its own protection—a small Secret Service attached to the Treasury department to keep track of attempts at counterfeiting and two or three men assigned to the White House, a Capitol police force composed largely of political appointees, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation which, established in Theodore Roosevelt's day to prevent fraudulent transactions in public land, had only two or three men located in Washington. Thus in 1915 and 1916 it fell to Louis Brownlow, the District commissioner in charge of the police department, and the newly appointed Chief of Police, Major Pullman, to take the first steps to forestall German espionage. When the war came the United States Attorney General created an Emergency Division in the Department of Justice to handle all matters touching alien enemies, sabotage, and espionage, but the Division did not start functioning until September, and in the interim the local police carried much of the load. A second and longer-lasting difficulty stemmed from the impossibility of keeping the force at authorized strength, partly because of army enlistments but even more because pay rates, set by congressional act in 1916, offered men about half what they could earn in private employ. The Bee suggested the time ripe for Major Pullman to add colored officers to his department, but either Negro candidates failed to qualify or Pullman was unwilling to risk using them lest racial frictions develop.  

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An illustration of policing problems lies in the situation that first assumed some international significance in the late spring of 1917. As the first missions of Allied governments began arriving in Washington, militant women suffragists representing the Woman's Party chose to picket the White House; they carried banners inscribed with mottoes describing the President and the administration in general as more tyrannical than Kaiser Wilhelm or the Romanoff Czar. Infuriated clerks pouring out of the government buildings every afternoon tore down the offensive banners; street riots greeted the eyes of foreign emissaries. In spite of President Wilson's disapproval, Commissioner Brownlow finally ordered the arrest of the leading pickets, all of them socially prominent women, and, upon their refusal to pay the court fines, sent them to the Occoquan workhouse. The President, unwilling to create martyrs, promptly issued pardons. The daily street riots resumed. Unfortunately, as enemy newspapers in Europe interpreted them as pro-German demonstrations, they hurt Allied solidarity. The District Commissioner at least felt compelled to act upon his own responsibility: some thirty women landed in a freshly painted, newly furnished separate building of the District jail in cells without lockable doors. The new inmates at once went on a hunger strike, but Brownlow had two stoves installed in the corridor where he arranged to have three eight-hour shifts of cooks fry ham night and day. The fragrance of frying ham defeated the hunger strikers. Abetted by the jailer, they voluntarily left the jail, and the campaign of militant abusiveness then collapsed.

A second problem grew out of President Wilson's passion for vaudeville.

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10 Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity, pp. 74-82; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1917, pp. 70-71, 1918, p. 81; Star, 18 Aug 17.
Every week, in war as in peace, he attended Poli's Theatre on 15th street, and crowds gathered nightly at the entrance in order to buy tickets for the performance which the President was to see. Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theatre fifty-odd years before stood as a painful warning. Commissioner Brownlow took counsel with the worried manager of Poli's who agreed that whenever the President occupied his box, tickets for the entire balcony must be reserved for reliably patriotic people. The manager cut a doorway through the theatre wall into the alley at the rear so that the White House limousine accompanied by a Secret Service man could deposit the President unobtrusively there whence he could mount a back stairway to his box. But the President never decided what night he would go until the morning of the day. Then Brownlow telephoned the theatre to sell no balcony tickets for that night and he himself issued free passes to people known to be trustworthy. President Wilson, unaware of these elaborate arrangements, later remarked cheerfully that the crowded balcony showed that at least Poli's profitted from his patronage.  

Just as hopes proved vain that after October 31, 1917, when prohibition in the District closed all the bars and saloons, police duties would lighten and, on the contrary, the force, reduced at times to fewer than seven hundred men, encountered an increased volume of violent crimes, so other units of the local government faced almost insolvable problems. Major Kutz, the experienced engineer commissioner for the District, resigned in July 1917 to go overseas,  

11 Interview, Brownlow, 16 Sep 59.  
and Commissioner Newman went into the Army in October. An able but physically frail retired Brigadier General, John C. D. Knight, replaced the former, and W. Gynne Gardiner, a Washington attorney, apparently a little reluctantly succeeded the latter; under the circumstances Louis Brownlow became the ruling power in the District building. But no amount of official experience or energy could ensure adequate transportation on the over-burdened, privately-owned, street railway system, or enlarge the public water supply or, at the wage rates allowed, hire hands for vitally necessary public chores. The maximum safe capacity of the reservoir and filtration plant was 65,000,000 gallons daily; by the summer of 1918 daily consumption exceeded 75,000,000 gallons.  

As private industry drew men away from jobs at the District sewage pumping station where the pay scale ranged from $900 downward to $540 a year, only Commissioner Brownlow's personal appeal to President Wilson obtained from the President's emergency fund the $8000 needed to keep the sewage system in operation; the President filled out the forms and signed the requisitions in his own hand. Shortly afterward, the contractor who collected the city garbage, after months of losing money, threw up the contract. Brownlow, seeing that a deficiency appropriation would be necessary to enable the District to take care of its own collections and run the garbage reduction plant, presented a carefully figured estimate of the cost to the House subcommittee on appropriations; the committee chairman immediately barked: "There is not one bit of use coming up here and asking us in time of war to start off the District government on a lot of socialistic experimentation." Fortunately Congressman Vare, the Republican boss of Philadelphia who had made millions as that city's garbage and trash collector, persuaded his fellow committee members that the request was

13 Star, 8 Aug 18.
reasonable; the appropriation passed.

Far worse troubles followed. In the summer of 1918, Dr. William C. Woodward, for more than twenty years the District health officer, resigned to become health commissioner of Boston at two and a half times the salary he received in Washington. Familiar with the sanitary problems he has struggled with in the over-crowded capital, he wired Brownlow in early September to warn him that several cases of a virulent disease called Spanish flu had occurred in Boston and to urge him to require Washington physicians to report any suspected cases. Prompt action on that advice failed to head off the plague; by September 21, it had hit Washington with full force. The reporting service broke down: doctors were swamped with desperately ill and dying patients. As both Commissioner Gardiner and General Knight were stricken, Brownlow, together with the new health officer, Dr. Fowler, called upon every unit of the District government for help. They closed the theatres, the movie houses, the churches and most of the shops, persuaded the school board to close the schools, and, with the cooperation of the Visiting Nurse Association, the Red Cross and a volunteer motor corps, opened nursing centers in four or five schoolhouses.

But the epidemic spread. Physicians and nurses caught the disease. Every hospital bed in the city was filled. At one point George Washington hospital, one of the largest, had every bed occupied and not a single nurse on duty. With half the trolley motormen on the sick list, street-car service was utterly disrupted. And as the death toll mounted, there were neither coffins nor gravediggers enough to meet the emergency.

"At last," Mr. Brownlow later wrote, "it seemed that we had come to the end of our resources. There was a dreadful Saturday." That day he enlisted

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through the White House the help of every federal agency and arranged for a
high-level meeting at the office of the War Industries Board on Sunday morning.

A scrutiny of the emergency skills listed by war workers who had come to Washington
revealed people with nursing skills or medical experience. Judge Parker of
the War Industries Board virtually commandeered a building just vacated by a
division of the Army, contractors and union representatives were told to ready
the building for hospital use, while merchants assembled seven hundred units of
bedding. By 8 o'clock Sunday night a seven-hundred-bed hospital was equipped
and, with a skeleton staff of doctors and nurses brought together by Army and
Navy medical officers, the Public Health Service and Dr. Fowler, was ready to
receive patients. Volunteer ambulance drivers worked through the night and by
2 o'clock in the morning every bed was filled. In the interval Secretary of
the Navy Daniels ordered marines from Quantico, Virginia, to Washington to dig
graves, and, on Judge Parker's instructions, two carloads of coffins in the
Potomac railroad yards consigned to Pittsburgh were transferred to the city
hospital where the District health officer took charge of distributing them for
sale at a fixed price. Thus the dead were buried, and the worst ravages of the
plague halted. By November 4, the emergency was over. Official records showed
35,000 cases reported and 3500 deaths in those six weeks, but no one could
tally the unreported cases, and deaths resulting from later complications ran
into hundreds.15

Magnificent cooperation supported by unlimited authority rescued the
capital from one of the worst disasters in its history. But if the behavior of
the local community during the crisis won commendation, during every other period
of the war Washingtonians found themselves held up to opprobrium in the rest of

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15 Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity, pp. 69-73.
the country. The source of the greatest ill-will was the housing shortage and the spreading rumors that Washingtonians were profiteering on rents. The commissioners' report of 1919 tells the essentials of the story:

Not since the journeying of St. Ursula with her 11,000 virgins to their martyrdom at Cologne, some 1,500 years ago, has there been such a pilgrimage of young women as that which moved toward Washington after the beginning of the war in 1917.

Many of the young women who were attracted by the relatively large salaries offered had never been away from home before, and in the nostalgic reaction which generally arises after separation for the first time from one's family, everything different from what it was at home was apt to seem objectionable. It had not occurred to these pilgrims that the expenses must also be figured on a new basis, and that the advantages of life at home in a small place could not be expected in a crowded city. This also caused disappointment and led to a great many undeserved criticisms of Washington people who had never had outsiders in their homes before, but who were admitting them then from a patriotic desire to help share with them in this way the burden which war imposed.

In most cases, the report continued, rents were not raised exorbitantly. The enormous rentals voluntarily paid by dollar-a-year men had an important part in forming the public image of the housing squeeze in Washington. Thus a magazine writer spoke of the $30,000 a year rental one wealthy man paid. On the other hand, numerous instances showed extortionate charges forced upon most unwilling victims, but congressional hearings held after the war indicated fairly clearly that subrentals accounted for the worst abuses; property-owners and real estate companies were relatively rarely party to them.

Although the federal government early in the war commandeered buildings for office space and began erecting "tempo" on the Mall, not until the following

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17 Clara Savage, "On to Washington," Good Housekeeping, LXVI, Apr 18, p. 158; H Dis Coms, Hrg on "Housing in the Dis of Col," 650, 23, 9 May 19; Subcommerc of a Dis Coms, Hrgs on "The High Cost of Living in the Dis of Col," 66c, 12, 29 Jul-Sep 19, pp. 807-17; Star, 8, 15 Feb, 19 Mar, 9 Apr, 8, 18, 29 May 18, 1 Jan 19.
January when the War department established a housing unit did federal authorities accept any responsibility about finding living quarters for incoming government clerks; and then, as informed people acknowledged, without the intelligent planning and vigorous work of Mrs. Archibald Hopkins, head of the women's committee of the District Defense Council, official efforts would have brought few results. In May 1918 the Civil Service Commission alarmed perhaps by statements that half of its appointments were refused on the grounds that the pay was insufficient to meet the high cost of living in Washington, Congress passed the so-called "Saulsbury Resolution" designed to prevent rent profiteering, appropriated several million dollars to build dormitories for government employees, and, since eight thousand alley dwellers if turned out of their tenancies would further complicate the problem, waived the requirement of the Alley Dwelling act of 1914 that had stipulated complete evacuation of all alley houses by the first of July 1918. Not until September did the Housing Corporation of the Department of Labor relieve the District Defense Council of the task of locating, inspecting and listing available rooms. None of the government dormitories on the Union Station plaza were ready before the Armistice "so that," the District commissioners observed, "aside from the unoccupied houses which were furnished and opened with the grant made through the War Department at the beginning of 1918, and some houses which were commandeered by the government some seven or eight months later, the problem of caring for incoming government employees was met by the citizens of Washington."

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18 Comrs Rpt, 1919, p. 576; "Living in War-Swollen Washington is a Serious Problem," Literary Digest, LVII, 27 Apr 18, p. 65.

19 Comrs Rpts, 1918, p. 6; Star, 1, 3, 6 Jan, 29, 30 Apr, 25 May 16.

20 Comrs Rpts, 1919, pp. 582-83.
Those citizens, aware of having stopped many gaps for the federal
government, were indignant at hearing themselves excoriated as "rent sharks, 
profiteers and cave-dwellers." "That madman Ben Johnson," as Louis Brownlow 
fifty years later characterized the city's chief enemy on the Hill, led the 
attacks, just as he had in 1910 and after when the House dug up thirty-year-old bills and demanded repayment from the District. 21 Two weeks before the
Armistice Theodore Noyes of the Star wrote angrily:

The last summer has been full of bitter days for the people of
Washington; gloriously better in the cheerful endurance of necessary 
patriotic war sacrifices with other good Americans; humiliatingly bitter 
through discriminating, slurring, hurtful legislation, unnecessarily 
imposed or threatened, and through the slanderous vilification of 
Washingtonians which has accompanied it.

Mr. Johnson denounces the property owners and landlords of Washington 
as the most unpatriotic people in the whole world. He poses as peculiarly 
the protector of the boys in the trenches and of the civilian war workers.

Mr. Johnson's Washington constituency has sent more boys to the 
trenches to give their lives to win the war than Mr. Johnson's Kentucky 
constituency.

His National Capital constituency has furnished more civilian war 
workers than his Kentucky constituency.

His Washington constituency has put up more money to sustain the boys 
in the trenches, and to win the war, in donations through the Red Cross 
and otherwise, in Liberty Loans and in war taxes, than his Kentucky 
constituency.

When underpaid clerks who worked long hours of overtime protested at an increase 
in their hours of work without any increase in pay, some members of Congress 
condemned them as slackers. 22 Perhaps Noyes' wrath was heightened by disappoint-
ment over the collapse of earlier expectations that the American public, 
appreciating to the full the contributions of Washingtonians, would henceforward 
be grudge nothing to the national capital. 23 Now, as in the Civil War era,
again false accusations and injustice were pillorying permanent residents.

Unlike other American cities, Washington underwent crises not in periods of business depression but amid the booming activities of war-time. The War of 1812 had nearly extinguished the city; the Civil War and its aftermath had subjected her citizens to wholesale charges of disloyalty; the war against the Central Powers brought down upon her patriots the hostility of their compatriots who had every cause for gratitude to them. If philosophical Washingtonians recognized this as the price of being citizens of the capital, they were nonetheless disturbed, even while they carried on their work at the sacrifice of local charities and other civic interests, and nursed belief that peace would restore sounder judgment to their critics. Unhappily, time would show that the attacks, coupled with the failure of attempts to forestall others, severely damaged community morale for a generation to come. Indeed Washington never fully regained her former faith in herself.

When the Armistice came, Washingtonians celebrated rather quietly, since the commissioners requested postponement of a great victory parade until after formal signing of a peace treaty. The early exodus of war-workers did not occur, and in fact the demand for housing and prices for all essentials continued to rise. The zeal for good works waned rapidly. Only large contributions from government employees enabled the city that had prided herself on meeting every challenge to raise her $800,000 quota for the "war chest" upon which the YMCA, the National Catholic War Council, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Salvation Army and several other organizations depended in caring for servicemen. The drive for Red Cross members in December 1918 was close to a complete failure; Washington did about a third as well as the national average. Perhaps still more indicative of the general spiritual exhaustion that overtook the community, the
annual campaign to raise money for the Associated Charities fell $2000 short of its modest $8800 goal.\textsuperscript{24}

The one project that appeared to evoke universal enthusiasm among Washingtonians was the drive for a constitutional amendment giving the District voting representation in Congress and the electoral college. In May and June 1917 resolutions offered in House and Senate and referred to the Judiciary committee had proposed a diluted version of that plan, namely a constitutional amendment authorizing Congress whenever it saw fit to grant Washingtonians representation; presumably the sponsors believed that amendment, if passed and ratified, a sufficient public mandate to persuade Congress to act promptly.

But war, as the Board of Trade observed glumly, relegated all District affairs to the background. Now with the fighting war over, citizens with a singleness of purpose new in the District's political history set out to win the status which recent experience had convinced them was their surest safeguard against future injustice. Carefully laid plans included an educational campaign to enlighten congressional constituents throughout the United States about the handicaps under which residents of the capital suffered.\textsuperscript{25}

In January 1919 the undertaking got off to a good start. A citizens' committee had laid the groundwork in 1916 by visiting other cities to assemble data on their tax structure, so that a nucleus of organization was already in existence. The impressive feature of the new Citizens' Joint Committee on National Representation for the District of Columbia, headed by Theodore Noyes and John Joy Edson, was the all-inclusiveness of the white groups participating— the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Trade, the Merchants and Manufacturers

\textsuperscript{24}Star, 11, 21 Nov, 16, 17, 23-26 Dec 18.

\textsuperscript{25}Star, 11, 21 Nov, 16, 17, 23-26 Dec 18, 1918; Star, 1 Jan 18, 24 Jan 19, Rec, 656, 13, Apr 17, May 17, p.
Association, the Central Labor Union, the Federation of Citizens' Associations, the Oldest Inhabitants Association, the Bar Association, the Monday Evening Club, the Real Estate Brokers Association, the 20th Century Club and a half dozen more, in short, every significant civic and business organization in white Washington. The local press carried long accounts of progress; out-of-town newspaper correspondents, such as David Lawrence of the New York Evening Post, William Brigham of the Boston Transcript, and Mark Goodwin of the Dallas Evening Journal, gave the program good notices. Local business firms attached to their out-of-town correspondence red stickers informing recipients that the District, with 400,000 inhabitants, paid taxes, obeyed federal laws and went to war, but was voteless. The response was surprisingly quick and encouraging. Offers of support flowed in from many parts of the country where people expressed astonishment at learning that Washingtonians were disenfranchised or paid taxes in any form. Not a dissident note sounded for weeks. But neither did anything happen on the Hill. 

Some opposition from Congress was to be expected, for, although the 1918 election had put Republicans in control of both houses, objections to a partly Negro electorate in the capital seemed likely. Moreover, an off-the-record statement from Senator Sherman of Pennsylvania indicated other kinds of hostility: "Washington has more profiteers and grafters than any city in the United States." Give them representation in Congress and they would allow the national legislature no time for anything except satisfying their demands for free gifts. But in early March, when House leader Mondell reportedly announced that in attempting "long-distance" governing of the District Congress was "making a mess of the job," and Commissioner Brownlow and a conference of one

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26 J. D. Kaufman, Scrapbooks on Washington Home Rule, Book I, Newspaper clippings, Jan-Mar 19, Book II, Correspondence.
hundred city mayors and state governors endorsed suffrage for Washington, prospects for early success looked rosy.27

While Congress, ostensibly waiting for completion of the peace negotiations at Versailles, delayed action on the District's appeal, the first sharp criticisms of the plan appeared in the New York City press. The attacks were directed chiefly at Washington's tax rates and the federal contribution to expenses. The Sun derided complaints from a city where taxes were set at $1.50 on $100 of assessed property valuations, and a week later the paper printed a communication from a Washingtonian saying old residents were content with things as they were. The New York Post declared that until the creation of the territory in 1871 "there had been no taxes in the District" and debts had accumulated only when the territory and voting existed. In mid-April newspapers elsewhere picked up the theme. The Shreveport, Louisiana, Journal, for example, carried a long account of District greed: "The political atmosphere of Washington would be even more sinister than it is now under a form of statehood." Unfortunately, amid all the careful organization of the local campaign, no one had found a method of presenting an accurate lucid picture of the incidence of taxes in Washington. Repeated statements pointed out that the District paid more than sixteen states in federal income and internal revenue taxes, but when a letter from an Iowa Chamber of Commerce inquired how the levies on Washington business firms compared with those of other cities, no fool-proof figures were available for an informing reply. Indeed, the 1916 hearings had shown the impossibility of arriving at an exact easily understandable comparison, because federal and District costs and services were so closely

27 Star, 17 Feb 19; Times, 11, 11 Mar 19; Washington Herald, 8 Mar 19; ltr, Sydney A. Schwartz to J. D. Kaufman, 13 Feb 19; Kaufman Scrapbook II; and numerous out-of-town newspaper clippings in Kaufman Scrapbook I.
intertwined. Lengthy involved explanations tended to raise as many doubts as
they settled. Nor did the publicity explain the basic difficulty of persuading
Congress to sanction the use of District taxes for badly needed expenditures
such as higher salaries for school teachers or new schoolhouses. Interestingly
enough, neither Washington nor other metropolitan daily papers commented openly
upon the possible impact of District suffrage on race relations or remarked
on colored Washington's aloofness from the campaign. 28

Upon the convening of the 66th Congress on May 19, 1919, resolutions
identical with those buried in the earlier Congress again went to the Judiciary
committees. 29 But by then the outwardly solid front Washingtonians had presented
in January had begun to reveal crevices. Differences of opinion about what speci­
ified form of government to seek had existed from the moment influential business
organizations like the Board of Trade had first admitted the wisdom of some
change. The Board of Trade committee from the beginning had advocated only
representation in Congress and perpetuation of an appointed commission for local
government. The Chamber of Commerce stood for securing a place in Congress
first and then considering the question of elective city officials. The labor
unions on the contrary, urged along with voting representation in national
affairs, immediate substitution of elected local officials for the commissioners.
While keeping himself out of the discussions, Louis Brownlow, the best-informed
person in Washington on District administrative problems, had also reached the
conclusion that home rule was vitally important to the city's well-being.

28 New York Sun, 31 Mar, 1 Apr 19; New York Post, 29 Mar 19; Shreveport
Journal, 17 Apr 19 and other clippings of April 1919 and later in Kaufman,
Scrapbook I; letters in Scrapbook II. See above ch. XVII, p.

29 Rec, 66C, 15, 19 May 19, p. 25, 12 Jun 19, p. 1013.
"Because the membership of Congress was overwhelmingly rural in background, it was frequently impossible to get the necessary legislation or the required appropriations of funds to enable the District to keep up with the constantly increasing demands of American urban life." Even two District senators and two or more representatives in the House would not ensure attention to parochial concerns from a body whose national and international responsibilities were mounting with every passing year. Business leaders, if aware of that probability in 1919, were still loath to entrust city government to an elected municipal council; they preferred to take their chances on getting congressional approval of needed expenditures rather than risk giving control to an electorate in which propertyless voters might predominate.

Commissioner Gardiner had told the Board of Trade in 1917 that Negro voting would be a calamity for the city, but the angry retort of the colored press had silenced further public comments of that sort. Unwavering united dedication on the part of the community to revisions of the District's political position was as unlikely to have produced an early response in 1919 as in the 1870's, but the cooling of local ardor in the summer after the war certainly was no encouragement to the Judiciary committees to report and favorably upon the resolutions referred to them. Later statements from the Board of Trade contended that Washingtonians were still determined to obtain the constitutional amendment and that delays had arisen solely because of protracted senate debates over ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and then by the bitterly fought League of Nations issue in the national election of 1920. Yet the Woman Suffrage

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30 Anl Rpts Ed of Tr, 1917, p. 15, 1918, p. 51, 1919, p. 11; Times, 9 Feb 19; Star, 12 Feb 19; Brownlow, Passion for Anonymity, p. 100.

31 Bee, 27 Jan, 15 Dec 17.
and Prohibition amendments passed in that interval, and subtle evidence points to a shift in the point of view of both Congress and Washingtonians after July 1919. For that month saw a flare-up of violence in the city's race relations as alarming to harvested interests as it was disgraceful. Thereafter white enthusiasm for political changes never again reached the pitch it had attained six months before.

The attitude of colored Washington toward the war and toward white community programs by and large was at once logical and dignified. Washington Negroes, unlike colored radicals in several northern cities in 1916, had not seriously considered putting race before country. On the contrary, they looked upon the war as their opportunity to win recognition as loyal Americans and the inevitable postwar readjustments as an unequitable chance to establish themselves permanently in a sound economic position. The Washington branch of the NAACP declared patriotism did not require colored men to put up with injustice or remain silent about lynchings in the South and unprovoked attacks such as occurred in East St. Louis, Illinois. Nor could any law-abiding white person want Negroes to ignore outrages of that sort. President Wilson himself rather belatedly in the summer of 1918 issued a strong statement on lynchings. But from early 1917 till the return of colored troops of the AEF two years later complaints about racial discrimination in Washington, though voiced again and again, were fewer and less bitter than at any time in the preceding fifteen years. Acknowledgments of every discoverable evidence of white fairness appeared

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in the local Negro press along with exhortations to colored people to make the most of the new openings which wholehearted cooperation with whites in winning the war would bring. Here was obviously the counsel of hope. However flimsy its foundations, it was the basis upon which colored Washington built until the spring of 1919.

Thus the District's colored candidates for officer training swallowed their initial dismay at the War Department's decision to send them to an all-Negro camp at Des Moines, Iowa, for as the Bee, weekly organ of the articulate Negro community, pointed out, there they could have a better chance to prove their worth than in a mixed camp. The Bee warned colored servicemen not to write home about every slight they endured; their record, the editor argued, would plead their case eloquently for them upon their return. After all, had not the Star, in the past no friend to colored Washington, printed photographs of two of the District's Negro officers commissioned at Fort Des Moines? Other signs of white recognition of colored men's value seemed to appear in Herbert Hoover's appointment of a Negro science teacher from the Dunbar High School to head the colored bureau of the Food Administration; in Secretary of War Newton Baker's making Emmett J. Scott, an intimate of Booker T. Washington, an assistant in the War Department and the local chapter of the Red Cross' selecting him to serve on the finance committee; in the Labor Department's assignment of George Hayner to a responsible position, and Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo's plan to send fifty colored men across the country to explain national war aims to Negroes. Even the arch conservative Oldest Inhabitants Association had invited the Oldest Inhabitants Association (Colored)
to visit the white headquarters in the old firehouse at 19th and H streets northwest. 35

Neither patriotism nor determined faith in the future, however, could conceal the repeated proofs of lingering white hostility. Southern members of Congress introduced new Jim Crow legislation for the District which, though not passed, was a slap at the Negro war effort. Realization that a well-built house in Le Droit Park, by 1917 a virtually solidly colored section, was a better buy at $3000 than a smaller house at $6000 in a partly white neighborhood did not lessen Negro wrath at new proposals for residential segregation. Colored troops on the move had to ride in dirty Jim Crow cars. When a Negro sentry at Camp Ordway in northeast Washington shot a white man for not obeying the command to halt, the court-martialled soldier received a three-year sentence for needless haste in doing his duty. In spite of the much-talked-of manpower shortage, government offices turned away colored people qualified by Civil Service examinations, the District police department took on no colored patrolmen, and even the draft boards called up Negro registrants only when the list of whites was exhausted. The Washington street railway companies when in need of some five hundred operatives refused to hire Negroes. The Red Cross segregated colored volunteers from white. 36 Although Negro builders, if provided with cash, were ready to put up houses for the alley dwellers who by the law of 1914 would be expelled in July 1918, District officials and Congress rejected the new housing plan as impractical and instead

35 Bee, 23, 30 Jun, 15 Sep, 10 Nov 17, 2 Feb, 16 Mar, 13 Apr, 11, 25 May, 8 Jun 18; Star, 21 Oct 17, 1 Oct 18.

36 Star, 3 Sep, 12 Oct, 25 Dec 17, 18 Jul 18; Bee, 3, 10 Nov 17, 2, 9 Feb, 9, 23, 30 Mar, 13, 27 Apr, 8 Jun, 21, 28 Sep 18.
threw away an act which public-spirited citizens had fought hard to get passed.

To the intense disappointment of part of the colored intelligentsia, upon the retirement of President Newman of Howard University the trustees again elected a white man to the position. For the first time Negroes heard themselves called "darkies" in a District courtroom. The daily newspapers, asserted the Bee, featured stories of Negro croquet games but ignored all colored social betterment activities including the not inconsiderable achievement of raising enough money to start a new $200,000 colored YWCA building. If all this did not add up to intensified racial antagonisms, neither did it presage a rapid easing of tensions after the war.

Negro leaders knew that some white Washingtonians deplored the continuing of discriminatory practices and fully appreciated what Negroes had done and were doing for their country. During 1918 several eminent whites joined the local branch of the NAACP. The best element in the colored community consequently dared hope that, with the backing of the perceptive element of the white community, the postwar world would bring colored people justice. The Armistice meant that every fair-minded Washingtonian, white, coffee-colored, or black, could wholeheartedly join the fight for democracy at home. Archibald Grimke, head of the Washington NAACP and president of the American Negro Academy, told fellow members of the academy at its twenty-second annual meeting in December 1919: "I am glad to say that associated with us in this campaign

37 Crisis, XIV, Jul 17, p. 139, XVII, Jan 19, p. 116; Star, 3 Jan 18; Bee, 12 Jan, 2, 23 Feb, 2 Mar, 18 May 18; H Rpt 120, 65C, 28, 29 Mar 18, Ser 7301; S Rpt 118, 65C, 28, 30 Apr 18.

38 Ltrs, Corcoran Thom to Mary Church Terrell, 25 Nov 18, and Jane Cgle, Asst Director Personnel Dept, War Camp Community Service, to M.C. Terrell, 3 Dec 17, Terrell mss (L.C); Bee, 21 Jun 19.
for justice are a number of leading white men. We do not have to fight this battle alone." 39 About the same time John F. Hawkins presented to the Washington NAACP fourteen points, paralleling President Wilson's famous fourteen points for world democracy, which alone would give meaning to the word in the United States. While Mary White Ovington, one of the white founders of the National Association, wrote in the Crisis that "the last place to which the returning colored soldier can look for justice is Washington, the very fountainhead of the government he has so faithfully served," she added: "The power of numbers, but organized numbers, is the power that wins the battle."

Every oppressed group . . . is engaged in a separate struggle to secure something of value for itself in the chaos that comes at the close of a great war. Now . . . while systems are fluid, before the structure of society becomes rigid again is the opportunity to win the reality of democracy. 40

Washingtonians won a first minor victory in January 1919 when Commissioner Brownlow, already known to have no racial bias, acted upon their plea to establish an all-Negro platoon in the Fire Department, an arrangement that ensured promotions for the four colored veterans of twenty years' service in the Department and gave new appointees a chance to prove their competence under men of their own race. 41 Equally helpful to colored morale were several articles in the Star describing the valor of the District's "famous old 1st Separate Battalion" in action in France. Of the battalion's 48 Washingtonians, 25 had been awarded the Croix de Guerre, and the officers of the French regiment to which the battalion was attached had nothing but highest praise for the entire

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39 Star, 26 Dec 18.

40 Mary White Ovington, "Reconstruction and the Negro," Crisis, XVII, Feb 19, pp. 169-70, 172; Bee, 16 Nov 18, 4, 18 Jan, 15 Feb 19.

41 Star, 18 Jan 19; Bee, 8, 22 Mar, 7, 11 Jun, 19 Jul 19.
The Star correspondent, remarking that the city would surely want to stage a home-coming demonstration for these troops, declared "every citizen of Washington—in fact of the United States—should feel proud of them." A few days later the chief secretary of the national Salvation Army, who said he had "a pretty complete record" of the conduct of the colored soldiers, announced that "something ought to be done to show their courage and fidelity were appreciated." He had rented a building in Washington to house them when they returned late in March 1919.

That was the last expression of general good will in Washington. The parade of returned soldiers, led by President Wilson, took place before the 1st Separate Battalion reached home. As if alarmed by the praise already meted out to the colored heroes, Washington's white newspapers after February had nothing more to say of them or indeed of Negroes' part on the home front. By late spring, the Crisis reported, influential Americans were repeating comments supposedly originating with high-ranking officers of the AEF that "the Negro officer is a failure" and the behavior of colored troops in France had been cowardly in battle and improper in social contacts with French people.

W. E. B. DuBois after three months in Europe spent in collecting facts for an authentic "History of the Black Man in the Great War" concluded that "No person in an official position dare tell the truth" about the shabby treatment the American army had accorded colored soldiers.

While most of colored Washington was smarting with indignation over what
seemed to them a conspiracy of silence broken only by innuendo about their war service, a group of colored parents launched a six months fight with the school board over its refusal to dismiss Assistant Superintendent Roscoe Conkling Bruce. The Parents League representing perhaps six or seven hundred colored parents accused Bruce of favoritism in making teaching appointments and, worse, lack of vigilance in what came to be known as the "Moens affair."

Dr. John Van Scheyck, a white member of the school board, armed with a recommendation from the Dutch embassy, had given a Dutch anthropologist by the name of Moens permission to photograph some of the city's colored school children for purposes of comparative anthropological data. Bruce had unofficially concurred. But Moens, so the stories ran, had taken advantage of innocent children and indulged in indecent behavior with one of the colored teachers.

White members and Mrs. Coralle Cook, a Negro member of the school board, upheld Bruce and, probably rightly, tended to dismiss the tales about Moens as grossly exaggerated. But Negro women picketed the Franklin school building week after week whenever the school board met at its offices there. That only a small minority of the Negro community took stock in the lurid rumors about the Moens' affair or shared the view of the Parents League that here was fresh evidence of white indifference to Negroes' good name apparently failed to affect the opinion of white supremacists that the agitation proved all Negroes emotionally unstable and lacking in judgment. Certainly the hostility and anger evinced by the Parents League helped kill any nascent Negro interest in the whitesponsored Home Rule movement.

Still more important in building up racial tensions in Washington in the
first half of 1919 was the outbreak of a crime wave of more serious proportions than any that occurred before or during the war. The newspaper accounts of street robberies and attacks upon women generally conveyed the impression that Negroes were responsible, as in some cases they were. The Star declared "thousands of young war workers in the city had a hysterie of fear." The Post accused the Negro press of "a plot" to stir up race hatred. In early July a series of sex crimes, most of them, later evidence established, committed by a single colored man, whipped the city into a fury of alarm and rage. A Negro bishop assured whites that colored people would join in the manhunt, while the Bee, aware that the temper of white Washington might lead to punishment of colored innocents, insisted that the criminals were not local Negroes and that an all-Negro precinct in the undermanned police department would be useful in bringing the assaults to an end. At the same time the local NAACP sent letters to the city's white dailies warning them that further "inflammatory headlines and sensational news articles" would encourage race riots. Hundreds of service-men stationed in and about Washington who roamed the streets during those hot July evenings added to the sense of uneasy restlessness pervading the city. In a situation already explosive their presence served as a fuse requiring only a minor episode trigger violence. The provost guard and military police on duty in Washington had been withdrawn in June.

The "Red Scare," moreover, which soon swept through the entire country, had already begun in the capital. In June a bomb set in the house of the new

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\text{Star, 1, 2, 24, 25 Feb, 22, 23 Apr, 30 Jun, 1, 2, 6-8, 11, 12, 14, 19, 21 Jul 19; Bee, 12 Jul 19; Post, 7, 12, 15, 17, 19 Jul 19; Crisis, XVIII, Sep 19, p. 242.}\]
Attorney General convinced conservative citizens that "bolshviks" were about to destroy the entire fabric of American society. "It is unsafe," announced the Star, "to wait for specific proof of individual criminality. It is dangerous to delay until jury-proof cases can be found." Although no one came out flatly with the accusation that colored Washington was one of the "red centers" in the United States, anxieties lest radicalism eat its way into Washington's working classes, at the bottom of which stood the city's black masses, undoubtedly increased racial animosities.

The first overt acts of race warfare occurred on a Saturday night, July 19th: "Men in Uniform Attack Negroes" ran the Sunday headlines. "As a climax to the assaults on white women . . . a hand of more than a hundred soldiers, sailors and marines last night invaded southwest and beat several colored persons before they were finally dispersed by a provost guard, a detachment of marines and reserves from three police stations." Worse followed. On Monday morning the Washington Post, after describing Sunday's riots, carried an alarming article under a huge headline reading Scores are Injured in More Race Riots:

It was learned that the mobilization of every available service man stationed in or near Washington or on leave here has been ordered for tomorrow evening near the Knights of Columbus hut, on Pennsylvania avenue between seventh and eighth streets.

The hour of assembly is 9 o'clock and the purpose is a "clean-up" that will cause the events of the last two evenings to pale into insignificance.

Whether official cognizance of this assemblage and its intent will bring about its forestalling cannot be told.
If, as Commissioner Brownlow and Major Pullam firmly believed, "these white ex-service men were frauds, paid to provoke the trouble they began," and if the Washington Post, on instructions from its owner, was deliberately fanning the fires, the wicked and malicious scheme succeeded. If that night," Louis Brownlow wrote forty years later, "the race riot swept over Washington. If it had not been for the good work of police and soldiers who kept the large mobs from contact, the city would have been a shambles. During the week the race riots in Chicago and Knoxville followed and the month of July ended with a feeling of apprehension and disturbance."

In Washington colored people, convinced that the time for meekness had passed, fought back for a day or two until, as the police received reinforcements, Negroes chose to avoid further provocation by staying off the streets after twilight. By the end of the week outward order was restored. But Negro anger did not subside, for they learned that although every eye-witness of the opening fights testified that white men had been the aggressors, of the hundred-odd persons arrested only eight or nine were whites and of those few only one was convicted for carrying a concealed weapon. Soothing words in the white press to the effect that the "colored residents of Washington are law-abiding people, good citizens and dependable in all crises" came too late to allay bitterness.

Yet colored leaders displayed extraordinary restraint. A week after the first outbreak Judge Terrell and Dr. Emmet J. Scott, former special assistant to the Secretary of War, issued a statement to Negro newspapers in the rest of

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50 Brownlow, Passion for Anonymity, p. 84; interview Brownlow, 18 Nov 58; Comrs Rot, 1920, I, 223; Star, 21 Jul 19.
51 Brownlow, Passion for Anonymity, p. 84.
52 Star, 20-25, 27 Jul 19; Bee, 26 Jul 19; Post, 22, 23 Jul 19.
the country pointing out that whereas white servicemen were unquestionably to blame for the Washington riots and Negro retaliation was natural, the most important fact was that "white and colored citizens freely counseling together in the interest of law and order" had successfully reestablished peace and that henceforward all efforts must be directed at preserving the "gains of mutual war-time sacrifices." James Weldon Johnson, the NAACP investigator sent down from New York, shared Commissioner Brownlow's private opinion that the Washington Post had had a large part in fomenting the violence. His report in the Crisis contained touches of humor: he had received a cordial welcome from the city editor who assumed that Johnson had come to tell Washington Negroes "to be good," and had then suffered near-panic upon discovering that the NAACP might ask the Attorney General to bring action against Washington's white newspapers, the Post above all, for inciting to riot. Johnson averred that Negro courage had saved the day in Washington. By fighting "in defense of their lives and homes" instead of running, they had prevented Washington's being "another and worse St. Louis." Indeed, he concluded, bad as things had been, white shame over the shocking events in Washington and Chicago "mark a turning point in the psychology of the whole nation regarding the Negro problem." That note of encouragement, if in the long run overly optimistic, appeared justified in the months immediately following, for Washington's white press, perhaps frightened by the consequences of its earlier propaganda, ceased to harp on Negro criminality. In December at a meeting called to raise money for a war memorial to colored heroes for

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51 Crisis, XVII, Sep 19, 211-13; Bee, 2 Aug 19.
which a bill had been introduced in Congress, the response of eminent white
men was heartening. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and Secretary of the
Navy Josephus Daniels both spoke on the occasion, and "the tabernacle quaked
from the acclamation of approval" when Judge Stafford challenged the crowd:
"Cite me a case of a Negro traitor?; "Show me a Negro anarchist?; "Let me see
a Negro bolshevist?; "The only red rag the Negro ever carried was when his
shirt was stained crimson by the sacrificial blood he gave for America."\(^55\)

The single most penetrating analysis of the Negro problem in Washington
and in Chicago came from the pen of George F. Haynes, director of Negro
Economics in the United States Department of Labor, writing on "Race Riots in
Relation to Democracy." He recognized the role of sensational journalism in
contributing to racial hostility, but he believed three other factors equally
significant. First was the lack of mutual understanding that resulted from
the loss of contact between the races:

The lack of contact has increased with the years. Older residents of
Washington and Chicago tell you of the growing racial antagonism with
the growth of separation. Only a few weeks before the riots in both
cities, some leading people of Washington were discussing the fact that
in former years the white and colored representatives of various philan­
thropic and community agencies were accustomed to meet more frequently
then now for the exchange of views and plans on matters of community
interest. The holding of such meetings has grown more difficult and less
frequent.

Second was the growing militance of the Negro community. Generations of seeing
the unequal enforcement of the law had led the Negro to believe "his safety
demands that he protect himself and his home," a conviction strengthened by a
new conception of liberty that accompanied the higher standard of living war
had brought to thousands of colored families.\(^56\) Other observers of the Washington

\(^{55}\) Star, 16 Dec 19.

\(^{56}\) George F. Haynes, "Race Riots in Relation to Democracy," Survey,
scene had remarked upon white irritation at Negroes' improved economic status: "Everywhere one can hear expressions of disgust at the expensive clothes of successful Negroes, their owning automobiles, etc." That comment in turn bore out the validity of Haynes' view of the increasing lack of contact between the races, inasmuch as upper class colored Washington from the early 1880's onward had included elegantly dressed, well-to-do Negroes. The third new factor in the situation was in some measure a corollary of the second, namely the realization of both white and colored Americans that the United States, as one of the great world powers, was now "face to face with the problem of dealing with the darker peoples of Asia, Africa, Central and South America."

Those peoples would judge the United States by the treatment white Americans accorded darker-skinned citizens within our borders. That an Abyssinian mission had been in the national capital during the riots was an uncomfortable reminder to intelligent Washingtonians that race relations here had a wider bearing than a purely domestic local question.

While much of the colored community had benefitted from better paid jobs during and immediately after the war, school teachers and government clerks who composed the backbone of the middle class had, like their white counterparts, suffered from the pinch of rising living costs and very minor or no salary increases. Moreover, as for years past, the number of appointments to professional or clerical appointments in Washington fell far short of the number of Negro candidates qualified either by graduation from the Miner Normal School or by Civil Service ratings. Assistant Superintendent Bruce, head of

57 "The Darkest Clouds," Survey, XLII, 2 Aug 19, pp. 675-76; see above ch. XV.

58 See n. 56;
the colored schools, while fighting to get better salaries for colored
teachers, implied, however, that those willing to leave Washington now had
larger opportunities than formerly because of the prosperity the war had brought
to Negroes in other cities.59 The opening of a colored Industrial Savings
Bank on U street and a new well-built well-furnished Negro hotel indicated that,
in spite of inflation, Negro business enterprises in Washington had also enjoyed
some success, and the wider support of civic betterment projects suggested
that many Negro families had more financial leeway than ever before. But the
NAACP and the Washington Bee repeatedly warned colored people that racial
solidarity was essential to continued improvement in their condition. In this
cause the NAACP undertook to enlarge its membership, and the Bee meted out to
its readers rebukes for their lapses and praise for their every achievement.60

If colored Washingtonians reached the point in the autumn of 1919 of
believing they had gained more than they lost by the race riots, white Washing­
tonians recognized that the outburst had lowered the city's standing in the
eyes of the rest of the country. Unlike the sweeping accusations about war-time
profiteering, the criticism in this case, honest people knew, was not undeserved.

Commissioner Brownlow and Major Pullman were not in a position to publicize
their conviction that the riots were a put-up job aimed at bringing the District
police into disrepute and forcing Major Pullman to resign. Apart from the
futility of levying charges they could not prove, any hints they could offer

Ster., 19 Mar 20; Crisis, XIII, May 17, p. 200.

60 Bee, 6, 13 Jan, 3, 17 Feb, 17 Mar, 29 Apr, 5, 26 May, 1 Aug, 15 Sep 17,
26 Jan, 16 Mar, 20 Apr, 22 Jun, 13, 19 Jul, 5 Oct 18, 15 Feb, 29 Mar, 26 Apr 19;
XVII, Jan 19, p. 116, XVIII, Jul 19, p. 158.
would only reveal an unsavory aspect of the city's past which would do her more harm than good.

Doubtless thousands of people admitted privately that for years vice had flourished rather openly in Washington and, until Major Pullman became Chief, the police department had tended to wink at it. One story still current in 1917 told of a "madam" brought into court for running a disorderly house who responded to the judge's query with the bland statement that it was common knowledge that hers was the second-best house in Washington. "Second-best?" asked the judge. "Oh, your Honor," she replied "everybody knows that the Treasury runs the best." The judge, acknowledging the justice of the comment, reduced her fine. True, apocryphal, or completely false, the tale suggested an atmosphere of moral laxity in the city which Brownlow and Pullman were unwilling to broadcast even while they set themselves to employ the police power to curb it. In doing so they incurred the bitter enmity of the spoiled heir of a large fortune who controlled the Washington Post at the time and was not, in Brownlow's view, above using any weapon, including a race riot, to injure officials who interfered with his pleasures. A modified version of that explanation appeared anonymously in the Survey attributing the source of the trouble to anti-prohibition forces which "welcomed and to some extent planned a 'crime wave' in the nation's capital to illustrate the appalling consequences of the bone-dryness since July first." That interpretation

62 Anecdote told the author by a former Secretary of State who heard it in 1922 from a former judge of the court.
63 Interview, Brownlow, 18 November 58; "The Darkest Cloud," Survey, XLII, 2 Aug 19, n. 675.
of the immediate origins of the riots, if accepted locally, did little to redeem Washington's reputation elsewhere and left conscientious citizens with a deep sense of guilt and shame.

Sensible people struggled to waste no time on mourning about past misdeeds, whether of commission or omission, but the revival of strong community feeling appeared to be a crippled cause. The knowledge that other American cities had undergone and were undergoing not wholly dissimilar post-war upheavals and that Washington could not reasonably hope to escape the unrest sweeping the country from Seattle to Savannah may have offered consolation of sorts; but Chicago's race riots, Seattle's general strike, Boston's police strike in September 1919 and fear of worse to come in other places failed to inspire Washingtonians to fresh civic efforts. During the fall the suffrage campaign resumed after a fashion; the Board of Trade issued the call in October: "Every good American among Washingtonians will respond with enthusiasm to the summons" to work for "that prized American privilege and power we so much desire and which the capital community for its welfare so greatly needs." Out-of-town newspapers from time to time took notice. The Syracuse, New York, Journal, commenting on war-workers' resentment of Washingtonians' touchiness and lack of cordiality, concluded "there is no doubt but what they do feel—and justly so—that they are discriminated against." The Little Rock, Arkansas, Gazette, offered the suggestion that cave dwellers take to their bosoms the congressmen's wives whose exclusion from "the local social set" engendered a bitterness that then infected their husbands: "Both parties have axes to grind

64 Star, 29 Jul 19, 1 Jan 20; Inl Rpt B of Tr, 1919, p. 128.
65 Inl Rpt B of Tr, 1919, p. 11.
but the cavedwellers ax is a good deal larger and in more urgent need of grinding than that of the congressman." But neither words of comfort and advice from outsiders nor any self-exhortation restored to Washingtonians their earlier enthusiasm. 66

Not only so basic a matter as the break-down in race relations but also other aspects of life in post-war Washington were depressing and contributed to a drying up of local pride. The very looks of the city had changed for the worse. The Mall was a clutter of tempes.

Old Washington vanished never to return, when its skyline changed from one of dormer windows and aspiring chimneys to the great impersonal apartment houses of tile and light-colored brick, with their square outlines, and the private houses of French Renaissance or modified colonial types, also light in color, that have replaced the deep-red brick beloved of Mr. Corcoran and his contemporaries. 67

The gates to the White House grounds, closed just before the United States entered the war, remained shut, giving an air of strange lifelessness to the very heart of the city. Old residents had looked forward to the moment when all would be as before, and after the Armistice for a brief time official about society had seemed to resume its pre-war festivities. But the Star regretfully reported: "As the New Year reception of the White House will never again be witnessed in its old form, the one day of the year when the representatives of kings and the humblest citizen might shake hands with the President and wish him good luck, so the cabinet day of old when the drawing rooms of cabinet homes were thronged with any who wished to call has gone the same way."

For the first time since John and Abigail Adams had occupied the Executive

66 Ibid., 1920, pp. 70-71, 131; Syracuse Journal, 12 Feb 20; Little Rock Gazette, 23 Oct 19.

67 Nicoley, Capital, p. 518.
Mansion, the American President was away from Washington for long periods—in Paris during the spring of 1919, in the autumn taking the League of Nations issue to the country. However much the old guard of Theodore Roosevelt's and Taft's day disliked the social attitudes of Woodrow Wilson, official society in his absence was rather like Hamlet without Hamlet.  

Vice President Marshall had to review the parade of the First Division led by General Pershing. The President's illness upon his return to Washington had a further dampening effect, in spite of the elaborate entertainment arranged for the visits of the King and Queen of Belgium and the Prince of Wales. Photographs of debutantes and hostesses never seen before the war filled the rotogravure sections of the newspapers. Washingtonians had trouble feeling at home in Washington.

Even the bookshops changed character. Washingtonians no longer dropped in to browse and chat socially; "expensive knickknacks and cheap postcards by the acre" diluted the stock. Strangers were everywhere. "Most of the women wear fur coats and the latest cut of shoes, and the latest shade in face powder. It is a crowd such as could not have been seen in Washington ten years ago, or even five. Like the apartment houses, it is bigger and gayer-looking and more impersonal." Not until a year or so later when "khaki had become the exception and not the rule on the streets, and dollar-a-year men and war workers Washingtonians real had departed," did Washingtonians realize that the

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69 Star, 28 Sep, 12 Oct, 9 Nov, 12 Dec 19; Brownley, Passion for Anonymity, pp. 86-88.
leisurely town they had loved and other Americans had envied them was gone forever. That inevitably impersonality must come with bigness and international affairs must crowd local into the background was clear enough. It was also clear that, whatever its drawbacks, life in the capital would never lack interest; as in the past, charming and gifted newcomers who intended to stay only briefly would frequently remain year after year and themselves become Washingtonians in all but name. But that the changes forced upon the capital between 1917 and 1920 would permanently stop the reemergence of a self-conscious community dedicated to making the city a model for all America was a prospect no Washingtonian contemplated.

70 Nicolay, Capital, pp. 519-20.
In 1916 the generation of Washingtonians who remembered the city of 1878 had cause for satisfaction. While leaders in the community knew that the changes in the prevailing temper of the United States were more largely responsible for the "new Washington" than were the efforts of local citizens, the results were nonetheless gratifying. The 1500 residents who according to Walter Ufford of the Associated Charities, bore the brunt of supporting good works in the city saw clearly how far Washington fell short of what she might be, but a John Joy Edson and a Mrs. Archibald Hopkins could still join with a Charles Glover and a Myron M. Parker in recognizing the benefits nearly forty years of peace and prosperity had brought.

No other rapidly expanding city in the country had suffered fewer growing pains. She had experienced none of the violence that marked Chicago's industrial development or the miseries of strikes like those in Detroit's automobile plants in 1912. Advocates of light manufacturing in the District could appreciate the reasons for congressional opposition to industrialization of the area. If factories were to cost Washington the favor of Congress and strip her of part of her annual tourist trade, far better to continue to rely upon service to the federal government and real estate transactions as the mainstay of the city's economy. She had escaped most of the social problems every boatload of immigrants landing on Ellis Island forced upon metropolitan centers like New York, Boston and Philadelphia. Conflicts such as led to the expulsion of the Chinese from Seattle in the 1880s and the later troubles of west coast cities over Japanese "invaders" had by-passed the Potomac region.

White Washingtonians, if concerned about their colored neighbors, still
believed the capital a "Negro paradise" compared to New Orleans or Memphis or Atlanta. Furthermore, inasmuch as the 1910 census showed a drop in the proportion of Negroes to whites in the District of Columbia, optimists dared think racial tensions would soon vanish completely. Alley slums still existed within the large blocks L'Enfant had laid out in the 1790's, but the alley dwelling population was shrinking and law provided for the early extinction of that form of housing.

Students of the past might regret that the full realization of George Washington's dream for the capital of the new republic was no longer possible: the unifying core of a nation-wide system of roads and waterways, a commercial center whose strength would enable the statesmen yearly gathered there to guide the expansion of the American people in fashion that would free them and their descendants from want, in Jefferson's phrase, to the thousandth and thousandth generation; a city in which a great national university would train the most gifted minds in America and, as John Quincy Adams envisaged the institution, under government sponsorship widen the reach of human knowledge for the benefit of all mankind; a capital which would inspire not only noble thinking but also creative art in every form. If Brooks Adams' verdict of 1919 was right in declaring those hopes shattered forever by his grandfather's defeat in the presidential election ninety years earlier, most Washingtonians on the eve of the United States' declaration of war upon Germany could still believe that part of that early vision was slowly materializing.

Economic power concentrated in Washington was not necessary to wise exercise of national control over American resources: had not Theodore Roosevelt, perhaps unconsciously swayed by Brooks Adams' Law of Civilization and Decay,
taken steps to check the growth of vest monopolies and to launch conservation programs that would preserve the forests, minerals and water supply of the continent? Although a national university had not come into being in the past forty years government bureaus in Washington had undertaken extensive scientific research, some of it fundamental in character in spite of congressional policies of supporting only utilitarian programs. Witnessing the broadening of federal activities which at times approached the scope of those John Quincy Adams, Joseph Henry and John Wesley Powell had urged the government to sponsor, Washingtonians saw the city becoming a scientific center where new truths were discovered and young men could learn from the dedicated investigators who presided over the government’s scientific work.

Nor had the capital had a wholly negligible influence upon American art. Louis Sullivan of Chicago, to be sure, doubtless considered the results as disastrous for original genius as he thought those of the Columbian World’s Fair, but the general consensus of the country was that the Washington of 1916 represented a magnificent example of skillful cooperation between architects, sculptors and landscape gardeners in producing the “city Beautiful.” Not for another thirty years would city planners heed the substance of Horatio Greenough’s protest of the 1850’s against “forcing the functions of every kind of building into one general form, adopting an outward shape for the sake of the eye or of association.”1 Certainly the members of the McMillan and the later Fine Arts commissions, who probably had never heard of Greenough’s essays, ignored the dictate of their contemporary Sullivan that “form follows

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1 Quoted in F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman, p. 111.
function." Wedded to the concept of creating a "monumental" city, they clung to an architectural uniformity expressed in a borrowed classical style. But good or bad, Washington's influence upon city planning and city decoration in America was paramount before World War I. Provincial visitors, accustomed to think sculpture well represented in the stone effigies of bearded, visor-capped Civil War soldiers impaled on disproportionately heavy pedestals in the central square of every county seat in the United States, were deeply impressed by the equestrian bronzes and marbles of Union generals emplaced in the landscaped parks of the capital. Guide books sedulously informed their readers of the opportunities Washington spread before them to improve their taste. The relevance of Greenough's warning seventy years before that "the translation of rhetoric into stone" was "often fatal to the rhetoric, always fatal to the stone" was apparently lost upon sophisticated people also. Yet despite facades and monuments which the taste of a later generation would label eclectic, the over-all effect of the city then as now was one of beauty. Perhaps above all it was the landscaping of the public reservations, the insistence of the Park Commission upon the vital relationship of open space to buildings and monuments, that endowed Washington with aesthetic distinction.

In other realms of art her role was distinctly minor. Music was only a polite pastime in much of Washington. The drama got little encouragement, if only because dinner parties and receptions interfered with theatre-going. The canvasses and drawings on display at the Corcoran Gallery and the National Museum evoked popular interest without inspiring a distinct school of local painters, while the murals in the Capitol commanded attention chiefly for their patriotic appeal or as curiosities. Washington produced none of the great

2 Ibid., p. 145.
writers of the period, although as a book-reading community she was hospitable to their ideas.

Indeed, probably the city's most important contribution to an American civilization encompassing more than material progress and heightened political power lay in her providing an audience and, in some measure, a forum. H. G. Wells' criticism of the slight consideration Washingtonians gave to basic questions left out of account the significance of a community in the United States of 1906 which recognized conversation as an art. The City of Conversation by merely conversing established a pattern of values that most Americans had forgotten or never accepted. At Jefferson's dinner table a hundred years before, he and his guests had exchanged ideas and information of the kind Wells presumably had hoped to hear in the 20th century capital; but, unlike Henry James, Wells seemingly failed to contrast conversation in Washington with that ordinarily to be heard in America except perhaps in an academic setting such as that of Cambridge or the Johns Hopkins or the University of Chicago campus. By mere example Washingtonians exhibited to the rest of the country the rewards of leisure cultivated without regard to financial returns.

If, as critics of President Wilson's regime occasionally contended after 1912, the city was more given over to socialist reformers and zealous "do-gooders" than to accomplished patrons of the arts of leisure, the residents who set the tone of Washington society still enjoyed the detachment from the market place which Henry James had admired in them.

Yet for all her air of detachment from the grubby world of money-making, 20th century Washington came to feel its effects in a novel and not wholly welcome fashion. The ante-bellum city had bowed to the wealthy slave-owners
of the Deep South and in the thirty years after the Civil War she had felt the power of new industrial "moguls" who came and went—"silver kings" from Colorado and Nevada, lumber and railroad barons with headquarters in New York, Boston and Chicago, and later oil and steel magnates. Old residents had looked upon them as transient political figures who need not be allowed to affect the permanent social structure of the community. But a Senator Brown of Georgia who had built much of his fortune on the exploitation of convict labor, a Senator Stewart whose wealth had poured out of the Comstock lode at Virginia City, Nevada, a Senator "Zach" Chandler, leading protector of Michigan lumber interests, and other rough industrial diamonds who, whatever their political finesse, had rarely acquired a cutting edge capable of reshaping the social fabric of Washington were a different matter from the millionaire interlopers of the Theodore Roosevelt era. The old residential families of Washington and Georgetown, in the 1880's and 1890's the "very elite" of the capital, suddenly found themselves subjected to social pressures they could not control. For the first time they faced an invasion of extremely wealthy householders without political ambitions and seemingly intent only upon establishing themselves on their own terms in a society they had neither helped to create nor wished to maintain on its old basis of antiquity of family and distinguished public service. Washingtonians' century-old method of putting the intruders on probation preceding a highly tentative social acceptance no longer worked: the "nouveaux" felt no need of endorsement from the local community. Unlike the seasonal locusts who from Grant's presidency onward had swarmed into the capital for two or three winters in order to obtain social entree elsewhere, the new invaders clearly intended to live permanently in the District of
Columbia even while they flitted in and out. The new millionaire colony not only expanded but its members with an unshakable assurance entrenched themselves in official society. Unable to beat them and unwilling to join them, old Washington and Georgetown families gradually withdrew into their caves, barring entry to all but a select few outsiders.

More than frustrated snobbery and envy underlay cave-dwellers' disdain. While by no means all of them had been selfless citizens dedicated to the well-being of the community as a whole, they had taken far greater interest in the city's problems than the new millionaire colony evinced. The most cultivated of the "nouveaux" who might have been expected to share the load seldom spent more than a few months of the year in Washington and seldom took the trouble to acquaint themselves with her needs. By comparison the Yankee newcomers of the post Civil War period who made Washington their permanent home became paragons of civic virtue in the eyes of families who had formed the backbone of the District's antebellum aristocracy. Most of the new "smart set" appeared to dismiss the wants of the poor with Marie Antoinette's suggestion that, lacking bread, they eat cake. That attitude among the city's wealthiest people encouraged civic irresponsibility at lower social levels in both white and colored Washington. And circumstances growing out of World War I would perpetuate the cleavage in the upper ranks of society.

A decade before cave-dwelling became a social phenomenon in white Washington, upper class Negro families had established a nearly identical pattern of behavior within the colored community. The reasons for the withdrawal of Negro aristocrats unto themselves differed somewhat from those impelling white Washingtonians, but the similarities in resulting action remained. White people failed to perceive the resemblance because after the mid-eighties...
they had ceased to have any real contact with their colored neighbors; all Negroes became merely Negroes, differentiated at best only classification as "good darkies" or "bad niggers." The white community consequently was oblivious to the sharp class distinctions in Washington's Negro world. Its class structure which long antedated the Civil War had undergone constant elaboration in the post-war decades as former field hands from the South moved into the District and imposed the burden of their abysmal ignorance and, discouragingly often, their irresponsible attitudes upon orderly educated colored Washingtonians. Negro leaders struggling to instill in the newcomers precepts of civic obligation had met with some success as long as white people cooperated, but as whites increasingly washed their hands of everything Negro, the problem had assumed proportions that overwhelmed intelligent colored men. No longer able to influence the black masses and rarely able to help them to help themselves, upper class Negroes had disassociated themselves as completely as possible from the rank and file of colored people. From 1878 onward the position of lower-class Negroes changed very little. The bottom was still the bottom and, in the absence of new economic opportunities, its level rose scarcely at all; a few men pulled themselves up a notch by their own bootstraps but seldom reached a station that admitted them to the circle of Washington's Negro elite.

Like their white counterparts, Negro cave-dwellers were members of respected old families some of whom had acquired considerable wealth and all of whom cherished pride of ancestry. Their light color, frequently hardly perceptible at all, and their cultivated tastes underscored the difference between them and the run-of-the-mill colored population. As the 19th century wore on they had suffered bitter humiliation in finding themselves denied the
political and professional recognition white Washingtonians had accorded them in the early seventies. Thirty years later the fact that lynchings, on the increase in the cotton states, never occurred in the national capital and that District law still forbade Jim Crow cars and theoretically prohibited racial discrimination in hotels, restaurants and places of public entertainment offered little comfort to colored families more white than Negro in cultural background. By 1900 the problem of getting jobs suited to their talents and education had become as acute for them as it was for the lower class Negroes with whom they had nothing in common but a few minor physical characteristics.

Yet in 1912 with the organization of a Washington branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, new leadership emerged in the city. Here the Negro intelligentsia led the campaign against racial discrimination, whereas whites predominated at the New York headquarters. The Washingtonians who devoted themselves to the cause included most if not all of the Negro cave-dwellers, for, while still unwilling to treat their inferiors as social equals, the colored aristocrats were now ready to fight for the basic economic and legal rights the Constitution guaranteed all American citizens.

After the early 1890's neither white nor colored Washingtonians thought the restoration of local suffrage desirable. Although the discontents that citizens' associations had voiced in the eighties did not disappear entirely, few people believed an elective local government a panacea for lingering civicills. On the contrary, even amid the anxieties about finances and congressional parsimony toward the District after 1909, white taxpayers generally feared any formal change in the Organic Act of 1878. Since Congress was manifestly unwilling to grant the District virtual statehood, the right to elect a District
senator and a member of the House of representatives was obviously unobtainable, and any lesser modification was unwelcome. Negroes saw no reason to believe a city council chosen by an electorate in which white voters would outnumber colored by two to one would benefit the colored community. The District commissioners, whatever their individual weaknesses, ran the city with efficiency and honesty, and the occasional muckraking charge that unscrupulous members of congressional committees constituted "plunderers of Washington" made little serious impression either inside or outside the District of Columbia.

The fact that members of Congress when defeated for reelection not infrequently chose to enter business or practise law in the city they had criticized severely at various times testifies to the attractions of life in the capital. Granting that the city was not perfect, long-time residents of white Washington tended to consider themselves singularly blessed and to thank God they were not as other men. While that kind of complacency did not overtake everyone, the social betterment leaders themselves inclined to believe the city destined to become a model of American urban civilization.

By 1916 hope born of determination was reviving even in colored Washington. The optimism of the entire city was contagious. No one foresaw the rude awakening that world war would bring.
Old residents of Washington, like newer comers, rarely or never wanted to live elsewhere. The perceptive recognized her shortcomings, and well-bred Negroes were distressed at the racial discrimination they encountered, but where in the United States would life be more agreeable? The lack of industry and commerce which narrowed business opportunities and yearly drove a number of young men regretfully to seek careers in other cities gave the capital the air of leisure that was much of her undeniable charm. Foreign visitors and American tourists alike invariably remarked upon it. Even Washington families constantly hard pressed to make ends meet apparently enjoyed the privilege of being envied by outsiders. Certainly no one, however lowly his status, admitted to thinking life as drab here as it would be in any other city in America. If his participation in the world of society and affairs was purely vicarious, seeing it pass by directly under his nose brought compensations. Government clerks, as late as 1914 still paid at rates set in 1853, had perhaps the greatest cause for complaint as the cost of living spiralled, but the addition of a half hour to their working day in 1913 still left them more leisure than clerks in commercial establishments commanded or farmers or factory hands in the rest of America. Indeed only the exceptional person who, though well up the economic ladder, objected to the false values he felt pervading a city in which snobbery of money competed with snobbery of rank found fault with Washington as a place to live. ¹ And few communities in

¹ "What it Cost Me to be a Prominent Man," American Magazine, LXXXI, Feb 16, pp. 84-86."
the United States of the early 20th century were entirely free of the competition for status between fortunes and professional or family distinction.

The sheer beauty of the surrounding countryside gave the District's city-dwellers intense pleasure. A scant half-hour's horse-back ride took the equestrian along streams into oak and pine woodlands scarcely touched since the 1860's when Henry Adams had found enchantment there. Inasmuch as Americans still thought walking a sensible mode of locomotion, a newspaperman recommended tramps through Rock Creek valley where views "are not surpassed for loveliness by the Adirondacks, or Killarney, or the English Lake District."

Walk the abandoned car tracks between Chevy Chase and Glen Echo, and see what picturesqueness lies between those hills of which you never dreamed. Resort even to the accustomed car rides out Connecticut avenue, or along the Upper Potomac, or out to Takoma, or park way to Baltimore and Annapolis, keeping your eyes open as the artist keeps his, and you will not lament a summer in Washington. And all this is in addition to the recreations made possible by one of the noblest rivers in the world.

Within the city proper also lay various opportunities for inexpensive outdoor recreation, for after the Park Commission's comment in 1901 upon Washington's "dearth of the means of innocent enjoyment" the government found the means to supply part of the want. In cold winters the frozen expanse of the Tidal Basin provided an ideal skating pond where "the clerks and shopgirls of the city skated over the ice shoulder to shoulder with cabinet officers and their families and with important members of foreign embassies and legations." In summer men, women and children used the municipal "bathing beach" on the Tidal Basin or enjoyed one of the three pools opened in other parts of the city; by 1915 about six hundred people daily were making use of the nineteen new municipal tennis courts, and fifteen hundred boys and young men daily played.

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2 Times, 1 Jun 08.

3 Post, 13 Jan 10.
ball on the sixteen diamonds on the White lot, the Monument grounds and in Potomac Park. The Zoo, now accessible by trolley, was another resource; no big city in America had at her doorstep a more delightful spot for an outing. Moreover, the organizing of the American League in 1901 and the admission to it of the local nine recaptured the public interest in professional baseball which had flagged during the Senators' last days. In 1912 when the new concrete and steel Clark Griffith stadium was finished, the home games drew happy crowds seemingly untroubled at the Nationals' repeated defeats. At the opening of each season as President Taft and then President Wilson tossed out the first ball from the bunting-draped box in the grandstand, the entire stadium took on a very special air compounded of affairs of state, enthusiasm for the sport, and a camaraderie among the famous and the obscure such as the city saw at no other time. During the summer of 1916 the excitement in much of Washington induced by the Nationals' standing for the first time within reach of the pennant largely blotted out concern over torpedoed shipping and the stalemate of trench warfare in Europe.

While the diversions and daily routines of the great body of Washingtonians held little interest for the European visitors who came and went until war checked the flow, they marvelled at the swarms of American tourists drawn like pilgrims to the national shrine. "More and more," wrote the correspondent for the London Observer, "Washington becomes the Mecca of the United States."
Brides and grooms, now eschewing Niagra Falls, chose to honeymoon on the Potomac, high school students chaperoned by their history teachers came every spring by the trainload and, as automobiles ceased to be costly luxuries, entire families made the hejira by car. On pleasant mornings licensed guides, most of them Negroes, laid in wait for their prey in Lafayette square. One man with a flair for the dramatic always assembled his audience first at the bronze group commemorative of General Lafayette and, with a wave of the hand toward the nude figure lying at the hero's feet and extending a sword to him, announced: "Fine statue! Great General! He not look at naked women. She say: 'General, you give me back mah clothes and ah give you back yo s-ward.'"

An English writer, after commenting on "the vastness and variety of its floating population," remarked: "It is at once the most and the least American city in America. It is the most American because there, if anywhere, one feels oneself assisting at the great composite panorama of American life. The city is a national reservoir fed by unnumbered tributaries." Europeans were also interested in Washington's atypicalities from the American norm—in the emerging stateliness of the physical layout of the city, in the unhurried pace of life and in the sophistication of high society, of which the foreign literary lion usually saw more than he did of the rank and file of citizens. The Honorable Maud Pauncefote, daughter of the British ambassador in 1903, considered Washington's cosmopolitanism and good manners.

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6 Maurice Low, "Washington, the American Mecca," Harper's Weekly, LVII, 22 Feb 12, p. 11.

7 Sydney Brooks, "Washington and the White House," The Living Age, CCLXXVII, 5 Apr 13, pp. 69-70.
the city's chief attraction: unlike New York where the stranger was asked
"How much have you got?", or Boston where the query was "How much do you
know?", or Philadelphia where it ran "How many grandfathers have you?"
Washington's greeting was simply "How do you do?". The Englishwoman thought
the "red brick town" surrounding the public buildings unprepossessing, but,
after the Park Commission plan began to take visible form, foreign travelers
usually praised Washington's architectural beauties. The flood of travel
books about the United States had diminished since the 1880's and ridicule and
disdain were no longer a central theme, but the open admiration of Washington
Europeans now expressed was peculiarly sweet to whose pride had
suffered at having the capital described as "The City of Magnificent Distances"
or, in Dickens' more scathing phrase, "The City of Magnificent Intentions." 9

Henry James, by 1906 as British as American, wondered about "the 'real"
feelings of appointed foreign participants, the delegates of Powers... before phenomena which, whatever they may be, differ more from the phenomena
of other capitals and other societies than they resemble them." He was struck
at once by the "extraordinarily easy and pleasant" quality of life in Washington
which induced forgetfulness of New York's "colossal greed" and by the bewildering
absence of "political permeation" in a capital where, in contrast to the
"social ubiquity... of the acceptable MP" in London, not more than "half a
dozens members of the Lower House and not more than a dozen of the Upper" were
part of the social scene. To him Washington presented two faces, "the public
and official, ... the Imperial part," and that of "a group of people engaged

8 The Honorable Maud Paunceforte, "Washington, D.C.," The Nineteenth
Century and After, CCCXII, Feb 03, pp. 280-81.

Feb 12, p. 135.
always in conversation." Her properest name indeed was "City of Conversation,"
What did people talk about? Washington and almost nothing else. Here, unlike
the rest of America, men were "solidly, vividly present" as part of civilization
outside "the market"; women gained more than they lost by being only
part instead of "all of society." Yet despite her differences, James felt
Washington to be the embodiment of the American spirit. 10

Not all European comments were entirely laudatory. H. G. Wells, seeking
to understand "the future in America," labelled the City of Conversation
"anti-climax," a place not wholly "alive to present and future things." 11 An
anonymous "English Visitor" observed that Washington, the chief "Legislative
foundry" of the United States and the headquarters of scientific research, had
a very limited, albeit delightful, society. Besides the diplomatic corps,
members of the Cabinet and the high-ranking military, the only people that
counted were "distinguished scientists in government service," Supreme Court
justices, a handful of senators and congressmen, a "few dozen old residential
families" and a small selection of the recently arrived nouveaux riches. In
short, the fabric of society resembled a small piece of "exquisite embroidery
overweighted by a fringe that is neither small nor exquisite."

The fringe in question is composed of the negroes, who form a third of the
population, the shopkeepers and retail traders, the clerks in the govern­
ment offices, about nine-tenths of the congressmen and their families and
friends, about two-thirds of the Senators, including their wives and
daughters, and of course the entire army of trippers. 12

10 Henry James, "Washington, I" North American Review, CLXXII, May 06,
pp. 662-68, 673-75, and "Washington, II" ibid., Jun 06, pp. 905-07 (later
published in The American Scene).

Harper's Weekly, L, 6 Oct 06, 1420.

May 11, p. 9.
The exclusion of most congressmen from the ranks of "society" astonished casual visitors as much as it distressed many a naive congressional wife. Dozens of women from small towns learned to their sorrow that "while the ramparts are theirs to stroll around, the citadel itself is as securely barricaded against them as though it were the Austrian court." The Women's Congressional Club founded in 1908 probably lightened the loneliness and disappointment of some of those "social tragedies," but tea and committee meetings in the house on McPherson square were a poor substitute for the "superb" dinners given within the "innermost stronghold" manned by members of the diplomatic corps, the "Presidential set" and high-ranking Army and Navy officers.  

13 "When a young girl comes out," Maud Pauncefote noted with amusement, "she is called a Bud." But buds sprung from congressional stock were rare in the extreme, and the cost of raising one in a Washington hothouse forbade families not to the manor born from attempting it.  

14 Because the constant exodus of presentable young men reduced the number of bachelors available as dancing partners, buds were denied the pleasures of the frequent balls which once upon a time had helped make Washington "one of the most marrying places of the whole continent."  

15 Instead, the fashionable "debutante slouch" made itself known at formal afternoon teas. But horseback rides and drives, golf and tennis parties at the country clubs and, during the  

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14 See notes 1 and 8; Times, 13 Oct 07.  
15 See note 8 and above ch II.
winter, the succession of brilliant dinners and evening receptions kept the
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social
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full
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people
recognized
as
part
of
high
society.

Mrs.
Taft
wrote
that
during
her
husband's
term
as
Secretary
of
War
they
dined
out
or
temselves
gave
dinner
parties
virtually
every
evening,
week
in
and
week
out,
from
December
to
April.

One
high-ranking
official
remarked
mournfully
that,
as
the
rules
of
precedence
tightened,
he
found
himself
the
dinner
partner
of
the
same
woman
thirty
times
over
in
a
single
season;
protocol,
the
new
word
for
etiquette,
manifestly
had
its
drawbacks
for
more
persons
than
wives
of
little-known
congressmen.

If
the
"strenuous
life"
President
Roosevelt
advocated
reached
its
high
point
for
Washington
society
and
preparations
for
the
marriage
of
"Princess
Alice"
to
Speaker
of
the
House
Nicholas
Longworth,
between
1901
and
1913
the
character
of
official
entertaining
changed
very
little.

But
dinner
parties
given
by
the
"smart
set"
on
Sundays
seemed
a
far
cry
from
the
hymn-singing
Sunday
evenings
at
the
White
House
in
McKinley's
time.16

A
heavy
sleet
and
snow
storm
during
the
night
of
March
3,
1909
which
held
up
trains
filled
with
guests
and
made
Washington's
streets
all
but
impassible
bereft
President
Taft's
inauguration
of
much
of
its
planned
splendor
and
heightened
the
eagerness
of
citizens
four
years
later
to
stage
a
particu-
larly
elaborate
inaugural
celebration.

But,
to
the
consternation
of
local
promoters
and
many
a
Democrat,
President-elect
Wilson,
having
concluded
that
inaugurations
were
being
commercialized,
refused
to
allow
an
inaugural
ball.

16
Taft,
Recollections
of
Full
Years,
p.
27,
280-81,
372-73;
"Spectator,"
Outlook,
LXXV,
9
Feb
07,
p.
305-06;
A.
Maurice
Low,
"Sundays
at
the
Capital,"
Harper's
Weekly,
LVI,
13
Apr
12,
p.
9;
Post,
7
Jan
06,
9,
16,
30
Jan,
13
Feb,
27
Nov
10;
Butt,
Taft
and
Roosevelt,
p.
18,
189;
Star,
7
Jan
06;
Times,
23
Feb,
9
Mar
06.
Washingtonians and the 200,000 visitors had to content themselves with the formal ceremonies at the Capitol and with a parade which disorderly suffragettes attempted to break up. Fear for Society’s future mounted when the new President, professing lack of time for golf, declined membership in the Chevy Chase Country Club which he obviously looked upon as a hotbed of unwholesome social standards nurtured by people with more money than sense of civic obligation. For the first time since the founding of the Metropolitan Club in the 1870’s, its officers extended no invitation to the President of the United States to join that select body.\(^{17}\)

To the group that prided itself on keeping “society and trade... here divided by a gulf as broad as that which separates them on the other side of the water,”\(^{18}\) the socialistic notions and puritanism of the erudite former professor in the White House were as offensive as a background of trade itself could have been. In what his critics considered a less refined setting than Chevy Chase President Wilson played golf almost daily, but his disapproval of everything “undemocratic,” according to Mrs. Larz Anderson, close friend of the old regime, merely meant that instead of the “well-ordered dignified affairs” that had formerly taken place in the private homes of officials, under the new administration “state receptions and dinners were given in hotel parlors and dining rooms.” Fortunately perhaps wrath at Democratic lack of savoir faire was diverted when shortly after the death of old ex-Senator John Henderson, his widow smashed every bottle of his famous cellar so that the gutters of 16th

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18 Helen Nicolay, *Our Capital on the Potomac*, p. 454.
street below "Henderson Castle" ran red with vintage wines: at least remarked Mrs. Anderson, the marriages of the President's two daughters and in 1915 his own remarriage gave society plenty to talk about. And the malicious element among the President's enemies in society took an unholy satisfaction in seeing him align himself with "trade" by choosing for his second wife the widow of a Washington jeweler.

The structure of society meanwhile, irrespective of realignments of political power, had slowly altered. As early as 1904, "old residential families," while rarely outspokenly critical of the "new Washington," were nevertheless plainly discomfited by some of the changes in a city year by year becoming less their own. They appeared to be far less troubled by the fringe than by the bawdy gilt strands in the exquisite embroidery of the center. In 1905 Bishop Satterlee warned:

A new type of residents are gathering in Washington, who, while they bring wealth, magnificence and luxury to the capital of the country, are, as a rule, actuated by no sense of civic, moral or religious obligation regarding the welfare of the community, and it is a very serious question whether the material advantages that they bring are any compensation for the atmosphere of careless irresponsibility which they create.

Self-protectively the descendants of the group Mrs. Dahlgren had called the "very elite" began to draw away from much of official society and its on-hangers. High-ranking government officials without independent means themselves faced growing but unavoidable financial embarrassments over the cost of entertaining. Washington and Georgetown bluebloods, by the very fact of being old District residents and so politically unimportant, were seldom office-holders; in social matters they had freedom of choice. Exercise of that freedom gave birth to a novel social phenomenon, the "cave-dweller." The name was new; the phenomenon

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19 Isabel Anderson, Presidents and Piegs, Life in Washington, 1897-1919, pp. 167-68.
20 Star, 26 Mar 05.
21 See above ch. X, p.
was not. Perhaps indeed resentment of the brash new arrival and a sense of
superiority to the transient federal office-holder laid the ground work for
cave-dwelling as early as Jackson's day. Certainly in the sixties and early
seventies dignified old Washington and Georgetown families more notable for
their lineage and their manners than for their riches had largely disassociated
themselves from the politicians and ostentatiously wealthy newcomers. But the
breach had mended during the last quarter of the 19th century and its new
manifestation seemed to have little connection with the earlier.

Inasmuch as Washington society of the Roosevelt era had an undeniable
brilliance, more than one observer believed that lack of money to keep pace
ddictated the cave-dwellers' course. Undoubtedly in some cases that was true,
but some cave-dwellers had ample fortunes. One tart commentator declared that
W. W. Corcoran, Washington's 19th century self-made millionaire, though
descended from forebears too obscure to have entitled him to rank as a cave-
dweller, would nevertheless have followed the same non-intercourse policy had
he lived to see the society of the 20th century city. Few people agreed at
any given time about who was and who was not a cave-dweller. Some included
Boston-born-and-bred Henry Adams, and in the 1930's the Leiters and McLeans,
new to the capital in the 1890's, would claim to be part of the select group.

Yet had the voluntary withdrawal into their caves never occurred, the
 eminent old families of the District must have played a progressively shrinking

22 Henry Loomis Nelson, "The Capital of Our Democracy," Century, LIV,
May 02, p. 39; "Spectator," Outlook, LXXV, 9 Feb 07, pp. 305-06; Maria
Columbia, "Washington: Its Cave-Dwellers and Its Social Secretaries,"
Delineator, LXV, Feb 05, pp. 243-53.
part in the social life of the capital. As the international responsibilities of the United States multiplied and government functions widened, the new complexity of governmental operations began to create a compartmentalization that slowly affected social intercourse itself. Insignificant compared to the proportions that compartmentalizing would later assume, it was pronounced enough before 1917 to narrow the opening in the City of Conversation for people not intimately connected with the government. The lengthening list of high-ranking federal officials similarly tended to shrink the importance of any group not increasing its strength equally. 23 The ranks of the local aristocracy had long been dwindling in relative if not in absolute numbers. For forty-odd years sons had been leaving Washington to build careers wherever larger opportunities offered. Daughters stayed behind to marry or, by ill chance, to remain maiden ladies, but marriage itself took many young women away. A genealogical tracing of the native belles who married into the military services would, it is true, doubtless reveal a considerable group who departed but returned now and again and, upon their husbands' retirement, resumed permanent residence in Washington or Georgetown; nevertheless as army and navy wives they no longer represented deeply rooted local tradition as had their parents and grandparents or great-grandparents.

That steady drain upon the community's human resources had profound, albeit subtle, consequences, denying Washington as time went on a central core of influential families conditioned by generations of devoted service and interest in local affairs. 24

Experienced globe-trotters, captivated as they were by a pervasive charm that endured in spite of social climbing and occasional outright vulgarity, still observed in Washington a curious cultural provincialism that contrasted sharply with the catholicity of taste and many-faceted artistic talents to be found in European capitals. Henry James, whose treatment of Washington in the American Scene was unwontedly gentle, implied that her self-absorbed conversation at best touched very lightly on the creative arts. The anonymous "English Visitor" of 1911 declared that the city had "no influence over the arts and letters of the American people. The day is infinitely distant and in all probability will never come at all when every American artist, author, dramatist, and musician will turn instinctively toward Washington."  

Reporters covering the current American political and society news found Washington a happy hunting ground. The Gridiron Club dinners and skits were still gala occasions for the men privileged to attend, for as a lampooner announced one year:

This is a Cannibal Feast,
We broil with our fish, bird and beast
A guest with each course, without pang or remorse,
And the scorch will not scar in the least.

Day in and day out newspapermen's writings contributed much of the meat to the literary fare of the community, but novels, poetry, drama and essays turned out in Washington were fewer and of lesser quality than in the 1880's. After the log cabin in which Joaquim Miller "poet of the Sierras," had composed his verse was removed from Meridian Hill, no American poet worthy of the name deliberately

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26 Richard V. Oulahan, "Literary Clubland, the Gridiron Club of Washington," The Bookman, XXIII, Apr 06, p. 151.
chose to live in the capital. Henry Adams, John Hay, Theodore Roosevelt, and
Senator Henry Cabot Lodge formed a quartet of literary lights at the opening
of the 20th century, but shortly thereafter John Hay left Washington permanently,
Adams was here only intermittently, and official duties of the other two dimmed
their purely literary brilliance. Gaillard Hunt, while in the State Department,
found time to edit the letters of Margaret Bayard Smith which appeared under the
title, The First Forty Years of Washington Society, and later, while chief of
the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, he wrote a charming slim
book of social history, Life in America One Hundred Years Ago. The Literary
Society continued to hold its literary exercises and never lacked for interesting
sessions spiced by the witty and informed comments of its members and followed
by suppers no less elegant than the scalloped oyster and chicken salad that had
consoled Mme. Hegermann-Lindencrone in the 1870's. Upper class Washington and,
particularly after the Public Library began to expand, a good part also of the
fringe which the "English Visitor" had dismissed so summarily was a "book-reading
community." Yet Washington had no equivalent of the "Bloomsbury Set" or New
York's literary colony; professional writers other than journalists, scientists,
and a handful of historians bound to the capital by the demands of their work
rarely lingered long in the District. Life here was apparently too distracting. 27

Playrights avoided a city that for all her atmosphere of leisure seemed
to lack time for creative art. Although the runs of popular plays at the
National Theatre and the Lafayette Opera House, later the Belasco Theatre,
generally drew fair audiences, matinees were better attended than evening

27 Francis Weston Carruth, "Washington in Fiction," ibid., XV, Jul 02,
pp. 451-63; Paul Wilsbach, "Literary Landmarks of the National Capital," ibid,
performances. Washington was not "a theatre town," in fact less so than she had been in the sixties and seventies and eighties. Vaudeville flourished at theatres no longer able to support plays and the three or four burlesque houses did a still bigger business, doubtless because their clientele was not committed to dinners and evening receptions. Moreover, here as in other American cities, by 1910 movies, if not yet a recognized form of art, were cutting in upon every other type of public entertainment. 28

Students of painting benefitted from the classes at the Corcoran Art School and from the exhibits at the gallery, but in 1903 the public was still unaware that the Smithsonian Institution included an invisible National Gallery of Art. When fire in 1865 destroyed the two hundred-odd Indian paintings of John Mix Stanley and William Bird King which had hung in the Smithsonian's art exhibition hall, the regents had loaned the remaining paintings and prints to the Corcoran Gallery and the Library of Congress. Reclaimed thirty years later but for lack of a place not put on display, the pictures remained a secret nucleus of a national collection until 1903. That year Harriet Lane Johnston, belle and hostess of the White House in her uncle James Buchanan's day, bequeathed her collection of old masters to a National Gallery when one should come into being. A friendly law suit followed which ended with a court decree that a National Art Gallery was already in existence. "Valuable as were the paintings," wrote an officer of the National Museum in 1909, "the real gain was in the stimulus given to art as a feature of the national collections, in the example set that the government might be trusted as a custodian of art for the people." The immediate result was an offer from Charles Freer of Detroit 28

28 Star, 26 Mar 05; Times, 28 Jul 07.
to give the National Gallery his paintings, largely canvasses of American artists and notably James McNeill Whistler, and a still uncompleted collection of oriental art; two years later William T. Evans of New York similarly gave the gallery his collection of modern American paintings. When the new National Museum on the Mall opened in the spring of 1910, the central hall was hung with the nation's old and new art treasures. In the interim local citizens organized the National Society of the Fine Arts and within a year or two affiliated with the country-wide American Society of the Fine Arts. The Society's lectures and annual conventions held at the New Willard Hotel further quickened public interest. But Washingtonians were disappointed in their hopes of seeing the city become not only "the foremost art center in the western world," but also the home of a distinguished school of American painters.

Of sculpture the story was much the same, although the Capitol and the public squares contained more statuary than could be found in any other city in America. Vinnie Ream, who when still a school girl had persuaded President Lincoln to sit for her while she modelled his head, kept the studio where, after her marriage to Lt. Richard Hoxie, she had modelled the figure from which the bronze of Admiral Farragut was cast which occupies Farragut square. But most of the eminent sculptors of the period sought their inspiration and did their work elsewhere, even when, like Daniel Chester French, Gutzon Borglu,
Lorado Taft and a dozen others, they were executing commissions for pieces to adorn Washington.\textsuperscript{31}

Of all the arts, architecture had the largest scope. Fostered by the volume of building in the city and influenced by the taste emanating from the Octagon House which the American Institute of Architects rescued from demolition in 1902 and made an adjunct of its own headquarters, architecture, at once a craft, an art and a profession, supplied more native talent than appeared in other fields. While New York firms designed most of the new government buildings, the multiplication of local firms of architects testifies to the unusual degree of interest the community took in their ideas and their work. The originality of a Frank Lloyd Wright, it is true, never materialized in the churches, office buildings and expensive houses put up in these years, and dedication to the classical form for federal edifices remained unavailing, but construction was solid, proportions were usually well balanced and the ornamentation was seldom offensive even to persons who deplored the imitative character of Washington's architecture.

Music suffered in a community where, the beautiful and cultivated Mrs. Reginald De Koven averred, people cared less about symphonies than about tea. Reginald De Koven, whose successful light opera Robin Hood had won him acclaim both abroad and at home and whose lyric "Oh Promise Me" quickly became an addition at American weddings to the Lohengrin and Mendelssohn marches, had concluded soon after he and his wife moved to the mild clime of Washington that the city would support a professionally trained orchestra. In 1901 having

\textsuperscript{31} Marietta M. Andrews, \textit{My Studio Window}, \textit{Sketches of the Pageant of Washington Life}.\textsuperscript{
persuaded several wealthy citizens to underwrite the cost of six concerts, he assembled sixty qualified instrumentalists and launched a first concert in April 1902 with Paderewski as soloist. Mrs. De Koven's comment was called forth by her indignation at the coup de grace dealt the struggling new Washington Symphony Orchestra the next autumn, for scarcely had De Koven scheduled a series of Friday afternoon concerts for the 1902-1903 season than word came that the White House had chosen Friday afternoons for the official teas over which Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt would preside. Evening concerts were virtually out of the question because halls were not available at night and, equally important, society was dining out in the evening. After giving the six guaranteed performances, each well received by the critics, the orchestra disbanded in 1905.

The failure of the Washington Symphony silenced the newspapers which from time to time had hopefully talked of Washington's increasing dedication to music. In 1907 and again in 1910 and 1912 the Music Art Society of Washington attempted to revive the local symphony, only to meet with defeat in spite of several "competent" performances. Thereafter an occasional concert given by the Boston, New York Philharmonic or the Philadelphia orchestras when on tour had to fill the gap. Members and guests of the Friday Morning Music Club could listen to talented amateurs and, less frequently, to professional musicians at the club's weekly meetings, but the general public had a narrower choice: a limited selection of phonograph records, a week of opera every winter, church music, including the singing of the boys' choir at the open air services in the

close of the National Cathedral, concerts given by the amateur choral societies or by the Marine Band, overtures before curtain-rising at the National and Belasco theatres, minstrel show jazz at the vaudeville houses and the pianos at local movies.\textsuperscript{33} Even the Marine Band whose popularity had waned after John Sousa departed ceased to attract large audiences. If the range of choice in Washington was no more restricted than in most American communities, it was certainly narrower than that of other big cities.

Colored people, usually refused admission to white concerts in Washington, had fewer opportunities than whites to hear instrumental music, but Negroes to whom good music in some form was all-important set high standards for their own choral societies. Negro church music excelled anything ordinarily to be heard in white churches, and in the early years of the century white people not infrequently edged their way into evening services at Negro churches to hear the Negro choirs. In 1904 white as well as colored Washington considered the great musical event of the year the rendition of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Hiawatha, conducted in person by that gifted British Negro, and sung by the Negro choral society named for him. The Marine Band supplied the orchestra. The enthusiastic audience was bi-racial.\textsuperscript{34} Later the growing barrier between the races interfered with a repetition of that success.

Yet Washington was neither vapid nor intellectually avid. While she

\textsuperscript{33} Times, 27 Nov 15; Program of the Eighth Concert of the Rubenstein Choral Club, 1911-1912, Cuno Rudolph Ms (L.C.) and miscellaneous programs and notices of organizations such as the Motet Choral Society and the Community Singing Society, 1908-1916, in the files of the Music Div (L.C.); Elbert F. Baldwin, “An American Cathedral Close,” Outlook, LXXX, Feb 05, p. 288.

\textsuperscript{34} Notice of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society (Music Div, L.C.).
was not a well-spring of creative art and original ideas; she was a pool into which poured much of what was most vigorous in American civilization. And the stream of cultivated and learned men who came and went enriched the life of the community. As the government widened its fields of scientific investigation, every year brought more scientists into federal service in Washington. For, in spite of the continuing hold of William Graham Sumner's laissez-faire teachings upon industrial America, the scientific needs of industry itself led to new demands for answers which federal bureaus might supply. At the same time growing public concern over conservation of the nation's dwindling natural resources and over preservation of citizens' health put pressure upon governmental agencies to expand their research programs and to institute new. Thus between 1901 and 1905 alone, four new bureaus came into being in Washington—the National Bureau of Standards in 1901, the Bureau of Mines and a separate Bureau of the Census in 1902 and in 1905 the Forestry Service. The century-old Marine Hospital Service, enlarged in 1902 and again in 1908, became the Public Health Service in 1912, and in the interim units in other federal departments took on new scientific functions. The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics created in 1915 supplied the capstone of the impressive government structure.

The mere proliferation of civil servants, it is true, did not guarantee Washington intellectual vitality. Indeed the government's increasing stress upon applied rather than basic research lost to its service brilliant men who preferred disinterested cloistered search for pure knowledge to the routines of seeking answers to practical problems. In the 20th century the universities took over the fundamental research which John Quincy Adams had believed the federal government should pursue. But if no Alexander Bache, no Joseph Henry and no Simon Newcomb now represented the United States government in the ruling
circles of science, and "bureau builders" like the conservationists Gifford Pinchot, James R. Garfield and Charles D. Walcott, Secretary of the Smithsonian, voiced the doctrine that scientific investigations "on the part of the Government should be limited nearly to utilitarian purposes evidently for the general welfare," the achievements as well as the broadened reach of federal scientific activities worked as a yeast in the community. 35

The successes in applying science to urgent public problems were a stimulant. When Major Walter Reed and his associates in Cuba proved that the "Aedes Egyptae" mosquito was the carrier of the yellow fever bacillus, the work of the Army Medical School which Major Reed until his premature death in November 1902 directed from the Dispensary at Arsenal Point inspired fresh confidence in the value of government programs. The investigations begun in the 1890s under Harvey Wiley of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Chemistry not only informed the American housewife of the dangers of adulterated food stuffs and brought about passage of the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906, but heightened interest in chemical research. If very few people in the capital understood the work of the physicists at the Bureau of Standards who before 1916 were employing cathode-ray tubes and radioactive minerals, the mere presence of the bureau's scientific staff generated a kind of electric current that linked Washingtonians engaged in humdrum tasks to an exciting unknown universe. Forgetting the ridicule once heaped upon "Professor Langley's bird," during 1909 and 1910 citizens travelled by trolley across the river to Fort Myer to watch the performances of the Wright brothers heavier-than-air plane.

Great things were expected from the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics and its newly opened experimental laboratory, expectations realized during the war. 36

Doubtless no one saw any immediate utilitarian purpose in the studies of Indian culture which Major John Powell had initiated in the Bureau of American Ethnology, but the findings and the carefully ordered collections at the National Museum drew anthropologists to Washington and, in fact, laid the foundation upon which cultural anthropology in the United States built. Data feeding in from the Geological Survey and the Department of Agriculture turned the National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution into a research center in anthropology, zoology, and botany, while the reports stemming from the oceanographic explorations of the Bureau of Fisheries ship "Albatross" had perhaps as much significance for the student of evolution as for the American fishing industry. 37

Nor was scientific work in Washington confined to the government, as the publications of the Washington Academy of Sciences and of the newer Carnegie Institution of Washington show. Andrew Carnegie's gift of $10,000,000 which in 1902 launched the Carnegie Institution restored to the city an important role in the realm of pure science. Of the Institution's eleven divisions, only the Department of Geophysics, the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism and the

36 Ibid., pp. 270-277, 288-91; C. Edward Anderson, The Health of a Nation; Post, 20 Mar 04; Times, 8 Aug 11.

Department of Historical Research carried on their programs in the capital, but the contributions of the "earth scientists" caught the attention of the entire world, and the work of the historical unit, though soon curtailed in order to expand archaeological research in the Mayan region of Mexico, enabled American historians for the first time readily to locate essential archival materials.38 Explorations sponsored by the National Geographic Society, moreover, exposed Washingtonians vicariously to scientific adventure in remote parts of South America and Alaska. At the dinner celebrating the Society's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1913 seven hundred members and guests heard Professor Hiram Bingham tell of his expedition into the Inca country of the high Andes and then, crowning moment of the occasion which British Ambassador James Bryce declared had no parallel in all history, the distinguished audience watched Rear Admiral Robert Peary, "discoverer" of the North Pole, award the National Geographic Society gold medal to the Norwegian Captain Roald Amundsen for his feat in reaching the South Pole.39

Then, as now, social scientists and historical scholars were less in the public eye than the men working in the exact sciences, but the Cosmos Club provided a common meeting ground, bridging gaps between disciplines. There exchange of ideas might occur naturally between men of widely divergent intellectual interests—between, for example, the witty and dedicated pure food expert, Harvey Wiley, and the urbane and learned Herbert Putnam, Librarian of


Congress, between the elderly economist and statistician Francis Walker and the young ichthyologist Austin Clark whom the Swedish government would later decorate for his work on forms of marine life; General George Sternberg, noted bacteriologist as well as housing expert, might talk easily with George Burgess of the Bureau of Standards or with J. Franklin Jameson of the Carnegie Department of Historical Research, editor of the American Historical Review. Similarly the Library of Congress Round Table luncheons which Herbert Putnam inaugurated and presided over daily brought together eight or nine able men from sundry walks of life; eminent jurists, such as Judge Wendell P. Stafford or Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, might lunch beside the engaging "Gail" Hunt, or Charles Wolcott, energetic Secretary of the Smithsonian, or some still obscure young scholar engaged in research at the library. No university campus in America offered more varied intellectual nourishment than the "City of Conversation."

Conversation, after the German torpedoing of the "Lusitania" in May 1915, turned with slowly mounting intensity to the question of American intervention in the war in Europe. Sentiment in the capital naturally represented in some measure a cross-section of opinion throughout the country. For months "business as usual," that is, concentration upon domestic politics and the accompanying "social game," continued to be a widely accepted motto in Washington. The resignation of Secretary of State William J. Bryan in June and the appointment of Robert Lansing made a stir, but one cynic later argued that it arose not so much from hopes for a more aggressive foreign policy as from relief that the prohibitionist Bryan could no longer urge upon diplomats the virtues of grape juice. 40 While policy-makers in the State Department both before and after that

change spent anxious hours drafting notes to the Central Powers about the
rights of neutrals, the League for the Enforcement of Peace won strong support,
especially among older people in Washington. The German background of several
influential families such as the Kaufmanns, chief owners of the Evening Star,
moreover, affected attitudes. Clifford Berryman's cartoons in the spring of
1916 portrayed the mood both the Star and the isolationist Washington Post
encouraged in the city: in March the figure of "D.C." stood rake in hand amid
a litter of papers reading "Blockade Trouble," "Pursuit of Villa," "Armed Ships
Question" and "Submarine Issue," while "D.C." said: "Can't let troubles stop
my spring work"; in May while the bloody campaign on the Meuse was under
way, "D.C." armed with a fly swatter and a banner inscribed "Destroy the Fly,"
announced, "Forward March! Now's the time for a spring drive." But war
three thousand miles away ceased to be remote when it repeatedly reached out
into the mid-Atlantic. Conviction grew, particularly among the younger genera-
tion of Washingtonians, that national dignity and morality demanded taking up
arms in defense of every principle that the United States had stood for throughout
its history.

Shortly after society held its Beaux Arts ball for the relief of French
war orphans, a National Service School opened a "military endowment" at Chevy
Chase to teach women to shoot rifles. Most of the six hundred trainees enrolled
at the "Ladies Plattsburg" in April 1916 were ardent interventionists, although
they reportedly explained that they liked "to get back to nature"; and, in spite
of the prohibition against wearing jewelry, few of them saw any incongruity in
wearing heavy three-stone diamond earrings with a khaki suit that costs $10.50.\footnote{Star, 13 Mar, 16 May 16.}
\footnote{Ibid., 2, 5, 18 May 16.}
When a new law authorized the tripling of the National Guard, the commanding general of the District militia, endeavoring to underline the need of serious military preparedness, besought Washington businessmen to help maintain an effective local unit "as the ultimate safeguard of the community against disorder and of the nation against disaster." The District National Guard filled its quota, and a "Preparedness Day" parade in June drew requests from scores of organizations to take part. For the first time in history, the President of the United States himself marched on foot the entire way. Preparedness, however, was not war. Apparently a great many Washingtonians, like countless other Americans, thought military training designed chiefly to enable the United States to bring Mexican insurgents to heel. While Republican hammering away at the necessity of taking a stronger line toward the German imperial government made an impression as the presidential election drew near, the reelection of President Wilson persuaded the capital that the even tenor of her ways would continue.

In the 1920's and 1930's reminiscences of Washington before World War I usually spoke nostalgically of rare qualities of her social life which largely disappeared thereafter. "We all feel," wrote Mrs. Lars Anderson in 1920, "that the city will never be quite the same again." Like other Washingtonians, Isabel Anderson acknowledged lacks in the city, "only a few first-class restaurants or theatres, and little good art or music," but those drawbacks she deemed minor. In Washington "there was always time to smile, and one always felt like smiling."

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13 Ibid., 2d May 16.

14 Ibid., 6 Mar, 27, 28 May, 1d, 19, 21 Jun, 5 Oct 16; Anl Rpt B of TR, 1916, pp. 76-78. Negative evidence about local attitudes is stronger than positive; the paucity of newspaper comment on possible American involvement in war is at least suggestive.
Delightful social intercourse was by no means confined to the groups publishers and editors of popular magazines thought newsworthy. Notwithstanding tales to the contrary, well-established families attended church on Sunday, enjoyed simple rather than extravagant pleasures and ordinarily displayed more friendliness than unwarranted snobbery. The scramble among rich newcomers for social recognition, while annoying to cave-dwellers and at times to other old residents, was in itself proof of a social mobility appropriate to a republic.

Over the years thoughtful people often sought to explain the powerful attraction that Washington held for almost every American who lived even a brief time in the capital before the first world war. That knowledgeable Washingtonian, Helen Nicolay, daughter of President Lincoln's secretary and biographer, described "a rambling, self-satisfied community with some of the characteristics of a watering place and some of a village, and more still of a thriving county seat. Precedents and prejudices and conventions hedged it about." Other cities were as friendly and less wedded to a rigid etiquette; the natural beauty of many places was more spectacular; creative art had wider scope in other communities; the intellectual climate of the great universities was quite as kindly to scholarship and intensive research; the rewards of a business career were greater in American financial and industrial centers; in the capital the incessant jockeying for political power in national affairs was frequently disillusioning, and for anyone wanting a sense of social stability the perpetual

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16 Nicolay, Our Capital on the Potomac, p. 512.
shift in the city's dramatic personae could be disconcerting. Wherein then lay Washington's peculiar enchantment? The consensus ran that it was her infinite variety largely created by the constant inflow and outflow of people of many backgrounds and talents that gave her social life unique fascination. "In Washington," wrote Mrs. Anderson, "there is always something new under the sun." Temporary residents left with regret, and uncounted men and women who called themselves temporary residents stayed on for twenty and thirty and forty years to see changes that heightened their affection for the relatively uncomplicated "City of Conversation" they had known before the war.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL AND "SOCIAL BETTERMENT," 1901-1917

Until American involvement in the European war became inevitable in the early months of 1917, life in Washington adhered to the general pattern it had begun to assume by 1901. The prestige of the United States, enormously enhanced by the Spanish American war and her rise to the position of a world power, heightened the stature of the American capital in the eyes of European nations and shed new glamor upon the city. Washington, though growing rapidly, continued to escape many of the problems troubling other American municipalities. The tide of immigration that brought to the Land of the Free 1,300,000 aliens in 1907 alone swept north of the Potomac, leaving Washington the one important American city to face no major social adjustment in assimilating thousands of non-English-speaking peoples.

In 1910, as in 1900, she contained, to be sure, the biggest Negro population of any city on earth, but, to the relief of white residents, the proportion of colored inhabitants dropped slightly during the early years of the century. At the same time, while her non-elective local government kept her largely free of corrupt political boss rule, the meagreness of her industry spared her the afflictions of more or less open warfare between labor and capital. The Wall Street panic of 1907 and the business reversals following the outbreak of war in Europe which upset financial and commercial centers created only a ripple on the smooth surface of Washington's economy.

As the "millionaire colony" in the capital increased, the disparities in wealth, it is true, became as pronounced as in New York or Chicago.
Although the District's working classes were not subject to conditions such as Upton Sinclair described in The Jungle of Chicago's stockyards, Jacob Riis found a counterpart to Manhattan's slums in Washington's alleys. But here the misery of the abjectly poor was tucked out of the sight of all but its victims and conscientious men and women who sought them out. "The poor ye have always with you" whether in Washington or elsewhere, and the capital seemed to most Americans the least anxiety-ridden place on the continent.

The good things of a country still at peace were hers to enjoy. When disasters like the San Francisco earthquake and fire, the Johnstown flood or the sinking of the Titanic occurred, she showed ready sympathy without losing her air of detachment. War in Europe forced difficult decisions upon the federal government. National determination to stay out of the fight preserved Washington's calm. Even the mounting tensions of 1916, with its Mexican border "incidents," its militant suffragette demonstrations and, above all, the German submarine threat to neutral shipping, failed to destroy the city's serene mode of life.

In this felicitous setting white Washington carried her civic plans.

Ideas moved slightly to the left with Theodore Roosevelt in the White House, and to the nation at large the atmosphere of the capital doubtless seemed different from that of McKinley's day: the winds no longer blew as Wall Street and powerful trusts listed. But within the local community the change was rather in tempo than in direction; the last years of the McKinley regime had already seen the charting of the city's course and except in the area of race relations deviations were minor. Growing hostility in Congress after 1909 put Washingtonians increasingly on the defensive.
forcing them to realize they must now fight for the consideration they had taken for granted for a decade. The coming of President Wilson in 1913 appeared, moreover, to irrevocably revolutionary upheavals, but the effect soon proved to be merely a quickening of the reform spirit that had stirred in the city since the late 1890's and a strengthening of the will to keep the gains of the immediate past. Just as the keynote of the early 20th century was gratification over what Washington had come to represent, so the dominant note of the last pre-war years was determination to see her fulfill the destiny her citizens envisaged for her. Complacency about their achievements, even at its peak in no way precluded recognition of shortcomings still awaiting correction, but optimism over the community's ability to resolve unanswered problems and to meet new as they arose prevailed after as well as before the altered temper of Congress multiplied difficulties. That faith in Washington's capacity to make herself the perfect model for all American municipalities spurred the efforts of public-spirited citizens, while it provided for the irresponsible and imperceptive a pleasant feeling that all was for the best in the best of all possible cities.

Physical Improvements

So far from stagnating in the pleasant warmth of finding herself the most admired and envied city in America during the early years of the 20th century, Washington made steady progress in her drive to become the most beautiful capital in the world. Indeed, success in turning some of her dreams into visible realities exceeded reasonable hopes, and the interest aroused by the proposals of the Park Commission as they became known during
1902 gave new impetus to city planning throughout the country. What a
magazine writer called "Washington's civic renaissance" could obviously not
have taken physical form without the endorsement of Congress, for not only
were large-scale improvements to federal property the very core of the plan,
but the spending of every dollar of local tax money had to receive con­
gressional approval. And horrified holders of the purse strings estimated
the cost of executing the plan in its entirety at sums ranging from
$200,000,000 to $600,000,000. Nor could local citizens, irrespective of
their talents, have commanded the prestige needed to win over Congress to
so elaborate a scheme; to persuade Washington's "city council" to consider
parts of it required the professional skills and the reputation of a Daniel
Burnham, a Charles McKim, a Frederick Law Olmstead, and an Augustus St.
Gaudens.

Yet the role of the local community was by no means negligible. The
Board of Trade, citizens' associations and influential individuals had
prodded and pleaded for years before Senator James McMillan induced his
associates on the Hill to sanction the appointment of an advisory Park
Commission; and important features of the commission's magnificent over-all
plan duplicated those long urged by Washington taxpayers. Perhaps the
widespread assumption that Washingtonians contributed nothing and merely

1 Charles Zueblin, "Washington Old and New," Chautauquan, XXXIX, Apr
Ol, pp. 156-67; Frederick Law Olmstead, "Beautifying the City," Indepen­
dent, LIV, 7 Aug 02, pp. 1870-77; H. B. Macfarland, "The Rebuilding of
the National Capital," The American City, I, Sep-Nov 09, p. 3.

2 Times, 1 Nov 07.

3 See above ch. XIII, po. ; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1902, p. 11;
reaped the benefits of other men's aesthetic concepts derived from popular magazine articles which contrasted in dramatic phrases the beautiful city soon to emerge under the Park Commission's guidance with the dreary community in which the natives had supposedly been content to live until, in spite of themselves, Boss Shepherd briefly shook open their pocketbooks.  

In submitting its report in January 1902, the Park Commission made no request for appropriations. The function of its experts as they themselves interpreted it was to prepare "a well-considered general plan covering the entire District of Columbia," with the object of securing a "harmonious and consistent building up" of the city. As Congress provided for new buildings and parks, it would have a blueprint to follow instead of letting the former "piecemeal, haphazard and unsatisfactory methods" prevail. Consistency in sticking to a plan was more important, Frederick Olmstead insisted, than the adoption of any particular plan. L'Enfant's original plan, restored where obliterated or mangled by past makeshifts, served as the basis of the commission's proposal, although some adaptations and considerable enlargement of the 1791 layout were necessary for the 20th century city.

Since an unobstructed Mall, the "government gardens" stretching from the Capitol to the Potomac, was a vital element in L'Enfant's scheme, the park commissioners had early realized that they must either abandon the

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5 S Rpt 166, 57C, 15, 15 Jan 02, Fer 4259; Olmstead, "Beautifying a City," Independent, LIV, Aug 02, p. 1870.
Frenchman's plan or persuade the Pennsylvania railroad to remove its tracks, train sheds and the heavy-towered stone depot from the Mall. As the law passed in February 1901 authorized the Pennsylvania railroad to enlarge its holdings there and to erect a huge new station at 6th street, the task of inducing the corporation to relinquish its title to that valuable land promised to be difficult if not impossible. In August 1901 Daniel Burnham, at the end of a Park Commission tour of European cities, sought out Alexander Cassatt, president of the railroad, in London. Unexpectedly Cassatt volunteered to withdraw from the Mall and to collaborate in building a Union station, provided that compensation be made for the cost of the change and that proper approaches be ensured "worthy of the building the railroads propose to erect." For this right-about-face, so one story runs, Mary Cassatt was responsible; the gifted painter convinced her brother that he must not stand in the way of an artistic movement in America. A few months later Senator McMillan's explanation stated: "The acquisition of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company of a controlling interest in the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad makes it possible at this time to secure such a modification of the project of last year as will, when carried out, give a complete, adequate, and monumental treatment of the railroad terminals in Washington." The design of the Union station was to make it "in reality


7 S Rpt 962, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., 3 Apr 02, Ser. 1265; see also S Doc 220, 57th Cong., 2nd Sess., 4430, a compilation of all canal and railroad legislation for the District, 1800-1903.
the great and impressive vestibule to Washington." Its building and the subsequent removal of the tracks and depot from the Mall were the first fruits of the Park Commission's labors.

Neither Congress nor the local public greeted all the recommendations of the commission with undiluted enthusiasm. The scope of the over-all plan made it seem visionary, and even with its execution spread out over decades the costliness gave more than one congressman gooseflesh. Objections also arose to particular proposals—to moving the Botanical Garden from the foot of Capitol Hill where the greenhouses had stood for sixty-odd years or to locating new federal office buildings in Lafayette Square and south of the Smithsonian Institution instead of placing them in the triangle formed by Pennsylvania Avenue and the old canal bed north of the Mall.

When the Commission placed on exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery of Art plaster models of the future city westward from the Library of Congress, residents of East Washington had reason to fear they were again to be slighted, although the commission report included a scheme for a parkway running from Soldiers Home to the Washington Asylum on the Anacostia, use of the upper reaches of that stream for a "water park" like Belle Isle in Detroit, and eventually treatment of the river front below like the quays of the Seine with a boulevard along the top and stone wharfage at the water's edge. Georgetown similarly received scant attention in the plan. It called for no significant improvements west of Rock Creek except for a narrow ribbon

8 See n. 6.
of parkway linking Potomac and Rock Creek parks. Congress, perhaps fortunately in view of its initial shock, had no occasion to reject or accept the plan as a whole; the House did not discuss it at all and the Senate merely implied tacit approval by ordering two hundred copies of the commission report. But it exercised "great moral force." When the time came to vote money for new buildings or new bridges or other badly needed public works, a majority of members of Congress found themselves converted to the principle if not to the details of the Park Commission's plan.

Other than purchasing the land for the Union station on Massachusetts avenue and voting to pay the railroads the compensation promised in 1901 for the elimination of grade crossings within the city, the first congressional measures relating to the commission plan authorized new government buildings rather than additional parks. As the railroads began the erection of the elaborate new station and launched upon tunneling under the Hill to carry the tracks underground across government property, work started on the long awaited District building at 14th street on the former site of the Capital Traction Company powerhouse, offices for the House of Representatives and the Senate on the Hill, a new building for the Department of Agriculture and a new National Museum flanking the Mall on the south and north respectively, and an imposing home on Arsenal Point for the recently


organized War College. These buildings immediately added to the city's aura of dignity, and after the clearing of the Mall of the railroad tracks and depot in 1909 and the grading and planting of the plaza in front of the new Union Station, Washington began to bear much of the aspect she would have for the next 20 years. On Mt. Vernon place stood the District Public Library built with money given by Andrew Carnegie and opened in 1903. The spring of 1910 saw the completion of Continental Hall erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution and adjacent, located above the Mall near the Washington Monument, the Hall of the American Republics, in its architecture a skillful blend of Spanish and French renaissance styles. The new city Post Office on the station plaza, the "Marble Palace", headquarters of the American National Red Cross, rising alongside the Corcoran Gallery, and nearby a new building for the Navy Department furthered the city's air of stateliness.

Although critics later complained about the inappropriateness of the classical architecture executed in white marble and pale gray granite, the general uniformity of design found wider favor than the late 19th century variations to be seen in the State Department building, the Gothic Post Office on Pennsylvania avenue and the ornate Italian Renaissance Library of Congress. As the Lincoln Memorial began to take form beyond the Washington Monument, the least imaginative person could envisage the future grandeur of the sweep of the Mall from the Capitol to the Potomac. Citizens who agreed with the Star that "esthetics are business in Washington" were

12 Rec, 573, 18, 25 Feb 02, pp. 2618-61, 28 Feb 03, p. 2730; Comrs Rpt, 1903, p. 11, Jan 1651; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1902, p. 56, 1905, p. 63, 1907, p. 84, 1909, p. 30.
disappointed at the slowing of progress on the Park Commission plan after 1911. Until the Lincoln Memorial was completed in 1922 and the less monumental Federal Triangle became a landmark in the 1930s, the city would lack architectural features later generations regard as part and parcel of the national capital. But the concept of Washington as a place where harmony between buildings and space must obtain had taken deep root before World War I.

That harmony was in no small degree ensured by the creation of a permanent Fine Arts Commission in 1910 to advise Congress "upon subjects within the domain of the fine arts." The distinguished architects, sculptors, painters and landscape architects composing the commission had no final authority, but their recommendations carried weight; they determined the site and design for the Lincoln Memorial in the face of vigorously pressed counter proposals. But the commission was threatened with a disastrous defeat in 1916 at the hands of Treasury officials.

Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo insisted that economy dictated placing a new government power and heating plant at the head of the Washington channel near the Bureau of Engraving where, the Fine Arts Commission contended, four huge smoke stacks cutting the sky line would not only mar the view of

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the city when approached from the south but compete with the Washington Monument and the Capitol seen from any angle. A citizens' committee joined in the protest, but Congress remained unconvinced and excavation began.

In the end it was the chairman of the citizens' committee, Glenn Brown of the American Institute of Architects, who saved the day. When he saw engineers sending up from the power plant foundations a balloon to mark the height to which the smoke stacks would rise, he hastily got a photographer to make pictures showing the balloon slicing across the shaft of the Monument and blotting out part of the Capitol dome. Prints sent to every member of Congress and published in a special article in the National Geographic Magazine failed to halt the work, but Brown seized upon an opportunity to dramatize the consequences to the public. He engaged a sign maker to paint two sandwich boards based on a cartoon from Clifford Berryman's pen in the one board depicted the 18th century plan of the city under the caption "The Past--A Heritage from Washington"; the second, marked "The Present--McAdoo's Smoke Stacks," portrayed the city on the completion of the new power plant. Dressed in a long white robe, bare feet in sandals and his face covered by a black mask, Brown wore the sandwich boards to a great Beaux Arts ball given at the New Willard Hotel to raise money for the children of French artists who had lost their lives in the war against Germany. The only person with masked face, he aroused immediate attention as he walked back and forth, saying no word but letting everyone study the contrasting pictures. Overnight McAdoo became a laughing stock. Congress agreed to the Fine Arts plan of enlarging the existing power plant on low-lying land to the south of the Capitol, and "The Heritage of Washington" was saved.15

15 Brown, Memories, pp. 301-03; An Appeal to the Enlightened Sentiment of the People of the United States for the Safeguarding of the Future Development of the Capital of the Nation, March 1916.
Meanwhile replacement of the historic Long bridge over the Potomac with a new steel trestle "highway" bridge a quarter-mile upstream contributed to the city's convenience without enhancing her architectural beauty. In 1908, however, the new "Lion" bridge with its placid-looking stone creatures crouching at the Connecticut avenue approaches to the spans over Rock Creek valley displayed the decorative possibilities of handsome structures; at the same time the solidly rebuilt but unembellished bridge over the Anacostia above the Navy Yard perhaps further convinced Congress that future highway appropriations must allow for aesthetics as well as utility. The Park Commission plan included a memorial bridge as an extension of the Mall to Arlington Cemetery, but although members of the Grand Army of the Republic laid a cornerstone for the bridge in May 1902 in endeavor to inspire congressional action, not until 1913 did Congress appoint a special commission to choose a site and a design, and not until the mid-1920's would work begin. Nevertheless the District saw the completion of a half-dozen handsome bridges before the end of 1916. Several of them involved extraordinary feats of engineering, notably the skillful use of concrete to encase the old water mains which carried the Pennsylvania avenue bridge over Rock creek and the graceful strength of the arches of the Q street bridge guarded by two bronze buffaloes. And a million dollar appropriation for a Francis Scott Key bridge to replace the old aqueduct bridge promised vastly to improve the looks of the Potomac river front at Georgetown. 16

New construction alone would have only partially altered the city's appearance. Quite as important was the landscaping of the areas adjoining the new buildings and the approaches to some of the bridges. As grass and flower beds began to cover the public grounds, gratified citizens lent support to a campaign to demolish the billboards that had long enclosed most vacant lots. With the acquisition of land for new parks and boulevards, the installation of fountains in several commanding places and the erection of marble and bronze statues at avenue intersections, the national capital, though still unkempt and unfinished-looking in many sections, stirred the pride of all Americans. As a safeguard against future obstructions, in 1910 Congress passed a Height of Buildings act which empowered the District commissioners thereafter to restrict the height of private buildings lest skyscrapers overshadow the streets and dwarf public buildings. At the same time the restraints imposed by the Fine Arts Commission met with warm public approval, for if no one had taken exception to the undistinguished bronze of Alexander Shepherd erected in front of the District building or to the towering Daniel Webster on his huge granite pedestal at Scott circle, the Board of Trade remarked that the city would benefit from the exercise of "a more critical judgment than has heretofore prevailed in the selection of models for statues, fountains and monuments in the public space."

squares, streets and parks of the District.\

Probably the development of most universal interest was inaugurated by Mrs. William Howard Taft when she chose to use the Japanese cherry trees, presented to her by the Mayor of Tokyo, to ring the tidal basin beyond the Washington monument. She planted the first tree with her own hands and, despite the disheartening discovery that several hundred trees were diseased and must be replaced with healthy stock, she later supervised the public gardener's planting of each new shipment. Washington thus owes her famed cherry trees to Mrs. William Howard Taft. Public delight in the beauty of the Tidal Basin undoubtedly inspired fresh attention to planting flowering trees and shrubs and laying out flower beds in suitable spots throughout the city.\n
The "Social Betterment" Movement

Yet as money poured out to adorn the public domain, uneasiness stirred among citizens who saw signs of a disturbing one-sidedness in the program for Washington—spacious parks and imposing buildings in some sections of the city, in others slums hidden away in alleys; emphasis upon beautifying public property, disregard of the rest. As early as 1904 gerry-built row-houses had begun to turn some of Washington's main suburbs into tenement sections, threatening rapid deterioration in adjoining neighborhoods. By 1906 the alley dwellings in the heart of the city were receiving almost as much publicity in national journals as was the Park Commission

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18 Times, 19 Aug 07, 21 Jan 09, 16 Mar 11; Star, 2 May 09; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1910, p. 61.

19 Post, 20 Jan 13; ltr, Helen Taft Manning to the author, 4 Dec
plan. The lack of playgrounds in Washington's poorer sections and the ramshackle condition of schoolhouses contrasted sharply with the landscaped grounds and architectural elegance of new federal buildings. Appropriations of $600,000 for new parks in northwest Washington and $275,000 for the bridge at Q street seemed out of all proportion to the $100,000 for reclamation of the malarial swamps near the mouth of the Anacostia and the $75,000 for demolition of the shanties in the "notorious Willow Tree Alley" and its conversion to a playground. Speakers at the national conferences on city planning held in Washington in 1909 and 1910 pointed out that city planners everywhere, captured by "a superficial quest for beauty," had tended to pay too little attention to overcrowding of vital residential areas; thus a community "from a social and hygienic standpoint" might continue to be undesirable "though outwardly it may be 'the city beautiful.'" 20

The completion of the pumping station and sewage disposal plant, the water filtration system and enlargement of the District water supply by 1907 relieved the District budget of the heaviest demands upon it and seemingly left funds available for playgrounds, roomy fireproof school buildings and a concentrated attack upon the great blight of the capital, the alley dwellings. But powerful members of Congress, having permitted the District to finance its costly public works by deficit spending,
insisted that taxes must go first of all toward reducing the funded debt and next to repaying with interest the sums advanced from the United States Treasury for sewers and the water supply. Even so, had Congress seen fit to authorize the expenditure, local taxes could have provided for the gradual redemption of the alleys and for decent housing and more open space in the most wretched areas of the city. Leaders in the community, though unwilling to have the District bear the entire cost, had long felt strongly about the necessity of action. The two laws of 1892 had prevented the building of additional shanties in the alleys, but neither law had restored the authority exercised by the Board of Health under the territorial government to condemn and raze unsanitary tenements. Yet if Washington was to become the magnificent capital she aspired to being, she must redeem her slums, a task which civic-minded people now saw could not be achieved simply by the moral regeneration of alley dwellers.

For gradually public-spirited Washingtonians were perceiving the narrowness of their earlier views of philanthropy in the battle against pauperism. The reorganization of the Associated Charities in 1896 had started the process of changing the focus, and in the next dozen years the philosophy dominant in the eighties and early nineties shifted considerably. Reduced to its simplest terms the change lay in a growing

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acceptance of the idea that environment might be as important as inherited character in making good citizens and thus a good city. If "moral uplift" alone could not win the fight against the degradation of poverty, the campaign must broaden to include provision for decent living conditions and wider economic opportunity for the city's poor. The "social betterment leaders," as the language of the day called them, continued to rely heavily upon education and persuasion to evoke cooperation, but they early realized that new legislation was also essential to the success of their enlarged program.

Among the leaders in this movement a half dozen stand out as men of exceptional vision and tireless vigor. Perhaps John Joy Edson supplies the best single example. Except for his searching eyes peering through rimless pince-nez, nothing in his kindly undistinguished face, partly hidden by untrimmed mustachios, suggested the extraordinary force of his personality; he looked more like a small-town businessman than the powerful big city banker and the deeply religious, selfless social reformer that he in fact was. He repeatedly refused appointment as a District commissioner and rather kept his light under a bushel, but for more than three decades he played an important part in formulating every significant civic project in Washington, for twenty years shouldered the thankless task of heading the District Board of Charities, and in the realm of penal reform blazed a new trail. The contributions of Dr. George Kober of the Georgetown medical faculty were equally valuable and through his published articles better known outside Washington than Edson's. Kober was at once a scientist, a gifted teacher and a philanthropist who initially devoted himself to sanitation and housing problems. Years of serving on the Board
of Charities widened the range of his interests until upon his seventieth birthday in 1920 grateful fellow citizens would acclaim him one of Washington's chief benefactors. Closely associated with him in the campaign against the alley slums was Ex-Surgeon General George Sternberg. Sternberg, with his military bearing and the prestige of his rank, carried enormous weight in the community and early became the city's foremost authority on sanitary housing.

Washington also owed much to three successive secretaries of the Associated Charities. George Wilson more than any other one men had given new direction to its work in the late 1890's, and his informed humane ideas continued to have great influence when he became the first secretary of the Board of Charities, that official body created by act of Congress to watch over relations between public and private philanthropies. The other two men were newcomers to Washington in the first decade of the century. Without Charles Weller the city's social betterment movement would probably have progressed relatively slowly. In 1900 he had behind him five years' work with Chicago's Associated Charities. Still a man under thirty, he saw with fresh eyes, his insights, sharpened by his professional experience in Chicago and his youthful confidence that once Washingtonians fully comprehended the dimensions of the local problem they would find solutions, gave him peculiar persuasiveness. In his eight years of directing the Associated Charities, he trained hundreds of volunteers and taught a large segment of upper-class Washington

the meaning of enlightened social service. Under his inspiration the Monday Evening Club became a vital force in the community. Originated in 1898 to enable professional social workers to become acquainted, the club expanded to include laymen closely connected with local charities and by 1908 was turning into "an educational lyceum" on Washington's civic needs. Under the guidance of Walter Ufford, Weller's successor at the Associated Charities, the members of the Monday Evening Club formed virtually "a standing conference" on charities and corrections. Ufford had begun his career as an ordained Congregational minister before he took a Ph.D. degree in sociology at Columbia and undertook settlement work in New York. In 1908 when Weller's cloak descended upon him, he was a gentle, soft-looking man of forty-nine whose unimpressive appearance belied his gifts and his vitality. Like Weller before him, he gave more than one well-intentioned Washingtonian a new concept of social work and philanthropy.

Long established residents and newer arrivals alike, loath to let plans for the city beautiful exclude social needs, set themselves to right the balance. In 1902, while attempting to persuade Congress of the urgency of the alley problem, fifty prominent Washingtonians acting on Charles Weller's suggestion had organized a Committee on the Improvement of Housing Conditions. Headed by men of the stature of Sternberg, Kober, Episcopal Bishop Henry T. Satterlee and S. W. Woodward, president of the

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25 Survey, XXIV, 7 May 10, pp. 197-98.
Washington YNCA, the committee had sponsored lectures, distributed circulars and prepared notices for the press and for the local churches. Weller had inaugurated the use of visual aids in presenting the data to Washingtonians: a series of stereoptican slides showing existing conditions. The committee's most effective method of publicizing the facts to the rest of the country had followed upon an invitation to Jacob Riis of New York to investigate Washington's alleys and describe what he found. Riis, widely known for his book *How the Other Half Lives*, had testified before a special joint session of the House and Senate District committees that Negro alley dwellers in the national capital lived under worse conditions and "one-room families" were more numerous than in the grimmest slums of New York City. President Roosevelt had driven the meaning of that statement home when his message to Congress in 1904 pointed out that the death rate in Washington's one-room tenements averaged twice that in two-room, four times that in three-room, and eight times that in four-room tenements. The combined pressure of Riis' findings, the President's appeal and the demands for remedial action pouring in upon Congress from constituents had promised to bring into being the congressional legislation for which Washingtonians had begged in vain for more than a decade.

In the expectation that a new law would soon empower the District commissioners to demolish alley dwellings, in 1904 Dr. Sternberg and Dr. Kober had launched a second housing company patterned on the then seven-year-

26 Post, 11 Apr 02; Anl Rpt B of Tr., 1902, p. 33; A.C. Rpts, 1902, pp. 5, 9, 15, 1903, pp. 18, 32, 1905, p. 14.

old Sanitary Improvement Company but with a 1% instead of a 5 percent limit on dividends in order to have inexpensive housing available to the families that would be rooted out of the alley slums. Certainly no critic could truthfully say that Washington had not tried to help herself.

In 1906 after several disheartening delays Congress did create a board vested with authority to condemn unsanitary buildings. Within a year 203 alley houses were razed and 53 more repaired while the District commissioners, inspired to make the most of their powers, ordered the opening up of twelve narrow alleys. Unfortunately early in 1907 the Supreme Court ruled the provision of the 1892 alley-opening act unconstitutional in requiring property-owners in the square involved and in the four abutting squares to meet the cost of damages and expenses unless a jury found the benefits accruing equal to the costs assessed. In consequence all attempts to convert the alleyways into streets came to a halt and, in spite of the President's appointment of a Homes Commission, the campaign to wipe out alley dwelling also slackened. The Sanitary Housing Company was unable to attract more than driblets of capital with only a 1% percent return and a sense of public service as bait; the job was too big for private enterprise to handle alone. Unless public funds supplied money to build hundreds of cheap houses, the eviction of families from the alley shanties might only mean doubling up in tenements on the streets. But large-scale federal or even a District house-building program was more than Congress could contemplate, particularly members from rural communities and primarily agricultural

28 H.Rpt 2448, 58C, 25, 1st Apr 04, Ser No 1583.

29 U.S. Stat., 59C, 18, 1 May 06, Ch. 2073, pp. 157-161.
states. Accordingly the recently created Board of Condemnations ceased to condemn any but the most flagrantly unsanitary buildings.30

The report of the President's Homes Commission when published in 1908, while producing no tangible results, was not without significance. Although Congress refused to spend federal money or District taxes on slum clearance, and although the commission's specific proposals, pointing as they did to the futility of small-scale individual efforts, discouraged private citizens, the analysis in the report of the causal relationship between low wages and the miseries of alley dwellers helped to destroy lingering illusions that pauperism was due solely to the moral weaknesses of its victims and could be cured by moral uplift.31 Nor did the commission accept entirely the validity of the Associated Charities' thesis that moving people out of the hidden alleys into the open light of the streets would effect a remedy.32 For the recommendations of the commission indicated its awareness that fundamental faults in the economic and social structure of the community contributed to the ills of which alley dwelling was only a symptom.

The diverse backgrounds of the commission's fifteen members makes their report the more remarkable. All served without compensation. No member was a trained social worker and only General Sternberg and Dr. Kober qualified as professional housing experts. S. W. Woodward, philanthropist,

30 Comrs Rpt, 1906, p. 7; Aul Rpt E of Tr, 1907, p. 53; Bicknell, The Inhabited Alleys, pp. 8, 11-12.
31 George M. Kober, "Report of Committee on Social Betterment," Reports of the President's Homes Commission, pp. 3-9.
32 Weller, "Neglected Neighbors," pp. 761-94. See also Comrs Rpt, 1906, p. 29; Times, 3 Jan 08.
tight-laced Puritan and successful merchant, must have viewed some problems from a very different standpoint from that of the former cigar maker or the livery stable man on the commission, just as attorney Frederick L. Siddons, confirmed single taxer; doubtless differed at times with the Negro real estate broker; the ideas of George W. Cook, Negro dean of Howard University, may have troubled some of his associates; the two women members, Miss Mabel T. Boardman and Mrs. Thomas Gaff, both decidedly of the city's wealthy social elite, might have been expected to think wage rates and salary scales not questions with which a Homes Commission or any non-employer group should deal. Perhaps every member had studied an article in the Bureau of Labor Bulletin which traced statistically the links between dependency and destitution in Washington and unemployment or annual wages of less than $600. If divergent points of view initially handicapped the commission, the common concern to locate the "causing cause" and suggest feasible remedies for the wretchedness of thousands of Washington families resulted in a report that showed deeper insight than other civic bodies had theretofore achieved.

Some of the proposals of the Homes Commission called for legislation—partial public financing for opening alleys and establishing playgrounds, government loans at low interest to enable "business philanthropy," like the Sanitary Housing Company, to build low-rental houses, an anti-usury law, a District Bureau of Labor, workmen's accident insurance, provision for more vocational training in the public school system and better pay for

33 U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Labor, Charity Relief and Wage Earnings (prepared by Samuel E. Forman), 1908, pp. 876-922.
government employees, including not only the unskilled but also the clerical force whose salary scale had remained unchanged since 1853. But in an appeal to community conscience and enlightened self-interest the commission also urged private employers to raise wages in order to ensure a minimum standard of living below which no family, irrespective of its morals or its wage-earners' skills, need have to exist. The one basic problem which the commission ignored was the effect of race prejudice upon the ability of nearly a third of the city's population to help itself.34

Unfortunately the report stirred up little discussion, and after 1908 lassitude overtook the movement for reform through legislation. Optimists persuaded themselves that past accomplishments, if not permitted to lapse, were sufficient to meet the needs of the immediate future.35 Those accomplishments were in fact impressive. Congress yielding to community pressure had created a juvenile court, appointed a Prison Commission to study penal reform, passed a "non-support" act compelling fathers to contribute to the support of their children, enacted school attendance and child labor laws, established an Industrial Home School for Colored Children, replaced the almshouse with a new Home for the Aged and Infirm, opened a model tuberculosis hospital and appropriated several small sums for public playgrounds.36

34 See n. 27; ptm, U.S. and D.C. employees to the President, 19 Dec 16, Folder 326, File 84½, Series VI, W. Wilson mss (L.C.).


At the same time groups of private citizens had not waited for Congress to act; they had opened playgrounds and arranged summer outings with money raised by subscription; the Board of Trade had organized a free legal aid service; the Associated Charities staff had served as employment agents, and voluntary gifts had increased the charity fund fifteenfold within a few years. Perhaps still more noteworthy, Negroes had started the educational campaign against tuberculosis, an organized Alley Improvement Association, founded a Children's Temporary Home and with white cooperation maintained a colored settlement house. But the dedicated zeal that had made that record possible faded as citizens concluded they could no longer look for help from official Washington. When President Taft succeeded Theodore Roosevelt, the White House ceased to provide initiative. District commissioners Henry MacFarland and Henry West resigned and were replaced by men of narrower outlook and less executive vigor. Otho Rudolph, a well-to-do hardware merchant, had served as president of the Associated Charities and won the title "Father of Washington's Playgrounds," but he was an inexperienced administrator and only less conservative than the retired army general, John A. Johnston, whom Taft appointed as the second civilian commissioner. The turnover in Congress, moreover, occasioned by the elections in 1910 gave control of the District committees to men more concerned with attacking real estate speculators and the utility interests in Washington


38 A C Rpts, 1902, pp. 8, 10, 1903, p. 23; Bicknell, The Inhabited Alleys, pp. 21-25; Bee, See below, pp.
than with helping her poor.39

For the District of Columbia the one forward-looking measure passed during an administration determined to check the spread of socialism in America and all that dread term implied was the endorsement of most of the recommendations of the Penal Commission of 1908 and the appropriation of funds to carry them out. The innovations proposed and accepted were primarily the fruit of the humane and courageous thinking of John Joy Edson, the commission chairman.40 Not content with spelling out the obvious need for a parole system and suspended sentences and for an expanded physical plant to relieve the shocking overcrowding at the workhouse and jail, Edson and his associates boldly advocated a totally new method of handling first offenders and minor misdemeanants: help them to rehabilitate themselves under watchful but unrestrictive supervision, instead of locking them up with hardened criminals in the penitentiary or with "the mass of derelicts" at the Asylum workhouse.41 Because the ladies of the Mt. Vernon Association objected to having a penal institution of any kind at Belvoir, Virginia, adjacent to a national shrine, in 1912 Congress transferred to the War Department the Belvoir site purchased in 1910 for the reformatory for the "more hopeful" class of adult offenders; the change of location to Lorton, Virginia, consequently delayed the opening of the new reformatory until November 1916. For different reasons the wanted legislation authorizing

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40 Interview, Louis Brownlow, 6 Mar 59.

41 Comrs Rpt, 1909, p. 28, Ser 5809; Times, 9, 15 Jun 07.
Indeterminate sentences and parole had to wait till the 1920's. But the opening of the new workhouse at Occoquan, Virginia, in 1911 initiated a revolution in penal administration, for here was a large institution without bars, bolts or other means of physical restraint, night or day. The inmates worked on the farm or at the brick kilns which by 1914 were supplying all the brick for the District Government's building and repair work. Officials from every section of the United States and from Europe visited Occoquan to observe the astonishing success of a system that combined minimum custody with wholesome outdoor employment.

While the pace of the civic uplift movement slowed after 1908 it did not grind to a halt, and though Washington progressives marked time in pushing for further legislation, they joined with more conservative citizens in pursuing a public health program through education. Because of the effect upon Washington's reputation in the rest of the nation, the cleanliness of the city, like a lowered death rate, was as important to business promoters as to social workers. When a "clean-up week" sponsored chiefly by the Evening Star resulted in the collection of thirty-three wagon loads of rubbish from a single block, a "clean city" committee set itself to teach thoughtless citizens the principles of sanitation and good health.

The District Health office, undermanned and starved for funds though it was, went to work with vigor and imagination. The District was declared clean in 1912, and the next year a new 40-room hospital was opened.

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struggled faithfully to better sanitary conditions, and by 1912 the Board for the Condemnation of Insanitary Buildings, even while grumbling that "a school of good housekeeping" was the chief need of alley dwellers, had ordered the demolition of over 1500 buildings in the city. Meanwhile, philanthropy, moved by the plight of aged people, provided some seven new homes, chiefly under denominational auspices. Private contributions of time and money continued to flow also into the city's medical and children's charities. And, contrary to all logic during these years of congressional reluctance to vote appropriations for adequate public health and building inspection, for additional officers to enforce compulsory school attendance or for staff for the Board of Children's Guardians, Congress continued to grant generous subsidies to private hospitals.

Out of this curious situation grew a struggle that for several years absorbed much of the energies of civic-minded Washingtonians and focused their attention on administrative procedures. The fight lay between boards of directors of private charities and the Board of Charities, that public body created to prevent overlapping services and inefficiencies in public and private charities and to provide for needy people whom private institutions did not reach. The five-man Board of Charities felt strongly that public money should go only to public institutions; private resources could and would meet the challenge and support private philanthropies adequately. But socially important Washingtonians resented that plan as

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belittling of their own pet charities. Consequently the Board's arguments urging the economies of building a general municipal hospital financed by public funds and administered by public officials met with fierce resistance. The sanctity of custom and the prestige of its defenders defeated a recommendation of 1909 when the Board, itself composed of such influential men as John Joy Edison and Dr. George Kober, proposed closing Emergency Hospital and denying the public Columbia Hospital $300,000 for a new building, since both institutions tended to spend their government monies on better care for pay patients instead of enlarging service to the poor for whose benefit the grants were intended. The proponents of subsidized private charities, it is true, could point to the shortcomings of more than one public institution. For example, parsimonious appropriations for the new almshouse, renamed the Home for the Aged and Infirm, had forced economies in construction and a prison-like sparseness of furnishings and facilities--neither screened porches, assembly rooms, chapel, diet kitchen nor private rooms for the desperately ill or dying; by 1910 the meagre funds allowed for running the home with its 130 inmates in need of 24-hour care kept the staff to thirteen attendants. The provision for the education of colored children in the new Industrial Home School was equally thin. They got some training in domestic work, gardening, farming and good habits, but no

16 Post, 5 Mar 07; Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1907, p. 87; Coverts Rpts, 1902, p. 299, 1915, p. 39; Rpt B of Che 1907, p. 7; George S. Wilson, Supervision of Private Charities, p. 1; Star, 1 Feb 12; "Municipal Hospital for the Capital City," Survey, 16 Mar 12, pp. 1924-25; 3 Dec 207, 697, 25, 14 Feb 27, pp. 12, 15-16, 22, 109-110, 116-17, 166-68, Ser 8702; Walter C. Clephane, Public and Private Hospitals and Charities in the District of Columbia, included in Anl Rpt B of Tr, 1912.

17 Times, 22 Sep 07; D. C. Village, Fifty Years at Blue Plains, 1906-56.
industrial or vocational schooling, and the physical plant was grossly inadequate. This public institution which supplanted the Hart Farm School after 1906 was little improvement over that older subsidized private charity. On the other hand, the tuberculosis hospital opened in 1908 showed that a carefully planned, well-run public institution could perform services no private organization could equal.

It was possibly the presidential election campaigns of 1912 that revitalized the city's interest in the substantive features of social betterment; for residents could scarcely fail to remember the vigor Theodore Roosevelt had infused into the local movement, and Woodrow Wilson's "New Freedom" promised far-reaching social as well as political changes. More probably, Washingtonians learned during their years of quiescence that the admirable laws passed between 1905 and 1908 had become virtually dead letters for lack of appropriations with which to work, and that the needs of a growing population in the interim had outrun what the earlier acts were designed to supply. Public charity was sharply limited in scope; except for opening playgrounds, fighting tuberculosis, and founding several homes for the aged, private philanthropy, while no less generous than in the 1890's, had widened its field very little; urgent wants within the community still fell between the acts. Other than several old buildings at the Asylum the District still had no place in which to care for the chronically ill or for drug addicts, alcoholics and the "mildly insane."
The Board of Children's Guardians knew that the benefits of placing its wards with private families were imperilled by the smallness of the staff of inspectors assigned to visiting the widely scattered foster and boarding homes,—only one inspector to 340 children compared to one for a third or a quarter as many in most American cities. Over 700 feeble-minded children got no care at all. 51 And the unwillingness of white people to give more than token sums for Washington's nearly 1500 destitute colored children multiplied difficulties. No observant resident of the capital regarded Washington in 1912 as a model municipality.

Yet when the new drive for social improvements began, it again centered on alley-dwelling. The most enlightened Washingtonians adopted the creed: Good homes make a good community. While members of the Monday Evening Club, the spearhead of the new campaign for legislation, prepared a directory of inhabited alleys, the Associated Charities, the Woman's Welfare department of the National Civic Federation, the Men and Religion Forward Movement, and the Social Service Conference of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington studied the problem. In September 1912 the three secular organizations formed a Central Housing Committee to enlist the cooperation of the press, church groups and business and civic associations in a united appeal to Congress for a federal housing commission with authority to act. 52

Help came from an unexpected quarter the following spring when Mrs. Woodrow


Wilson began to tour Washington's alleys and visit all the settlement houses. The daughter and granddaughter of slave-owners, Mrs. Wilson explained that her upbringing had taught her to accept work in behalf of Negroes as her Christian duty, Negroes themselves found objectionable.

During her first weeks in the White House she attended conferences of the Associated Charities, was elected to its board and threw herself into the work of the Woman's Welfare Department of the Civic Federation with such energy that, as one associate noted, "people flocked to our standard and everybody wanted to help in the alleys. It was laughingly said that no one could move in polite society in Washington who could not talk alleys." 53

Debutantes formed a Neighborhood House Auxiliary to do kindergarten work in the settlements, and by May 1913 "Automobile tours of our best people, by way of [studying the conditions] and [helping] the poor, are now established as socially correct." 54 While some of this activity was useless and essentially frivolous, citizens were aroused over alley-dwelling as they had not been since Charles Weller first showed his stereoptican views of Washington's slums. And the personal interest of President and Mrs. Wilson promised to produce mighty things.

Before June 1913 women had raised $8500 for the Sanitary Improvement Company, Senator Works of California, radical-minded friend of the District, submitted a bill to establish a federal housing commission, bills in both House and Senate proposed the conversion of two of the worst alleys into


parks, and another citizens' committee, this time containing representatives of the Board of Trade and the newer Chamber of Commerce, undertook to draft a measure which businessmen and large taxpayers could endorse without qualms. At this point the Senate requested a tabulation of ownership of alley property. The forty-page list revealed more than a thousand different owners, most of whom held only one or two lots, many of whom were women and a few of whom themselves lived in the alleys. Realty companies owned very little alley property. A disconcerting discovery was that title to six lots was vested in the Washington City Orphan Asylum. The battle thus could not be fought against a mere handful of villains or a few unwitting exploiters like the young man in O. Henry's Brickdust Row.

The plan that eventually emerged from the citizens' committee made no mention of public housing but called for vesting in the District commissioners authority to condemn alley property and drew upon the District's general fund over a ten-year period, to meet the cost of conversion of alleys into minor streets or parks. By the time the proposal belatedly reached Congress early in 1914, popular excitement had died down and congressional opposition to spending federal money in the capital had grown. Nothing stirred on the Hill until mid-August. Then Congress learned that on the last morning of her life Mrs. Woodrow Wilson had told the President she would rest happier if she knew the alley bill had passed. Two months later

56 s Doc 120, 633, 19, 2 Jul 13, Ser 6536.
what would soon prove to be a curiously unrealistic measure became law. It
forbade after July 1, 1916 residence in any alley not converted to a minor
street but provided no machinery and no funds for conversion and ignored
the problem of where evicted families were to live. The Board of Trade
was troubled at the threat to the rights of private property, but most
Washingtonians were elated. Shutting their eyes to the weakness of the
new law, they assumed that the alley problem would now solve itself. Con­
gressional hearings had brought out the fact that, without benefit of
publicly financed housing, the alley population had declined from the 19,076
of 1906 to 11,100 in 1912, and when a special census of 1915 showed fewer
than 8,500 still living in alleys and the new Ellen Wilson Home Association
preparing plans for low-rental houses on the streets, the matter dropped
out of sight. At the end of 1916 consequently the condition of the families
still living in the city's alley slums differed little from that of 1901.
No one foresaw that within a year the demand for housing in the war-ridden
capital would consign the alley act to limbo.

While the long battle against alley-dwelling got the most publicity
and engrossed the attention of some philanthropists, social betterment in
other realms, notably child care, made greater lasting progress. Infant
mortality, on the decline since 1900, had dropped to one in ten by 1917.
Thanks in considerable degree to a Childrens Council formed in November 1911,

58 Bicknell, "The Home Maker of the White House," pp. 21-22;
"Certain Alleys in the District of Columbia," Hearings before the H Comme on
D.C., 630, 28, 13, 18 Mar 11, pp. 12, 22; Comrs Rpt, 1915, p. 189, Ser 7071.
dry nurseries, child welfare centers, public playgrounds, summer camps and classes and clubs at the settlement houses came to be part of an accepted program of checking juvenile delinquency before it began. 60 The Juvenile Court, to be sure, proved disappointingly ineffectual; it had only two probation officers assigned to it; had to function as a criminal rather than a domestic relations court, and its policy of making short-term or temporary commitments of children to the Board of Children's Guardians forced the Guardians to place an increasing number of their wards in institutions instead of private homes. 61 Yet despite the continuing handicap of a small staff, the Guardians succeeded in providing better care for colored children than was possible earlier, for while a smaller percentage could be placed with private families, the quality of the homes was higher. On the other hand, whereas good private homes had been available at the turn of the century for four out of every five of the white children, by 1916 the Board had to put more than half into institutions, since white families were reluctant to take temporary boarders, chances of adoption accordingly diminished, and short-term apprenticeships were impracticable. 62 The institutions were on the whole better run and more


61 Times, 1 Dec 15, 2 Feb 16; A C Rot, 1913, p. 10.

numerous than in the 1890's, but an institutional atmosphere hung over the best of them, even the new Episcopal Home with its spacious grounds beyond the Anacostia where the children were housed in groups of eight to ten on "the cottage system."

More significant, however, than the recurrent dissatisfaction with the placing of wards was the growing realization that the Board of Children's Guardians, established to handle a social problem after it had developed, could not work effectively in the field of prevention. In 1914, the Board president, B. Pickman Mann, an examiner in the government Patent Office, undertook a study of the background of the Board's charges in an endeavor to identify and find ways of eradicating the social forces that brought 1500 minors into its custody. He concluded that two obstacles stood in the way of a constructive attack upon delinquency and dependency in Washington, namely race prejudice and the lack of any means of keeping a family together when long illness, unemployment or the desertion of the wage earner caused a domestic crisis. Mann had no panaceas for racial antagonism, but he believed extensive recourse to mothers' pensions, a plan the Associated Charities had followed as best it could since 1906, would cut the roots of many problems of child care. A law passed in 1914 limiting to eight hours the working day of women in mercantile and manufacturing establishments had had some beneficial effect, but in a non-industrial, generally non-commercial city where jobs in factories and shops were few and virtually never open to colored women, the act contributed little to the preservation of family life, least of all among colored people whose

children yearly swelled the ranks of delinquents. Chiefly at Mann's instigation but with the cooperation of the judge of the Juvenile Court, the Children's Council and other child welfare groups, in 1916 the Children's Protective Association came into being to carry on Mann's study of how to forestall delinquency and dependency. 64

Just as tacit recognition grew that deep-seated social maladjustments underlay most of Washington's child welfare problems, so an enlightened segment of the community began to take a new look at adult unemployment and its consequences. The fluctuations were confusing: the figures on homeless men out of work who sought temporary refuge at the Municipal Lodging House rose from 6800 in 1914 to 9900 the next year and again dropped to 6800 in 1916 when munitions plants in other parts of the country opened up jobs for the able-bodied. Although the Lodging House was designed for "tramps," the Monday Evening Club put a new, better-equipped Lodging House high on the list of civic needs. The ups and downs of employment for permanent residents troubled thoughtful citizens even more. Because the building trades and "ditch digging" provided seasonal work for both craftsmen and unskilled labor, unemployment rose alarmingly in severe winters, but its decline in a mild winter encouraged belief that nature must take its course; all philanthropists could do was to try to find stopgaps when the worst befell. Yet the point of view continued to shift subtly in the direction of greater public responsibility. If a moral judgment seemed implicit in

the comment of the superintendent of the Gospel Mission in the late winter of 1911 that most of Washington's 15,000 unemployed men were "deserving," charitable-minded citizens were too concerned with the basic fact of want to consider moral criteria. The Chamber of Commerce urged an immediate start on all public works for which there were appropriations in order to reduce unemployment; and the District commissioners agreed. While severe weather kept the building trades idle, Walter Ufford of the Associated Charities wrote 3000 letters to householders who might have jobs to offer, but he remarked: "What Washington really needs is an employment bureau under Government auspices, without the tinge of charity." 65

Ufford went much further, for he advocated old age, sickness, accident and unemployment insurance for all wage earners and minimum pay of $2.00 a day for common laborers at a time when $1.50 to $1.75 was standard despite findings that $720 a year was below a subsistence wage for a family of five. Ufford's thinking far outran that of most of his associates and indeed would have little impact until the 1930's. The Associated Charities itself continued to approach its every case as one independent of all others, a finger in the dyke method of work which left little energy or time to plan far-reaching social reconstruction. 66 In early 1916 Senator Nolan of California, in response to a flood of petitions from government clerks, 67


introduced a bill setting a minimum pay rate of $3 a day for all federal and District government employees, but as half the forty-odd thousand were then earning less and a fourth of them less than $750 a year, the proposal seemed unthinkably extravagant, particularly as seven hours constituted the normal day in government offices. The bill got no more attention than the repeated pleas of government clerks for a pension system. By and large, influential Washingtonians, like members of Congress, still believed laws of supply and demand must regulate wage rates. Though anxious to wipe out unemployment, that threat to community stability, few people, trade unionists included, thought legislation necessary to set economic matters right.\footnote{Rpts B of Ch, 1902, pp. 207-08, 1916, p. 244; see petitions and ltrs in folder 326, file 1813, Ser VIIH, Woodrow Wilson mss; Times, 9 Apr 11, 30 Apr 13, 17 Jan 14, 29 Jan 10, 26 Feb 1, 17, 20, 22 Mar, 15 Apr, 25 Nov, 7 Dec 16.}

Although pensions and laws of a kind a later generation would consider essential to social security seemed in 1912 radical nonsense to most of a nation which still thought its poorest citizens protected by the right to homestead on the public domain, the immediate actualities of life in America's big cities confronted humane citizens with a single alternative: they must enlarge their efforts to help the needy. If no one in Washington saw the situation as an either or, nevertheless public and private charity gradually widened to narrow one by one the gaps in services. Private giving enabled two new homes for the aged to open, one of them sponsored by colored people. As charity reached out to the chronically ill, the Home...
for Incursibles came to occupy a far larger place among the city's philanthropies than formerly and, under the leadership of Mrs. Archibald Hopkins, a close friend of Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, the project evoked wide local interest. The long debated question of a municipal hospital in turn appeared to be settled in 1914 by a congressional appropriation for plans for a new building in northwest Washington. But the bitter opposition of property-owners to having a "pauper" hospital in their neighborhood caused delays which threatened to kill the project forever. Not until January 1917, after a change of location back to the old asylum grounds on the Anacostia and a politically adroit proposal of District Commissioner Brownlow to name the institution for the former chairman of the Senate District committee, was the building of Gallinger Hospital ensured.

Despite lingering doubts about the morality of helping fallen women, the missions for unmarried mothers also enlisted more generous support, perhaps partly because of a dramatic incident in 1914. Sentiment had long been mounting to force the closing of the houses of ill fame in the triangle below Pennsylvania avenue near the Treasury. Known as "Joe Hooker's Division" since Civil War days when General Hooker's determination to keep prostitution within bounds had led to a semi-official demarcation of a few squares along the Avenue, the red light district had spread until in 1913, according to outraged woman suffragists who investigated, it stretched from within two blocks of the White House to the edge of Capitol Hill. Open

operation of the houses in the Division not only affronted the sensibilities of respectable citizens but advertised the city's vicious aspects to every tourist in Washington. In January 1914 Congress passed the so-called red light bill, but President Wilson refused to sign it until some provision was made to care for the prostitutes. Women of the Florence Crittenton mission thereupon undertook the task, the bill became law, and unmarried mothers got more sympathetic help. 70

The new importance of women in the "civic uplift" movement was well-illustrated in the battle against the Division. "Suffragettes" headed that drive, but through the non-political activities of the Woman's Welfare Department of the National Civic League anti-suffragists and women without political convictions also began to emerge as leaders in various fields of community welfare. Women had long been the chief proponents of prohibition. Whether or not they were primarily responsible for the intensification of the anti-saloon campaign in the years immediately preceding World War I, they took an active part in the fight, particularly after discovering that the District Excise Board, established by law in 1909 to supervise and limit liquor traffic, had failed to wipe out the evils attributed to the saloon. 71 Whereas men had formerly made the policy decisions and controlled the purse strings of the city's charities, after 1912 women increasingly took things into their own hands. In 1913 one woman


71 Star, 15 Feb 12; Times, 2 Jul 12, 16 Feb 16; S Rpt 391, 63C, 25, 30 Mar 14, Ser 6552; S Doc 981, 63C, 3S, 1 Mar 15, Ser 6775.
wrote of the war against alley dwelling: "Never before have the women of the capital risen in a body"; the victory was theirs. Success whetted the appetite.72

In Washington, unlike most other big cities, women's clubs were not the mainstay of volunteer social service. In spite of the elaborate plans of the now all but defunct Wimodeswahsis and the programs of the National Professional Women's League, the Woman's Suffrage League and the District Federation of Women's Clubs, in Washington the "club woman" was a relatively inconspicuous figure. In Chicago to be president of the Woman's Club was to hold an eagerly sought-after position of power. Washington had no comparable organization. Of her unusually large number of single women, many were self-supporting; for them club life as such was more a matter of sociability than of public service. Women not obliged to earn their own living might join afternoon bridge clubs or literary discussion groups but they carried on their civic activities through the churches and work with organized charities.73

Yet few cities had so large a group of prominent women pouring their energies into social betterment. In many parts of America women with leisure at their disposal would not learn much about community service until war work drew them into it. Here the sense of obligation came much earlier, doubtless partly through the skillful appeals of Charles Weller of the Associated Charities and later through the example set by women with the social prestige of a Mrs. Hopkins, a Mabel T. Boardman, a Mrs. Henry Macfarland

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73 Times, 3 Nov 07; Thirteenth Census, 1910, Population.
and, above all, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson. While Dolly Madison and Frances Folsom Cleveland each in her day had participated in Washington's charities, neither First Lady had played so direct a part as Mrs. Wilson and neither had occupied the White House in a period when social guilt ran strong in the upper ranks of American society. Miss Boardman, after serving on President Roosevelt's Homes Commission, undertook as a director of the District chapter of the American Red Cross to teach Washington debutantes that their privileged place in the world put upon them a debt to society which they could best pay by personal service in worthy causes. Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Macfarland similarly indicated by precept and deed that for women the one justification for unearned wealth and leisure lay in good works. Debutantes quickly learned that they could combine charitable activities with the gaieties of the social season and indeed, after the Washington Junior League came into being in 1912, a disciplined pursuit of the former was likely to enhance the latter, especially for the young women of slightly insecure social background.73a

The heightened interest in beautifying the city and in bettering social conditions was by no means a phenomenon peculiar to Washington. On the contrary, it was country-wide. For as Americans awoke in the mid-1890's to the realization that the United States was no longer overwhelmingly rural and that urban problems required solutions different from those offered by homesteading in the land of free opportunity, city-dwellers from coast to coast, spurred on by the muckrakers and preachers of the social gospel, early in the 20th century set themselves to find an answer. They rarely

73a Times, 10 Sep 11.
questioned their capacity to reach it. Their wish to have the national capital a model met with some response in Congress and strengthened the local movement. But its growth in the District of Columbia was indigenous and in some particulars antedated that in other municipalities. The belief of Americans elsewhere that Washingtonians had little or nothing to do with the starting and carrying on the City Beautiful and welfare projects in the capital was as widespread as it was unjust. Later it would have serious consequences for the local community. Before the entry of the United States into the world war, however, Washington's civic leaders consistently displayed a magnificent faith that they could overcome every difficulty. Who took the credit was unimportant. In 1916 District Commissioner Oliver Newman told the Monday Evening Club that Washingtonians had a wider interest in community affairs than he had seen in any of the other nine cities where he had lived. With a highly developed civic conscience, a cleaner municipal government than other cities enjoyed and far fewer class conflicts between capital and labor than those of industrial centers, Washington appeared to have a long headstart on achieving her ideal. Here the optimism that characterized reformers everywhere in the America of the period was especially marked. If naive and somewhat shallow, it nevertheless suffused the city with a golden warmth of hope.

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*74 Times, 18 Jan 16.*
Oh, my sister cities of the land, harken to me .... Young and strong, fair of body, clear of mind, I have kept our faith. I live and grow, in beauty and power, in the strength of the spirit that makes for good. My feet are set in the path that leads, my hands pluck flowers by the way, my eyes leave not the shining star that is my guide. ....

Now harken, my sisters, to what I will do. .... I am young. ... but also I am the Capital and blood kin to our Mecca of the East. Day by day, year by year, century by century, I will grow. .... It shall be mine, by the example that I teach, to put order in thy houses, where disorder now reigns. It shall be mine to teach thee cleanliness of body and of mind, and honesty and the municipal faith. It shall be mine to teach thee the meaning and show thee the soul of the beauty that lies within and the beauty that shines without. 1

So the Evening Star in 1906 portrayed Washington’s past and future. In somewhat less bombastic language presidents of the Board of Trade voiced similar complacency; their occasional reminders that no one must rest on his oars scarcely interrupted the flow of self-congratulation over “the grandeur of our city.” 2 In addition to a “delightful climate,” a magnificent physical layout, an ample supply of pure water, efficient local government and moderate taxation, Washington offered “superb commercial and manufacturing probabilities” and exceptional educational advantages through her universities, public and private schools, art galleries and libraries. 3

1 Star, 1 Jan 09.
2 Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1905, p. 5, 1906, p. 37, 1910, pp. 13-14, 1912, pp. 5-6, 1913, pp. 33-44.
3 Ibid., 1907, pp.
Even an experienced former District commissioner believed her blemishes few: "Is it any wonder," Henry West asked rhetorically in 1913, "that during recent years there should have been attracted to Washington a most desirable class of residents—people who have acquired a competence in commercial centers and who are glad to live in a city which is attractive and well kept, where the society is cosmopolitan, where peace and order reign with freedom from political disturbance, and where the constant march of progress is unchecked?"

Real estate and its ally, banking, continued to be the mainstay of Washington's business world. Land prices rose steadily. While row houses went up in the vicinity of Lincoln Park and in Mt. Pleasant, apartment houses adapted to families who could afford only one servant multiplied in more central areas, and the expanding "millionaire colony" around and about DuPont and Sheridan circles, the newspapers reported, was making the "City of Magnificent Distances" also the "Home of Palatial Mansions." Wall Street depressions had little effect upon banking or building operations in the District; Washington real estate, on the contrary, attracted outside capital. One realtor averred that Washington in 1907 was growing faster in two months than she had in twelve during the 1890's. As office buildings and stores took over the areas immediately to the north and east of the Treasury, real estate brokers developed new residential sections along upper 16th street, about Chevy Chase circle, and, for people of very modest means, along the

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4 S Doc 420, 63G, 28, 13 Feb 14, p. 11, Ser 6593.
eastward extension of Rhode Island avenue. Uneasiness about the attitude of the new administration in 1913 and then the outbreak of war in Europe lessened the volume of transactions, but prices did not fall and during 1915 apartment house building in Washington again accelerated.

Suburban expansion, though hampered for a time by lack of sewers and always by costly street paving assessments, the Board of Trade declared "phenomenal." Built-up blocks interspersed with an ever diminishing number of vacant lots stretched for a mile or more north of Florida avenue by 1907, making the formal city limits a limit only in name. Prophesies ran that before 1917 Washington's suburbs would reach into nearby Maryland. And indeed in 1910 the parts of the District outside Washington and Georgetown contained a quarter of its total population. Trolley lines passing over the Aqueduct bridge meanwhile hastened the growth of Roslyn on the Virginia shore and inspired so many real estate ventures there that in 1909 District Commissioner Henry MacFarland argued that protection of the capital would soon force the Supreme Court to pass upon federal reannexation of the southern third of the original ten-mile square. Since Washington would need that area for factories and homes for her poor, he believed the Court would find in the District's favor. The question never got beyond vague talk among Washington promoters, and by 1921 with the creation of Arlington County the region would be too valuable to the Commonwealth of Virginia to allow room for hope in the District that its bounds could again reach beyond the

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5 Post, 6 Apr, 29 Jun 02, 23 Jan, 6 Mar, 9 Apr 03, 21 Jun 10, 25 May 13; Star, 10 Jan, 30 Mar, 5 Sep 03, 26 Mar, 11 Jun, 2 Dec 05, 1 Jan 08, 1 Jan, 15 May 09, 1 Jan 11; Times, 9 Jun, 13 Oct, 3 Nov, 18 Dec 07, 9 Feb, 3 May, 9 Aug, 27 Nov 08, 9 Mar 11; Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1908, p. 23, 1910, pp. 13-16.

6 Star, 1 Jan 11, 1 Jan 15, 1 Jan 16; Times, 28 Feb 13, 18 Jun 15; Corrs Rpt, 1915, p. 50, Feb 7071.
Building and loan associations financed most small householders' home-building, while the city's big national banks handled larger enterprises—entire suburban subdivisions, new office buildings, the utility interests and the like. Surprisingly enough in a city not primarily commercial in character, banking was extremely profitable. The Riggs National Bank ranked as one of the most powerful in the country, powerful enough indeed to risk defiance of the United States Treasury in 1915 when the Controller of the Currency, John Skelton Williams, invoked the authority of the new Federal Reserve act to stop the improper practices which he charged the bank's officers of resorting to. Charles Glover, the bank president, was so incensed at what he labelled Williams' personal vindictiveness and misrepresentations that he hit the controller on the head with a walking stick when the two met by chance in Lafayette square. Glover, who three years before had struck a congressman for calling his veracity into question, was again summoned before Congress to make public apology, but the episode, once the courts had declared the bank's action legal, heightened rather than lowered the Riggs' stature in American financial circles. And insofar as the administration's campaign to weaken Wall Street's stranglehold on American business was successful, all Washington's big banks benefitted.

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7 Anl Rnts B of Tr, 1903, p. 16, 1912, p. 17; Comrs Rts, 1906, p. 41, Ser 5126, 1912, p. 57, Ser 6464; Times, 9 Jun 07; Rec, 590, 28, Index, p. 67, 4. D. F. MacFarland, "The Rebuilding of the National Capital," American City, I, Sep 09, pp. 11-12; Star, 1 May 09, 1 Jan 12; Post, 13 Mar 10; Time, 3 Nov 07, 23 May 13, 5 Aug 13, 11 Oct 15.

In spite of virtually unbroken prosperity and a growth that brought the District's population to over 367,000 in 1910, a part of the business community urged as insurance for the future a renewed drive to attract industry. The Chamber of Commerce, founded by small business interests in 1907, was the chief advocate of the plan which its members contended would reduce seasonal unemployment and give Washington her proper place in the American business world. They lost no opportunity to advertise her potentialities for manufacturing. 9 (See Table II). On the other hand, the Board of Trade, realtors, and bankers committed to developing the city as a show place and residential center tended to shy away from the proposal. If they did not call it "suicidal," they knew it would antagonize Congress and apparently feared that industrial competition with other American cities, in the words of a writer for Scribner's Magazine, would cost "the spoiled child of the republic" the favors she enjoyed. By 1915, to be sure, the squeeze caused by rising prices in a community where fixed incomes were the rule led the president of the Board of Trade to suggest that factories in the suburbs might furnish the new revenue the District badly needed, but he admitted that the Great Falls, the one ready source of power, could not supply much, particularly as Congress had not acted on a bill of 1914 to harness the power then going to waste at the Falls. 10


All businessmen, however, approved the idea of expanding Washington's commerce by improving railroad freight service, building with federal subsidies a shipping canal from the Anacostia to Chesapeake Bay and making the capital the national convention city, a goal to be achieved by providing a huge auditorium. None of these proposals, most of them bolstered by arguments familiar from the 1840's onward, produced results. If large enough, the auditorium, the Chamber of Commerce estimated, would bring $10,000,000 annually to Washington; District businessmen need put in only a quarter million dollars, leaving a National George Washington Memorial Association to raise another two and a quarter million, to erect a hall in which every big national and international organization in the United States would want to convene; the local business community would net at least 40 per cent on its investment. The $250,000 from the District was not forthcoming, and not until the 1950's when a plan to establish a "Washington Cultural Center" shifted the emphasis did the century-old dream begin to look realizable. Yet yearly the flood of visitors ready to spend money in the capital rose as the fame of the architectural beauties and historical interest of the national city spread. By 1908 Washingtonians were learning to recognize the arrival of spring less by the appearance of robins than by the fleet of sight-seeing buses manned by megaphoned guides which lined up on the Hill and about the White House, and by 1916, next to government business and real estate, the tourist trade ranked as Washington's chief financial asset.


12 George Fitch, "Seeing Washington through a Megaphone," Ladies Home Journal, Aug 1907, p. 27; Times, 15 Sep 15, Star, 2 May 09
The Board of Trade meanwhile had ceased to occupy the position of enlightened leadership it had held in 1901. Differences of opinion about what Washington should strive for contributed to the splitting off of the Chamber of Commerce in 1907, but, although explicit statements are few, the irritation of small businessmen at what they thought the high-handedness of the little coterie that set Board of Trade policies clearly counted more heavily than disagreement with any specific pronouncement of the older organization. When its president in 1903 declared that once a Board committee, the Board's directors and the full Board endorsed any proposal it immediately commanded "public attention, public respect and the support of all good citizens" as well as serious consideration in Congress, he overstated the case very slightly. Thereafter a growing tendency to regard the welfare of the city as identical with that of the thin top layer of society gradually stripped the Board of Trade of its former representative quality. For more than fifteen years its guiding lights almost without exception had served also as trustees of local philanthropies; most of the younger generation of Board directors did not. Doubtless the increasing professionalism of social welfare work accounted for much of that change, but it had the effect of divorcing Board policy-makers from close association with the social betterment leaders. Nor did the citizens' associations fill the gap; more fully than in the 1890's they concentrated upon their own neighborhood problems to the exclusion of city-wide concerns.

By 1911 the Times, Washington's nearest approach to a left-wing paper, observed that the Chamber of Commerce "represents the most advanced and most progressive thought of the community. It stands for the interests of the
people of Washington."13 It studied and made recommendations on questions
the Board of Trade now bypassed--utility rates, milk inspection and similar
matters important to the rank and file of humble citizens. Unhappily,
perhaps because business counsels were now divided, the Chamber carried less
weight than its parent organization had once. Some men belonged to both
bodies; after 1907 neither organization included any colored men. Even
while it was losing members, the Board of Trade never admitted that it no
longer spoke for the city as a whole. Successful campaigns to recruit
new members evidently laid to rest any doubts of the directors that they
knew best what Washington needed. They devoted their efforts to city finances
and the protection of the "half-and-half" principle from congressional
inroads. And the board of directors, composed of men linked with the great
real estate companies, the big banks and the utilities, continued to
exercise enormous influence, particularly as long as a group in Congress
looked upon investment in Washington as a sure road to fortune. That as
late as 1915 some congressmen still held that view emerges in the comment
of a representative who in congratulating a newly appointed District com-
missioner assured him he should wind up his term in the District building
with at least $1,000,000.14

The Board of Trade would certainly have scoffed at the notion that

13 Times, 8 Jan 11.

14 Anl Rate B of Tr, 1903-1916 inclusive, especially 1903, p. 6, 1905,
Times, 17, 30 Jan, 17 Feb, 9 Aug 08, 12, 26 Jan, 15 Mar, 12 Apr, 26 May 11,
17 Dec 13, 1 Jan 14; Star, 2 Dec 09, 1 Jan 12; interviews with Louis Brownlow
18 Nov 58, 17 Apr 59.
anyone wanted the post of District commissioner for the financial benefits it might bring; it was a position of prestige and honor. Is an incumbent might, however, affect the course of Washington's development the inner circle of the Board of Trade, familiar as it felt itself to be with the city's problems, expected to name the civilians whom the President would appoint. President Roosevelt was not wholly amenable to that arrangement.

He appeared to listen, but he kept in office the former journalist Henry Macfarland whom one Washingtonian later described as "a nice piece of bric-a-brac," and upon John Ross's death in the summer of 1902 the President ignored all objections to the appointment of another newspapermen. Although Theodore Noyes wrote the President: "It is not in human nature that the Star should view with any complacency the appointment to local municipal control of the employee and representative of a rival newspaper of democratic proclivities," Henry West was sworn in as commissioner in October.

During his seven years in office West while frequently disagreeing with Macfarland nevertheless served the city well.

The two colorless individuals whom Taft appointed in January 1910 were more to the liking of the Board of Trade, but satisfaction turned to alarm in 1913 when Woodrow Wilson selected two former officers of the Monday Evening Club, Oliver Newman, an experienced newspaper correspondent, and Frederick L. Siddons of the District bar. Admittedly swayed by a judgment confided to him that the District government had been "controlled by men


16 Ltrs, Henry Cabot Lodge to President Roosevelt, 30 Jul 02, Theodore W. Noyes to Roosevelt, 11 Aug, Crosby Noyes to Roosevelt 15 Aug, and Mark Hanna to Roosevelt, 20 Aug 02, Theodore Roosevelt mss (L.C.).
with connections in speculative real estate, a triangle of profit and power manned by a triumvirate," the President had made clear that he wanted no commissioner tied to the local real estate "ring." In the eyes of powerful business interests in Washington both men named were tainted with radicalism. Resentment ran so strong among the old guard that one of the group brought a suit contesting the legality of Newman's appointment on the grounds of his not being a bona fide resident of the District; the plaintiff lost. Another blow awaited the former kingmakers in 1915. President Wilson, having elevated Siddons to the District Supreme Court, chose as his successor Louis Brownlow, a thirty-five-year old correspondent for a Washington news syndicate. In time to come "Brownie" would be recognized from coast to coast as the foremost authority on public administration in America. In 1915 he was known in Washington as a competent reporter, a friend of muckrakers like Robert Wickliffe Woolley and, doubtless source of special uneasiness to ultra-conservatives, a son-in-law of Congressman Thetus Sims, the old warrior who as a member of the House District Committee had for years fought special privilege in the District.

Fortunately each of the seven civilian commissioners in turn was conscientious, and the engineer commissioners who worked with them set a


19 Times, 15 Jun 08, 20, 31 Jan 15; Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity, pp. 1-12.
high record of efficiency. If West was easy-going and Rudolph and Johnston unimaginative and intellectually timid, those shortcomings were more than offset by the qualities of Macfarland, Siddons, Newman and Brownlow. All told, the successive boards of commissioners during the fifteen years preceding the United States' entry into the war achieved a standard of public service not again equalled in the District until the 1950's.

The job was no sinecure. Ideally it meant maintaining and improving the appearance of the capital, the national show place, and simultaneously meeting the community's less immediately visible needs out of the funds Congress was willing to appropriate. It meant balancing the wants of one section of the city or one group of citizens against those of another and providing for intangibles, such as an enlarged public health service and better police protection, without curtailing public works like opening new parks and building new bridges. And always it meant, after the administrators had mapped out what they considered the wisest allotment of money, a struggle to persuade the House Subcommittee on Appropriations for the District that the figure for each item in the proposed budget was justified.

The final decision never lay with the commissioners. The prohibition on borrowing created in itself a never-ending quandary, even during the period when Congress sanctioned an evasion by authorizing the United States Treasury to advance the District money at interest for enlargement of the water distribution system, construction of the sewage pumping station and similar expensive projects. The list of public works the commissioners considered urgent in 1909 and the estimated cost of each suggests the dimensions of the problem of meeting such needs out of current income:
Pro,ject

Reclamation of the Anacostia flats, a measure vital to the city's health

Improvement of Rock creek valley from its mouth to Massachusetts avenue, most of the stretch still an unsightly and insanitary dumping ground

Improvement of the harbor front

Purchase of additional land for parks

New buildings for the reformatory and workhouse

Installation of a high-pressure fire protection system

Extension of suburban trunk sewers, a project to be spread out over 12 years

Extension of trunk water mains to the suburbs

Enlargement of public hospital facilities

Elimination of dangerous railroad grade crossings outside the city limits

Cost

$2,552,320

$1,750,000

$2,880,000

$5,000,000

$1,000,000

$750,000

$2,000,000

$800,000

$150,000

$400,000

The total of some $20,282,600, even if spread over several years, would leave nothing over for new kinds of services, let alone the expansion of old in a rapidly growing city whose local revenues had never reached $7,000,000. About twelve of the twenty million requested could be classed as aimed at embellishments rather than essentials. Then and later some members of Congress, like many Washingtonians, preferred less emphasis on stone and mortar or remote expanses of parkland and more on higher salaries for school teachers, on employment of school nurses and dentists, more sanitary inspectors and more staff for the Board of Children's Guardians, a bigger better paid police force and all the administrative machinery needed in a complex urban society. But critics on the floor of Congress rarely

20 Comrs Rpt, 1909, pp. 57-58, Ser 5809.

succeeded in redistributing funds in the District budget as it came from committee; at most they cut the overall figure. Except insofar as the Senate insisted upon restoration of some of the sums pared by the House, the make-up of the House subcommittee determined what the commissioners could spend and for what purpose.

In spite of repeated charges that leading members of the House and Senate District committees and the subcommittee on appropriations constituted "the plunderers of Washington," the commissioners' programs before 1910 got fuller support from Congress than did their successors, for plans for the beautification of the capital aroused the interest of congressional constituents and the laws enacted to promote social betterment involved relatively little money. MacFarland and West and the three engineer commissioners of their time, while disappointed at obtaining year after year only part of the sums they asked for, managed to run the city reasonably efficiently and encountered little hostility in the "city council." 22

Indeed as long as an Arthur Corman in the Senate, a Joseph Babcock, chairman of the House committee from 1895 to 1911, and a dozen committee members had financial interests in Washington, personal concern for her prosperity would plead her cause; and stories never denied told of Gorman's making a $1,000,000 and Babcock's making $800,000 in Washington real estate and utility stocks simply by using their advance knowledge of which sections of the city were to get funds for improvements and what privileges were to be allowed the utility companies. 23 At a time when senators were buying

22 Anl Rpts B of Tr, 1906, p. 20, 1908, p. 26, 1909, p. 34.
their seats from state legislatures, the tales of graft in the Capitol
occasioned no scandalized astonishment. Most Washingtonians resented congressional refusals to order drastic reductions in utility rates and to
live up meticulously to the 1878 commitment on sharing District expenses, but the friendliness on the Hill brought a measure of benefit to the entire community. If the \textit{entente cordiale} was more useful to the well-to-do few
than to the impecunious many, still small householders could take satis-
fection in Congress’ heeding of their pleas for a compulsory education law,
the removal of an upper age limit for students in the night schools,
additions to the fire and police departments, and occasional increases in
the allowances for charities. The District Auditor noted less than $400,000
charged to the District in 1908 for items for which Congress was unwilling

But the honeymoon was over. Restiveness in Congress over the half-
and-half arrangement had been growing for some time before Washingtonians
let themselves worry. Hardened to periodic diatribes against such \textit{extrava-
gent} requests as appropriations for public playgrounds, local taxpayers
refused to see anything especially ominous in a law of 1909 which required
the commissioners thenceforward to submit their annual budgets, not as in
the past in the form of estimates of needs which House and Senate would
then try to meet, but as statements of expected revenue from District taxes
and matching federal funds.\footnote{Stet, 22 Feb 09; Fiscal Relations, pp. 1628-39, Ser 6914; Reg, 600, 15, 4 Apr 08, p. 1908, 28, 7 Dec 08, p. 8, 13 Jan 09, pp. 818-19, 859-74.} Although the innovation allowed for no
long-term financing of major public works—the extension of water and
sewer mains into the suburbs, for example—the act otherwise looked innocuous,
simply a way of tailoring the suit to fit the cloth. New leaders in Congress,
however, were soon using the shears to snip away at the federal share of
District expenses by reducing over-all appropriations. Thus when the
commissioners estimated District tax revenues at $6,477,000, Congress
instead of voting twice that amount appropriated about $10,719,000, of
which less than $1,242,000 was federal money, more nearly a third than a
half the total. 26 By then the local community was fully aware of its
peril, for the House was considering ways not only to put upon the District
the entire cost of street maintenance but digging into records of the past
to prove that the District owed the federal government large sums of money
for such items as advances to the Freedmen's Hospital in the mid-1870's,
unredeemed bonds of 1877 and 1878 and thirty years of care for the District's
insane at St. Elizabeths.27

The rights and wrongs of the District of Columbia in its fiscal rela-
tions with the federal government were—and still are—infinitely complex. 28
Viewed from the perspective of half a century, three facts are clear about
the fight that came out into the open in the early months of 1910: first,
that the members of Congress who launched and carried on the attack believed
they were engaged in a righteous battle with that monster, special privilege;

26 Post, 15 Jun 10; Star, 15 Jun 12;

27 Lawrence Schneeklothebier, The District of Columbia, Its Government
and Administration, vol. 52-5b; 5 Doc H03, 532, 25, I Feb 11, Ser 6593; Anl
Art B of Tr. 1912, v. 1h and Rpt, "Financial Relations of the District of
Columbia and the Federal Government from 1871 to 1912.

28 In the paragraphs that follow, is merely a small fragment of the
substantiating evidence to be found in the pages of the Congressional Record, the
two fat volumes on Fiscal Relations and the local newspapers.
second, that they frequently used battering rams where fly swatters would have served their purpose better; and, third, that many of Washington's self-styled financial experts unwittingly undermined her defenses by shifting ground or by taking positions they could not fortify with incontrovertible figures. Promoters who talked of the city's "moderate taxation" when they were trying to attract new business enterprises attempted at other times to prove to Congress that per capita taxes here were higher than in other cities of like size and that any added burden would be ruinous to the community. 29 Confused thinking and much misinformation in Congress about laws and practices in the District of Columbia, even its geography, complicated the struggle. Few members, whether of long standing or newcomers on the Hill, were familiar with the unique problems of the capital and fewer still understood the Treasury's accounting methods in handling District funds. Attendance during debates on District affairs was always slim; as few as fifty representatives often disposed of questions of great importance to Washingtonians, and any discussion of such matters on the floor of the Senate was rare in the extreme. Consequently congressmen could and did go unchallenged in making statements as preposterous as that the United States defrayed the entire cost of running the schools, paving the streets, supplying the city with water and installing and extending the sewage system. 30 Under these


circumstances ill temper and a sense of outrage developed in both camps.\textsuperscript{31}

The changed attitude of the congressional majority sprang from a combination of factors. The increasing amounts of money the commissioners requested between 1901 and 1910 were certainly one of the first.\textsuperscript{32}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Commissioners Estimates</th>
<th>Recommendation Sec of Treasury</th>
<th>Appropriations</th>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>8,657,773</td>
<td>9,826,016</td>
<td>7,032,519</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>8,080,704</td>
<td>8,329,297</td>
<td>8,389,975</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>10,572,198</td>
<td>11,062,370</td>
<td>9,665,785</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>11,005,628</td>
<td>10,888,284</td>
<td>9,102,602</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>13,017,581</td>
<td>11,598,222</td>
<td>9,880,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>12,556,177</td>
<td>9,880,099</td>
<td>10,133,389</td>
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<td>11,625,666</td>
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<td>11,918,519</td>
<td>8,762,986</td>
<td>10,527,016</td>
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<td>13,798,126</td>
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<td>11,809,837</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>16,176,356</td>
<td>9,880,099</td>
<td>10,531,331</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>11,180,628</td>
<td>11,664,513</td>
<td>11,572,524</td>
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<td>1912</td>
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<td>12,322,539</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>11,491,614</td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>15,173,676</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>12,909,434</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimates for the fiscal year 1910, the last budget submitted before the law of 1909 limited the commissioners to figures based on expected revenue, tell part of the story--\$16,000,000 for a city that nine years before had asked for less than half that much.\textsuperscript{33} That large sums were intended for...

\textsuperscript{31} Times, 2h Jul, 1h Dec 13, 20 Jan 14; Rec, 63c, 2x, 16 Dec 13, p. 1012.

\textsuperscript{32} Rec, 59c, 1x, 18 Apr 06, pp. 550-06, 607, 2x, 1 Feb 09, p. 1832.

permanent public works—in 1909, for example, six new school buildings—in no way mollified irate congressmen who saw in these the demands of a city of millionaires battering on the taxpayers of the rest of the country.

Closely allied to the wrath evoked by the growing size of the commissioners' tentative budgets was a new indignation in Congress at the exploitation of Washington's lesser citizens practised by real estate speculators and powerful utility companies, an anger which reformers from urban constituencies shared with representatives of rural districts. Unlike some of their predecessors, after 1910 the men in control of the House and Senate District committees showed no wish to make the most of their business opportunities in the capital and instead dedicated themselves consciously or otherwise to making political hay out of standing for economy and suppression of the money power wherever it raised its fearsome head. They might have slain that dragon in Washington by revising the District assessment and tax laws, but disagreements about how to rewrite them made it simpler to advocate the cancellation of all federal contributions to the city irrespective of which group of local taxpayers suffered next thereby.34 A third factor derived from the determination of senators and congressmen from agrarian areas to hold the line against the march of "socialism" in any form, that insidious threat creeping out of teeming cities to engulf robust American individualism. Thus, to name but a single example, so God-fearing and earnest a believer in the rights and duties of free men as Washington Gardner of Albion, Michigan, fought tooth and nail against appropriations for public playgrounds in

Washington, because they represented a socialistic perversion of public obligation.\(^{35}\) Conflict between rural and urban interests was of course nearly as old as sectional controversy in Congress but neither had affected Washington as much in the late 19th century as in the early 20th when her population had grown to a third of a million souls, the admission of three western states between 1907 and 1912 and the widening recourse to direct primaries altered the balance in both houses.

Two other elements also entered into the picture, namely party politics and the mounting pressure of national business in the legislature of a country now become a world power and rapidly turning into a great industrial nation. Votes along party lines on Washington's problems were not the invariable rule, but before the election of a Democratic administration in November 1912, Democrats, though in control of the House from 1911 onward, found opposition to Republican-sponsored measures a politically useful device. Far more disastrous for the city was the frequent postponement of "District days" on the Hill and the lack of informed attention given to local bills when they at least reached the floor.\(^{36}\) In retrospect, the time committees of both houses devoted to hearings on reorganization of the Board of Education, city planning, proposed Jim-Crow bills and in 1915 on District finances seems surprisingly generous and testifies to the conscientiousness of the "city council." But for citizens who had seen a

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\(^{35}\) Rec., 600, 15, 3 Apr 08, p. 1353, 1 Apr 08, pp. 1383-85.

series of constructive local acts passed between 1902 and 1908, the summary dismissal or destructive amendment of District bills thereafter was profoundly disturbing. Badly needed social legislation sneaked through, if at all, only by the skills of its supporters in tying it to an appropriation bill. More than a few Washingtonians recognized before World War I the unsuitability of requiring men elected to legislate for the United States as a whole to study and act intelligently upon purely local municipal problems, but that realization did not ease the situation and the powerlessness of enlightened residents to change it heightened their discomfort. That they did not despair and, on the contrary, during 1916 regained much of their earlier confidence indicates again the pervasive optimism of the entire pre-war period.37

Indeed by 1916 the community had reason to draw freer breath. By then the money borrowed from the Treasury after 1901 had been fully repaid and the funded debt reduced to $4,000,000. Real estate reassessments that corrected most inequities and added $80,000,000 to over-all valuations further cooled the heat of critics in Congress; some of them were still incensed at the number of "tax dodgers" in the District, people accused of choosing residence in Washington in order to escape state inheritance levies and taxes on intangible personal property, but a District law passed in 1916 imposed the latter and the workings of the new graduated federal income tax

37 Star, 9 May 09; Times, 15 Jul, 6, 12 Dec 11, 18 Apr 16; Brownlow, A Passion For Anonymity, p. interview, Louis Brownlow, 18 Nov 58; Fiscal Relations, pp. 963-66, Ser 6915; An Rpt R of Tr, 1916, p. 13.

38 Times, 7 Jan 16; An Rpt R of Tr, 1916, p. 10.
promised to catch up with other "malfactors of great wealth." At the same time Washingtonians who had felt themselves victimized by the public utility companies were gratified by the creation of a District Public Utilities Commission, made up of the three District commissioners, ex officio, authorized to fix rates and control the sale and emission of utility stocks and securities. The labor involved in arriving at just valuations of the companies' property, the basis of the rates to be set, delayed final rulings until after the war, but the essential first steps in protecting consumers had been taken during 1914 and 1915. Wealthy taxpayers in turn were relieved at the outcome of lengthy congressional hearings held in November 1915 on the District's fiscal relations with the federal government, for the principle of federal sharing of expenses survived officially, and formerly aggrieved property-owners admitted the fairness and thoroughness of the joint committee in charge of the investigation.

The record of the fiscal hearings gives an exceptionally detailed view of the intricacies of the problem and the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of the argument. In proposing the formation of the joint committee, Senator Gallinger had pointed out that no one could judge the extent of District obligations by a reading of District appropriation acts, since Congress yearly authorized federal officials not responsible to the District:


41 See n. 38.
commissioners to spend local funds voted "in the sundry civil and legislative appropriation acts, in deficiency acts, public building acts, extension and widening of the streets and for other purposes." Similarly Senator

Works' final report for the committee noted how much he and his associates had had to learn about the city's difficulties. Both opponents and defenders of the system of matching federal and local money for running the capital city were guilty of presenting some data of dubious validity, figures assembled too long before to be applicable or faulty comparisons with the taxes of other cities, but the testimony, if occasionally colored by passion, was illuminating. The assumption was general that the United States should contribute something to the city's annual revenues. Several witnesses reverted to the arguments of the Southard report of 1835: national obligation arising from the 18th century agreement with the original proprietors of the land. Other men indicated that since manufacturing plants and great commercial houses such as supplied the bulk of taxes to other big cities would interfere with Washington's main business of national government, the United States with its extensive tax-exempt property must make some monetary compensation. The main question thus was how much and by what method. Everyone agreed that Congress would never permit taxation of federal holdings. Proponents of rigid adherence to the half-and-half

\[\text{Reference} 63, 28, 11 \text{Jan } 15, \text{ p. 1348; Fiscal Relations, pp. lxiv, Ser 6915.}\]

\[\text{Reference} 63, \text{ Bureau of the Census, Statistics of Cities Having a Population of over 30,000, 1907, pp. 330-33; Fiscal Relations, pp. 406-07, Ser 6915, pp. 1639-40, Ser 6915.}\]
rule insisted that a sliding scale of federal payments would leave the city in a constant turmoil of uncertainty. As they saw it, a proposal endorsed by the House of using all local money first and relying upon federal funds to fill gaps in the budget foretold the end of true sharing, a judgment in which many experienced members of Congress concurred; routine operating expenses would gobble up all city revenues and federal appropriations for long-term needs would not be forthcoming. The same objection applied to a similar plan advanced as early as 1901 by Senator Hoar of Massachusetts, a scheme of having the government foot all the bills but collecting from District property-owners levies equal to but not in excess of those paid by residents of other like-sized cities. Both civilian commissioners thought some change inevitable and inclined to favor the Hoar plan. Louis Brownlow believed it sounder than the "legislative fiction" of half-and-half, and as he demonstrated the impossibility of separating the costs of services to the local public from those primarily benefiting the national government, he urged prompt adoption of a juster and more realistic division of the financial burden. In spite of Brownlow's exposition of the inseparability of federal and local needs, the committee concluded that District taxes should be used solely for the District, and all local revenues be spent before drawing upon the United States Treasury; "half-and-half" sharing was no longer either feasible or necessary. Since congressional parsimony toward Washington seemed to be wearing thin, the national city would not suffer. The Senate ignored the committee's findings and in fact they included no recommendations for legislation. But the report left the door open to future readjustments which, Senator Works remarked, should take into consideration the restoration
of some authority to the community over its own expenditures and the relieving
of Congress of some of its aldermanic responsibilities. 46

Local self government and "half-end-half" were so tied together by
the Organic act of 1878 that, quite apart from anxieties about allowing
Negroes political power, the most influential Washingtonians before 1916
were loath to contemplate an elective city government lest it result in
killing federal financial aid. Full voting representation in Congress, on
the other hand, got increasingly wide support from 1909 onward, in spite of
occasional Board of Trade warnings about the dangers involved in seeking
any change. 47 At a dinner given for President Taft by the Board of Trade
and the Chamber of Commerce in May 1909 Chief Justice Stafford of the
District Supreme Court made an eloquent plea for District enfranchisement,
at least for national elections:

Strip men of the ballot and you take away from society the most
powerful inducement that can prompt selfish human nature to educate
and elevate its helpless and its poor.

In a scarcely veiled attack on white fears of Negro voting, he asked:

Shall we say we fear the suffrages of ignorance and vice . . . that
could not last a generation if we did our duty by our fellow-men? . . .

Never until the men of wealth and education have spent their last
surplus dollar and exhausted the ingenuity of their brains in the
effort to make their fellow-men worthy to be sharers in the government,
ever until then will they have a right to hide behind an excuse like that. 48

46 Fiscal Relations, pp. 1-lix, Ser 6915.
47 Star, 23 Nov 09; S Doc 581, 603, 28, 26 Jan 09, Ser 5108; S Doc
1138, 522, 38, 1 Mar 13, Ser 6365.
48 Star, 9 May 09.
The President derided Stafford’s arguments, but a number of citizens’ associations outside wealthy northwest Washington endorsed them, and in 1912 a straw vote conducted by the newly organized District Suffrage League polled 10,816 ballots favoring local suffrage to only 941 against. Three years later, after the joint congressional committee report and Senator Works’ statement appeared, the Board of Trade also decided the city had more to gain than to lose by asking for a modification of the Organic act. Residents felt little or no dissatisfaction with the commissioners’ administration; even sectional complaints from East and Southwest Washington largely ceased when Newman and Siddons and then Brownlow took charge. But the disadvantages of rule by congressional committee were emerging with a clarity not to be ignored. To much of the local public the surest remedy seemed to lie in having an elected District senator and representatives on the Hill, although opposition to accompanying that change with an elected city government continued to sound loud in some quarters. Congressman who discussed the matter at all tended, on the contrary, to think Home Rule desirable, if only to lighten their duties, but were more than doubtful about giving the District virtual statehood. In short, what the community believed most beneficial was what Congress was least likely to grant. Yet the restoration of some measure of good feeling between the city and the United States Congress encouraged belief that together they would work out a satisfactory solution.

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19 Ibid., 5, 10, 12, 15 May 09, 1 Jan 10, 1 Jan 11; Times, 12, 29 Apr, 5 Jun, 8 Dec 13; 28 Sep, 14 Oct 11; Archibald Butt, Taft and Roosevelt, pp. 29-31; Post, 16 Feb 13.

CHAPTER XVIII

"THE CITY OF CONVERSATION"

Men and women born and bred in the District, like visitors, believed Washington the most sophisticated and agreeable city in the United States. On the eve of World War I, as for 50 years past, neither exasperation over missing services nor distress at the bitter poverty of the lower classes detracted sharply from the day by day pleasures of living in the capital.

Even families constantly hard pressed to make ends meet apparently enjoyed the privilege of being envied by outsiders. Certainly no one, however lowly his status, admitted to thinking life as drab here as it would be elsewhere. If his participation in the world of society and affairs was purely vicarious, seeing it pass by directly under his nose brought compensations. Government clerks as late as 1913 still paid at rates set in 1853 had probably the greatest cause for complaint as the cost of living in Washington reached a height unknown elsewhere, but the addition of a half hour to their working day in 1913 still left them more leisure than clerks in commercial establishments commanded or farmers or factory hands in the rest of America. Indeed only the rare person who thought well up the economic ladder took exception to the false values he felt pervading a city in which snobbery of money competed with snobbery of rank found fault with Washington as a place to live? And where in the United States of the early 20th century were fortunes and professional or family distinction not vying with each other?

When H. G. Wells in 1905 wrote of "Washington as Anticlimax," his

\[ \begin{align*} 
\frac{1}{2} \text{"What it Cost Me to be a Prominent Man," American Magazine, LXXXI, Feb 15, pp. 91-96.} 
\end{align*} \]
American readers could put his comments down to the crotchetsiness of a gifted but bumptious Englishman. Wells himself, picking up Henry James' epithet "The City of Conversation," remarked:

Washington, indeed, converses well, without awkwardness, without chattering, kindly watchful, agreeably witty. She lulled and tamed my purpose to ask about primary things, to discuss large questions... Washington remarked and alluded and made her point and got away.

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 CHAPTER XIX

THE BEGINNINGS OF NEGRO PROTEST

The position of Negroes, contrary to later often quoted Republican claims, continued to worsen slowly during the Roosevelt and Taft administrations, although subtle changes in the atmosphere in Washington rather than admitted shifts in official policy marked the decline.\textsuperscript{1} Colored men had little reason to expect special consideration from Theodore Roosevelt for, although as President Cleveland's first Civil Service Commissioner he had exercised scrupulous fairness in putting the merit system into effect in government, the Colonel of the Rough Riders had deeply offended Negroes by belittling the heroic services of the Black Cavalry at San Juan hill during the Spanish-American War.\textsuperscript{2} Yet if only because faith was essential to endurance, Washington Negroes inclined to believe the vigorous Theodore Roosevelt their staunch friend. They saw a new era Dawning when one of his first acts upon becoming President was to invite Booker T. Washington to dine at the White House to discuss Negro appointments to office; the unusual gesture seemed to presage recognition of political if not social equality. Those hopes quickly shrivelled; within six months the Washington Bee was speaking of "the Negro political decapitation dinner."\textsuperscript{3} The President, apparently surprised at the horrified outcry from arch-conservatives in his

\textsuperscript{1} E.G., Republican National Committee, Republican Campaign Textbook, 1912, p. 278.


\textsuperscript{3} Bee, 19 Oct 01, 8, 22 Feb 02, 2 Apr 04.
own party, stuck by his guns to the point of winning Senate concurrence in several Negro appointments, and he retained a number of colored men McKinley had put into office, but thereafter he made no further overtures to the race.

On the contrary. In 1906 when Negro troops in Brownsville, Texas, were involved in a brawl with white townspeople in which a white man was shot, presidential severity in approving the execution of thirteen colored soldiers and the dishonorable discharge of those who refused to identify the guilty alienated Roosevelt’s colored supporters in Washington. His appointment of two Negroes to the Homes Commission in 1908 won him no applause since all members of the commission gave their service.

President Taft stirred up fewer animosities than his predecessor but offered colored people meager encouragement for the future. Avoing belief in the Tuskegee philosophy of Negro economic advancement before enlarging Negro political power, Taft declared himself unwilling to appoint colored men to posts in the South where white resentment would create friction.

But he selected colored men for several “offices of essential dignity at Washington,” on the principle that it was better to give “large offices to well-equipped Negroes of the higher class” than to scatter “a lot of petty ones among the mess of their race.” Rather apologetically he wrote to

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5 Negro Year Book, 1912, p. 30-11; Nowlin, Negro in American Politics, p. 115; Star, 20 Jun 09.
Robert Terrell, Washington's one Negro judge: "I have not done all I ought to do or all I hope to do in the matter of the recognition of colored men, but positions are hard to find. Nobody resigns and nobody dies." However sound his reasons, Taft's policies were not wholly satisfactory to the city's colored people who saw their chances for political assignments diminish.

Up to a point colored Washingtonians rejoiced at any Negro's receiving a responsible federal post, they were dismayed at being themselves consistently passed over by the Presidents even for positions like that of Recorder of Deeds for which local taxes paid half. The grievance was heightened by the knowledge that Negroes the country over looked upon Washington's upper class colored community, voteless though it was, as the most distinguished in America. Under the "Square Deal" local Negroes won nothing except a municipal judgship to which President Roosevelt appointed Robert H. Terrell upon Booker T. Washington's recommendation. Every other appointive place in Washington, if tendered to a Negro at all, went to a colored Republican from one of the states. By 1908 the assignments of any distinction numbered seven: the posts of Register and Deputy Register of the Treasury, Assistant District Attorney for the District of Columbia, Auditor of the Navy Department, the police court judgship, the Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia and Chief Surgeon at the Freedmen's Hospital. President Taft added two more, the office of Collector of Customs

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6 Ltr, President Taft to Judge Robert Terrell, 2 Mar 10, Mary Church Terrell ms (L.C.).

7 See, 4 May 07, 7 May, 4 Jun 07, 20 Feb, 19 Apr 09, 23 Feb, 25 Mar 11. See also, ltr, William McKinley Clayton to Woodrow Wilson, 19 Mar 15, File 128, in 85A, Wilson ms (L.C.)
at Georgetown and, still saw more gratifying, the position of Assistant Attorney General of the United States, a plum which fell to a prominent colored lawyer from Boston. At those nine Negro preferment stood till 1913.

The significance all Negroes, particularly Negroes in Washington, attached to these nine offices seems at first out of all proportion to their number or their intrinsic importance. But between 1901 and 1913 they represented far more to colored people than sop to racial ambition or than thin acknowledgment of several hundred thousand potential colored Republican votes. For during the first dozen years of the 20th century when no colored men sat in Congress, Negro civil service employees of the government came to depend upon the President's Negro appointees to serve as their bulwark against injustice. In the 1880's and 1890's Negro congressmen had filled that role, or at least so colored departmental clerks believed. Now they must look elsewhere for help in getting merited assignments when civil service rules swayed precariously in the winds of a stiffening racism. In 1910 a Negro journalist jokingly called Taft's nine principal Negro appointees "the Black Cabinet." The name stuck and with some reason: although their intervention was not always successful, apparently sometimes it had the desired effect.

Nevertheless civil service jobs held out fewer opportunities for intelligent Negroes than in the 1880's and 1890's. The Civil Service Commission rules had always allowed a department or division chief a choice among the three top candidates whose examinations qualified them for a

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8 Negro Year Book, 1912, pp. 70-71; Bee, 27 Apr 07, 23 Jul, 10, 11 Sep 11.
9 Bee, 29 Mar, 12 Apr 13; Hayes, Negro Govt Worker, pp. 26-27, 32-35.
vacancy, but after the turn of the century that latitude, Negroes believed, increasingly came to be used as a weapon of racial subjugation. Certainly promotions became fewer and fewer for Negroes and they remarked on the mounting frequency with which white associates of lesser education and experience and therefore presumably of lesser competence were pushed ahead of them. By 1908 not more than three or four colored men had advanced into supervisory positions and all colored employees of the federal government in Washington had dwindled from the 1537 of 1892 to 1450, about 300 of them clerks, the rest messengers or common laborers. Until 1909 the State Department had no colored employee ranking above a messenger, and the lone Negro who then attained a clerk's rating achieved it, he later explained, because his personal friend, the incoming Secretary of State, insisted that the merit system recognize merit. While Republican campaign literature of 1912 claimed that by then the federal government had more than 4100 colored employees in Washington earning over $4,000,000 a year, those figures were manifestly exaggerated and in any case made little impression upon educated people who knew that the color of their skins would keep them in the bottom grades of government service.

In the District government civil service rules did not apply at all.

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The wishes of members of the House or Senate District committees might determine who was hired or promoted and, if congressional patronage did not interfere, the preferences of individual commissioners or their immediate subordinates were the deciding factor. The Washington Bee insisted that the Engineer commissioners never approved of Negroes in any but menial jobs, and of the civilian commissioners only Henry West displayed no "colorphobia."

In 1908 out of a clerical force of 450 in the District Building, only 9 were Negroes; among 731 policemen and 498 firemen 39 and 9 respectively were colored; 79 clerks and 55 mail carriers were colored out of 881 city post office employees; 160 colored school teachers selected by the Assistant Superintendent completed the list of the District's Negro employees in "white collar" jobs. The pay scale put the yearly income of most of them at less than $1000. Four years later a city containing some 94,000 colored inhabitants and 20,000 colored men who paid fifteen million dollars in taxes had about 900 Negroes on the payroll, but nearly half of them were rated as unskilled laborers at wages of $500 or less a year. The advantages which government employment in Washington had once offered colored people no longer obtained.

At the same time jobs open to Negroes in other fields, especially domestic service, shrank in number. Judge Terrell put the blame for householders' shift to white servants upon his own people, for too often, he

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11 Madden, "A Color Phase of Washington," World Today, XIV, May 06, 1917, pp. 449-52; Sherman's Directory, pp. 407-17; Bee, 9 Sep 99, 11 May 07, 17 Dec 10, 28 Jan, 23 Feb 11, 20 Feb 15. As the figures given in the Negro Year Book between 1913 and 1917 do not vary by so much as a digit, they automatically become suspect. The Directory data on the other hand are so detailed that errors seem unlikely.
declared, they skimmed their work while making unwarranted demands upon
their employers. He viewed the refusal of Negroes to work for other Negroes
as a particularly serious matter in a city where he estimated a tenth to a
fifth of the 90,000 colored people did not or would not work at all. He
told the National Negro Business League in New York of a colored woman who,
having advertised for a washwoman, was informed by a colored applicant:
"Lady, I can't work for you; I'm in society myself."\footnote{12} Partly because of
Negro reluctance to patronize other Negroes, all the professions in Washington
were overcrowded with trained men who could not find clients and teachers
who could not get places in the colored school system. Nor did Negro business
enterprise prosper in spite of the efforts of the local branch of the new
Negro Business League and in spite of a few isolated examples of modest
success—an insurance company, a shoe store, and several drug stores.\footnote{13}
In 1903 Washington's Negro Savings Bank failed and neither the urgings of
Negro leaders elsewhere nor the endeavors of local men succeeded in launching
another institution. Although the greatly improved appearance, better news
coverage and more dignified tone of the Washington Bee indicated a growing
readiness in the colored community to support Negro ventures, the Colored
American, which Booker T. Washington had largely financed, ceased publication
in 1904 after a losing ten-year struggle. The Bee in turn ran into
financial difficulties in 1908 when a rival, the Washington American,
appeared, Calvin Chase's repeated attacks upon Mr. Washington's "Uncle
Tomism" notwithstanding, the educator came to the rescue, for he considered

\footnote{12} Star, 20 Aug 05; Bee, 26 Aug 05.

\footnote{13} Bee, 25 Nov 05, 24 Feb, 21 Jul, 3 Nov 06, 9 Jan, 27 Mar 09,
15 Feb 13.
a vigorous Negro press an important weapon in the Negroes' fight for advancement, and the capital above all must have Negro newspapers. 14

Accompanying the growing economic pinch was a gradual tightening of the cordon excluding Negroes from any slight share in a common social life of the city. The one exception was the children's annual Easter Monday egg-rolling contest on the White House lawn when for a few hours white and colored children intermingled, "all beaten up as it were in a social omelette. Eggs of every color are rolled back and forth . . . and there are just as many shades, if not as many colors, of skin as of egg shell."15 The rest of the year race prejudice seeping down from parents poisoned the relations between white and colored youngsters. As Joe Gans, the Negro prize fighter, won fame in the ring, whenever a championship bout was scheduled a boy of either race who ventured alone into Washington's streets beyond his own immediate neighborhood risked a beating up from a gang of the enemy intent upon upholding the honor of Gans or his white rival. One very light-colored red-haired Negro boy faced double jeopardy, since colored contemporaries outside the Negro section of Foggy Bottom took him for a white, while white boys pounced on him as a Negro. Jack Johnson's victories over Jim Jeffries later made matters worse. 16 Athletic prowess, which in post World War II years would begin to bridge racial cleavages, merely widened the gulf.

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16 Interview with Dr. Rayford Logan, 23 Nov 54; Bee, 19 Feb 16.
The rapidity with which the breach developed in the first decade of the century is astonishing. As late as 1902 the Washington Post with an unusual display of interest devoted a half column to praise of the city's upper class Negro society, "the Negro scholar in silk hat and frock coat," the wealthy Negro lawyer, the half dozen colored members of the Washington Board of Trade, the colored women graduates of Wellesley, Smith, Oberlin and Russell Sage, the Treble Clef Club "organized for the study of classical music," the Samuel Coleridge Taylor Oratorio Society with its 225 voices and the church choirs which "won golden opinions." Two years later the Post was deploring the unseemly ambition of Washington's colored leaders to get "the ballot, recognition, admission to theatres and restaurants, monopoly of the public parks and other like prerogatives" instead of pouring their efforts into establishing colored vocational and manual training schools as Negroes in the Deep South were doing. White residents overlooked the steady decline of illiteracy among Washington's adult Negroes; in 1910 it stood at less than 17 per cent. The Star suggested that white people should not draw the color line in giving Christmas charity, but otherwise, save for an occasional friendly notice in the Washington Times, after 1903 the city's white press confined its favorable comments on Negro activities to acclaim of Booker T. Washington's program at Tuskegee Institute with its implied acknowledgment of Negroes' inherent racial inferiority. By 1908 a dispassionate appraisal of race relations in the capital led a magazine writer to conclude that in Washington "the separation of the races is more

17 Post, 3 Aug 02, 9 Jan 04.
18 Fourteenth U.S. Census, 1920, Ref. No. 1157. Star, 14 Dec 03.
nealy complete than in any other city of the Union. The better class of white and colored people know absolutely nothing of each other."19

Intelligent Negroes were painfully aware of what was happening. An anonymous article entitled "What It Means to be Colored in the Capital of the United States" listed for readers of the Independent some of the new manifestations of racism which were appearing in 20th century Washington: in January 1906 the Columbian Debating Society at George Washington University debated the question: "Resolved that a Jim Crow law should be adopted and enforced in the District of Columbia"; the affirmative won; a few months later a bill for Jim Crow cars was introduced in Congress and a citizens' association endorsed the proposal; until 1900 the colored schools had had colored directors of music, art, cooking, sewing, manual training and physical culture; now all were white. "For fifteen years," wrote the author, "I have resided in Washington, and while it was far from being a 'paradise for colored people,' when I first touched these shores it has been doing its level best ever since to make conditions for us intolerable."20

Mounting white antagonism had the desired effect: from 31 per cent of the total population in 1900, colored Washington dropped to 28½ per cent in 1910 and would be only 25 per cent by 1920. (See Table I, p. ). Knowing themselves unwelcome, the colored members of the Board of Trade resigned. At the request of the local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Negro women withdrew in 1908 to form a "Jim Crow" unit. While the


colored people, he thought Negroes "morally and intellectually a weaker race, and ... even if they should become great landowners, men of wealth and of education; race antagonism would only become stronger and more sharply defined." Washington's Negro intelligentsia no doubt saw some truth in these pronouncements, but the Bishop's repudiation of education, wealth and political power as means of closing the gap between the races and his statement that a solution must depend upon every Negro's winning for himself "a strong, robust Christ-like character" were profoundly discouraging. 23

Seemingly white men could remain devils but colored must become saints. Told by whites year after year of the virtues of Booker T. Washington's subservient philosophy, Negro aristocrats in the capital listened without enthusiasm to the exhortation of the sage of Tuskegee speaking at Washington's colored YMCA that the eyes of the world were upon them and they must set an example by ridding the city of loafers, drunkards and gamblers. 24

Perhaps the most deadly blow the city's white churches dealt their dark-skinned Christian brethren came in 1910 with the assembling in Washington of the sixth World Sunday School Convention. The local committee on arrangements refused to seat local colored delegates or permit them to march in the parade because they were not members of the District Sunday School Association although they belonged to the World Sunday School Association and had taken part in earlier conventions. The Evening Star blandly reported all "wrinkles ... smoothed out" by a vote of the organization and the contributions of delegates of the southern states to make Booker T. Washington


24 Star, 21 Apr 02, 10 May, 26 Jun 09; Post, 29 Jun 02; Bee, 17 Sep 01, 19 Dec 05.
a life member. But insofar as Mr. Washington represented "Uncle Tomism" to many local leaders the Star's interpretation smacked of belittling the entire issue. 25 Several clergymen in the North thundered their protests, but discrimination was too common in northern cities to make rebukes from the pulpit telling. 26

Still worse were the multiplying instances of racial segregation put into effect in government offices on the thinnest of pretexts or none. A "Jim Crow corner" first appeared in 1904 in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. By 1905 the Bee, after listing other examples, declared, "In the government departments there is a systematic effort inaugurated to Jim Crow the Negro. The fever is spreading... The Negro is afraid to complain." 27 Race prejudice and hate, having once gained a foothold under a Republican administration, quickly intensified and widened its reach. Before 1909 separate locker and wash rooms and separate lunch room accommodations had become the rule in a number of sections of the Treasury Department and the Department of the Interior and, although the scheme did not spread rapidly during the next four years, the administration made no move to check or forbid it. What Republican officials saw fit to allow set the pattern for private concerns. In 1910 at the invitation of the Federation of Citizens' Association ten recently organized Negro neighborhood groups attended a joint meeting, only to have their hosts then vote to exclude them from federation membership; the Negroes thenceforth took the name Civic

25 Star, 20, 23, 28 May 10; Herald, 23 May 10; Post, 20, 21, 23 May 10.

26 Ray Stannard Baker, Following the Color Line; Frank Quillin, The Color Line in Ohio, op. cit., 126-58.

27 Bee, 3 Sep 04, 11 Feb 05.
Associations and formed their own federation. The local civil rights acts still stood unrepealed, but restaurants, barber shops and hotels now barred Negroes as a matter of course, theaters admitted them only to "Nigger Heavens," and railroads and buses carrying passengers into the District from Virginia and Maryland enforced Jim Crow seating. As a suit if won in court meant at most token damages for the plaintiff, Negroes ceased to invoke the law. Indeed, a good many of them obviously shrank from public complaint lest it feed fuel to the campaign to rewrite the law. White extremists might persuade Congress not only to destroy the last flimsy legal safeguards against racial discrimination in the District of Columbia but to make segregation mandatory.

From 1907 on bills for Jim Crow cars in the District came up in the House of Representatives at intervals. While a new congressman from Georgia announced his determination to force all Negroes out of government service, agitation for an anti-miscegenation law for the District made headway until in February 1913 the House passed the bill in less than five minutes; only Senate inaction stopped it. When the Negro Register of the Treasury and a colored guest lunched in the House Office Building restaurant, five congressmen threatened a boycott that would close it down if such an affront to white manhood ever recurred; the manager assured them it would not. With lynching rampant in the Deep South, Negroes in Washington had some reason to think the moment inopportune to protest the curtailment of their own civil rights. It is possible, to be sure, that only a few men...
understood the seriousness of the trend in the capital and, as one student of the local scene later argued, that before the summer of 1913 the rank and file felt little comprehensiveness for themselves. 29 But over a ten-year span the evidence the Washington Bee assembled and published periodically indicated clearly that Washington Negroes, albeit unlikely to see lynchings in the city, were already subject to most of the discriminations imposed upon colored people elsewhere in America.

The accelerating racism of white Washington, however, brought reaction in the form of growing militance among the city's upper class Negroes. Booker T. Washington to the day of his death in 1915 kept many close friends in the capital, but educated colored people who accepted his program of "racial solidarity, self help and economic chauvinism" increasingly rejected his methods and his disregard of political action. His conciliatory policies, his anxiety to avoid "friction" with white exploiters and his stress upon patience led to a break between him and a group of Negro radicals in 1906 when some twenty-nine "rebels" headed by the brilliant young W. E. B. Du Bois of Atlanta University and William Monroe Trotter, editor of the Boston Guardian, launched the so-called "Niagara Movement" with a manifesto of Negro rights and aims. Four Washington Negroes took part in the first Niagara conference. Inspired by that example, leadership long dormant in colored Washington began to reassert itself. Kelly Miller, professor of Mathematics and later dean at Howard University, George W. Cook, Treasurer of Howard, the Reverend Samuel Carruthers of the Galbraith AME church, 

29 H Rpt 8072, 590, 25, 23 Feb 07, Ser 5065; Star, 11 May 09; Herald, 21 May 07; Post, 11 Feb 13; Crisis, V, Apr 13, pp. 270-71; Hayes, Negro Govt Worker, p. 33.
Francis J. Grimke of the 15th Street Presbyterian church, three or four other local pastors, Mary Church Terrell, wife of Judge Terrell and the first president of the National Association of Colored Women, Calvin Chase of the Bee, and a score of other men and women who commanded prestige abandoned the tactics of suffering indignities in silence and began a campaign of outspoken protest against social injustice. Few of them openly criticized the conservative Booker Washington and Mrs. Terrell while serving on the Board of Education rebuked a Negro newspaperman for objecting to the "Tuskegee idea" of Negro education, although she herself advocated giving the colored child in the District the same schooling as the white. But irrespective of their feelings about Mr. Washington, all of the group joined in publicizing the fact that colored people were not content to be hewers of wood and drawers of water and that whites were deluded if, like the New York Times, they thought "the Negroes of the United States are doing very well."  

Although Washington's Negro militents constantly gained adherents, the city was not initially in the front of the fight, perhaps because the District's voiceless status gave political leadership to New York, Boston and Chicago, perhaps also because colored people in the largest Negro city in the country, having escaped the excesses of lily-white agitation which the Deep South was experiencing, were very about forcing an issue locally.

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31 Ltr, Mar Church Terrell to H. G. Pinkett, 9 Sep 06, Terrell mss (L.C.); New York Times, 18 Apr 13.
lest it boomerang violently. If, as one scholar avers, Booker T. Washington's greatest ascendency, which spanned the first decade of the century, "coincided with the period of greatest oppression Negroes have faced since the Civil War," the birth of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in New York City in 1909 must be recognized as marking the beginning of the slow march upward. Started by a handful of earnest white people, the association was bi-racial from the first. Not until the spring of 1912 did Washington branch of the NAACP organize, but within a few months it was one of the largest in the country and counted 143 members. Among them was so distinguished a white man as Chief Justice Stafford, but, unlike the New York group, white members were few; here the most able of the upper class Negro community took charge, bending their efforts upon providing legal aid for Negro victims of discrimination.33

Yet grim as things looked for all American Negroes in 1912, gleams of hope were visible in Washington. They derived principally from the changing point-of-view of the city's professional social workers and the volunteers they trained as visitors in the slums. First-hand exposure to the conditions under which honest hard-working colored families had to live gradually taught fair-minded investigators a good deal about the obstacles confronting Washington's Negroes. In 1908 the report of the President's Homes Commission and an eye-opening study in the United States Labor Department Bulletin enabled thoughtful people to examine the statistical evidence

33 Negro Year Book, 1912, p. 131; Third Annual Report National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, p. 23 (hereafter cited as An Rpt NAACP); Flint Kellogg, "Villard and the NAACP," Nation, 188, Nov., 11, Feb 59, 137-ho; The Crisis, VI, Aug 13, p. 190.
that starvation wages and destitution were directly related. Certainly key people in the Associated Charities ceased to label poverty and extreme want indications of moral depravity. True, white business men still occasionally talked as if public interest in lowering the Negro death rate had no humanitarian basis and was merely a question of disposing of an unpleasant detail which interfered with favorable advertising for the city, but few men sounded as sure as once they had that Negro "shiftlessness" lay at the root of the problem. Furthermore, white assumptions that upper class Negroes lacked civic-mindedness received a jolt when a compilation of scattered data revealed that Negroes not only had initiated the anti-tuberculosis drive in the city but also organized the Alley Improvement Association in 1907, carried on a day nursery for infants of working mothers and provided summer outings for colored children. Of the $50,000 collected in Washington for a colored YMCA colored people contributed $27,000. Conferences between Negro workers at the colored Southwest Settlement House and white philanthropists came to be "remarkably free from race consciousness, the one thought on both sides being the common welfare." Negroes thus brought into touch with whites active in Washington charities had opportunity to feel the lightening of the atmosphere of censoriousness. 34

Inasmuch as white men's respect, not their charity, was the goal of Negro leaders, any sign that a segment of white Washington was ready to work

34 Crisis, X, Dec 11, p. 51; Rot F of Tr, 1910, p. 6; Times, 5 May 11; Sarah C. Fernandia, "In the Making," Charities, XVI, 11 Sep 07, pp. 703-05; Bres. 3 Apr 07, 5 Jan, 13 Feb, 6 Mar, 8 May 09, 1 Jan, 19 May, 16 Apr 10, 7 Nov 11, 17, 24 May, 5 Jul 13; Washington Sun, 12 Feb, 15 May 15.
with them for the common good assumed importance. Furthermore, reform was in the air throughout the United States as the presidential election of 1912 approached, and noting the fervor with which white muckrakers and progressives talked of the far-reaching social and political changes that must come, thoughtful colored men dared think reform might extend to race relations. Washingtonians' disenfranchised state in no way lessened their interest in the campaign. None of the three major party candidates made explicit promises, but while Republicans pointed to President Taft's record of Negro appointments and Theodore Roosevelt announced Bull Moose opposition to "brutal" Democratic and "hypocritical" Republican racial policies, Woodrow Wilson preached the "New Freedom" with its guarantees of "fair and just treatment" for all. 35 The Washington Bee warned of the risks of trusting any Democrat, but when the election was over the editor urged his readers to have faith in the assurances of the NAACP and influential colored supporters of Woodrow Wilson that the incoming President would not countenance continued discrimination and segregation. 36

Negroes in the capital waited eagerly for word of new appointments and measures that would wipe out the Jim Crow sections in government offices. March and most of April 1913 came and went. Confidence in the "New Freedom" gave way to uneasiness. Then piece by piece the world of colored Washington fell apart. Within the next few months the President dismissed all but two


36 Bee, 12 Dec 12.
of the Negroes whom T!>ft had appointed "to offices of essential dignity at Washington" and replaced them with white men. He nominated a colored lawyer from Oklahoma for Register of the Treasury with the intention of making the Register's section an all-Negro unit, but when the nominee, intimidated by fierce opposition of the Senate, withdrew his name, Wilson appointed an American Indian. Even the recordership of deeds for the District of Columbia, a colored preserve since 1881, went to a white man in 1916. By then the only Negro to hold an appointive position in Washington was Robert Terrell, confirmed in April 1911 for another term as a municipal judge.37 Disillusioning to Negroes though these snubs were, they were pin-pricks compared to the segregationist policies officially sanctioned in government departments in the summer of 1913. Colored people, aghast at this repudiation of what they felt Wilson had solemnly pledged them, refused for a time to believe that the President knew what was afoot, but in October 1913 when a delegation led by William Monroe Trotter of Boston begged him to intervene, the President's evasive answer dissipated doubts: Jim-Crowism in the federal government had his approval.38

"Segregation," reported a white officer of the NAACP "is no new thing in Washington, and the present administration cannot be said to have inaugurated it. The past few months of Democratic Party control, however, have given segregation impetus and have been marked by more than a beginning


of systematic enforcement. It is becoming known as a policy of the present government." As soon as the Virginia-born President was installed in the White House, a group of Negro haters calling themselves the National Democratic Fair Play Association had undertaken to stir up trouble in order to get Negroes out of the civil service, restrict them to menial jobs or at the very least keep white and colored workers separate. A Fair Play committee busily poking about in various offices had elicited complaints from "Democratic clerks and other white employers of the government who are inimical to the Negro," and had obtained the backing of "Democratic office-seekers" who declared it intolerable for white people to work in proximity to Negroes, let alone under their supervision. The President, apparently convinced that racial friction was indeed rife in the executive departments, was anxious to check it if only because it might imperil his legislative programs. Perhaps in the view of the southern background of Postmaster General Albert Burleson, Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo, and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, segregation would have become standard throughout their departments without the impetus supplied by outside agitation and tales of the shocked disapproval of Mrs. Woodrow Wilson at seeing on her first tour of the Post Office Department colored men and white women working in the same room. The change, by whichever


40 Post. 30 Apr 13; Crisis, VI, Jun 13, pp. 60-63.

41 Post. 30 Apr, 2, 20 May 13; 1trs, Ralph Tyler to President Wilson, 12 May, and Oswald Garrison Villard to Wilson, 29 Sep 13, File 152A, Wilson mss; Bee, 10, 17 May, 11 Jun, 19, 26 Jul, 6 Sep 13; Arthur Link, The New Freedom, op. 245-51; Crisis, VI, Sep 13, p. 220, Oct 13, pp. 298-99; see also Long, "Woodrow Wilson and the Negro," pp. 59-121, for an analysis of the President's attitude.
inspired, had gone into effect in the Post Office Department before the end of July 1913, and by autumn the Treasury, which had moved more cautiously while watching public reaction, had consigned the colored employees of most divisions to separate rooms and forbidden all Negro employees to use the lunch tables and the toilet facilities that for years past they had shared with their white fellows. Similar rules applied in the Navy Department as well as in all federal offices where segregation had obtained under Republican rule.

"The effect is startling," the NAACP report noted. "Those segregated are regarded as a people apart, almost as lepers." White clerks, seemingly without personal convictions, now said they approved; to endorse the new arrangement had become "the thing to do." Yet, as the Bee pointed out, ever since President Cleveland had quashed every proposal of segregation in the government service, "Afró-American clerks" had worked side by side with white in "peace and harmony." In the summer of 1913 Booker T. Washington wrote a friend: "I have never seen the colored people of Washington so discouraged and so bitter as they are at the present time." A mass meeting of some 10,000 people gathered in late October at the Metropolitan church to protest "the officializing of race prejudice," but for the moment the "lepers" in the government service dared go no further lest they precipitate a drastic change in the Civil Service law which would extend segregation into every federal department and be far harder to rescind than the word-of-mouth orders of departmental chiefs.

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12 NAACP Report, 1 Nov 13; Bee, 15 Nov 13.

13 Ltr, Booker T. Washington to O. O. Villard, 10 Aug, enclosed in Ltr Villard to Woodrow Wilson, 18 Aug 13, File 152 Wilson mss; Bee, 15 Nov 13; Crisis, VII, Dec 13, p. 89.
Local leaders of the NAACP realized that "almost every man employed by the government and by the schools risks his position when he stands on our militant platform," but they believed that only a united front could stop the spread of racial discrimination. In the autumn of 1913 they organized a "sneakers' bureau to go from church to church, society to society, and lodge to lodge, "to arouse the colored people themselves to their danger, to make them feel it through and through, and at the same time to make them willing to make sacrifices for the cause." The response was "nothing short of a miracle." In a city notoriously rent by "all sorts of sections," Archibald Grimke, president of the Washington branch, almost disbelievingly saw support for the NAACP program come from "school teachers [from whom you do not believe cared for anything but pleasure,] society women, young men." 14

By the early months of 1914 the Washington branch had over seven hundred dues-paying members and had sent nearly $1000 to national headquarters. 15

Influential white men who believed in racial equality joined in the fight. Personal letters pleading with the President to alter his course and indignant articles in the liberal magazines and newspapers failed, however, to persuade Mr. Wilson to reverse his position. On the contrary, his resistance stiffened. When a second Negro delegation, again led by William Monroe Trotter, reminded him of his earlier promise to see justice done, he lost his temper and let the delegation know he was not to be high-pressured.

The remonstrances, on the other hand, were almost certainly instrumental in

14 Crisis, VII, Feb 14, pp. 192-93.
15 Ibid., VIII, May 14, pp. 32-33.
preventing the wholesale adoption of segregation throughout the government. In March 1911 when the House Committee on Civil Service Reform held hearings on two bills calling for mandatory separation of "government employees of the white race from those of African blood and descent," the NAACP was successful in getting the record made public. The sponsors of the bills argued that it was unjust to a member of "this inferior race" to put him in a position of authority over a Caucasian; segregation was righteous, not by the stamp of color the Lord had decreed a lowly place for Negroes. When an unjust, discrimination. Illinois congressman asked: "Who can say the Almighty decreed it?", Representative Aswell of Louisian replied: "History, experience, and first-hand knowledge." Northern representatives did not concur; both bills died in committee.

In the meantime the Supreme Court ruled that the federal Civil Rights Act of 1875, long ago declared unconstitutional in the states, was invalid also in federal territory, a decision which opened the door to new discriminatory laws in the District of Columbia. But no further restrictive measures became law in the District. Fresh attempts to exclude Negroes from government service, anti-miscegenation and Jim Crow streetcar bills and a segregated residential bill patterned on a Baltimore ordinance of 1913 all met with defeat. Pressures in fact eased slightly in 1915 when the Supreme Court in an unforeseen reversal of earlier opinions refused to

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h7 Negro Year Book, 1914-15, pp. 34-36; H Comes on Reform in the Civil Service 636, 28, Segregation of Clerks and Employees in the Civil Service, 6 Mar 14, pp. 3, 7.
allow nearby Maryland to write a "grandfather clause" into her constitution.

"More than seventy-five percent of the present segregation," the Bee reminded its readers in 1915, "was transmitted to President Wilson by the Republicans." And, while omitting mention of a change in Civil Service rules whereby applicants filing for examinations must now submit their photographs, the editor noted more Negro promotions in the civil service than in years past. Such statements, true though they were, were clearly designed to bolster Negro morale when it badly needed bolstering. For, as realists had foreseen, the administration policy meant to white citizens and most corporations in the District that short of open violence they could carry discrimination virtually as far as they chose. The transit companies, to be sure, were not allowed to introduce Jim Crow cars, and white real estate firms could not enforce by law housing covenants restricting Negroes to black belts within the city, but informal agreements between sellers and buyers effectively strengthened the residential color line. In 1914

Moorfield Story of Boston, President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, persuaded the American Bar Association to rescind its recent ruling that no Negro could be elected to membership, but the substitute provision that applicants must state their race and sex served the same purpose. Negroes were unable to buy tickets to the Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts; colored school teachers were excluded from a

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teachers' lecture series held in the Congregational church; and no Negro civic organizations were invited to join with the fifty-six white in planning better correlation of the city's recreational activities. While not all white Washingtonians shared the prevailing colorphobic and Chief Justice Wendell Stafford fought it in the District Supreme Court, tendency outside Washington until the election campaign of 1916 began was to dismiss racial problems in the capital as purely "local issues" of no concern to the rest of America.49

The attacks and the only less disheartening indifference of white people, however, had the effect of maintaining the new solidarity in the Negro world. In Washington's triple colored community a sense of cohesiveness, lacking for thirty years, had begun to emerge before 1911; it strengthened extraordinarily during the crisis of 1913 and 1914, but as the struggle against race prejudice dragged on, the failures to make headway might well have dissolved the new bonds. That it endured was the great triumph. In other cities, also, at least in the North, upper class Negroes, the "talented tenth" upon whom W. E. B. DuBois pinned hopes for the race, saw they could not remain detached from the lower class black, no matter how superior they knew themselves to be and no matter how uncongenial they found his society.

But the growth of "group-identification" among all classes of Washington Negroes had special significance, both because elaborate class distinctions were older here than in most of the United States and because all colored people recognized Washington as the center of Negro culture in America.50

49 Bee, 6 Dec 13, 31 Oct 14, 15 May 15; Haynes, Negro Govt Worker, pp. 52-55; Crisis, VII, Jan 11, p. 117; Feb 14, p. 142, 159; Sun, 76 Mar, 30 Apr 15.

To this change in Washington the new attitude of the Bee supplies an index. Where its pages week after week in the 1890's and 1890's had carried soothing accounts of Negro discrimination against Negroes and had sneered at any colored man who achieved distinction, the editorials and news articles as the 20th century grew older gradually took on a constructive character. Calvin Chase, it is true, indebted as he was to Booker T. Washington for financial aid, leased out periodically at W. E. B. DuBois, arch opponent of Mr. Washington's subservient teachings, but after the death of the Tuskegee leader in November 1915, those explosions in turn ended. Chase saw fit to needle colored men who sought their own advantage at the sacrifice of principle. He called attention to the destructive selfishness of Negro candidates for office under the proscriptive Democratic régime. "Woody," he declared, "believed his segregation policy was approved by the black gentry because so many of them were anxious to serve under him, segregation or no segregation."

Sarcastically Chase observed that no local colored men had had the courage to ask the President in person to define his position on race questions as William Monroe Trotter of Boston had twice obliged him to do, first in November 1913 and again a year later. Yet in taking cowards and the mean-minded to task, the Bee also accorded praise to colored men of firm convictions and larger vision. Scoldings at Negro short-comings became progressively fewer and turned instead into exhortations to push on with the noble work of establishing a self-respecting, self-sufficient Negro Washington within the larger community.

51 Bee, 5 Mar 15.

52 Ibid., 26 Nov, 17 Dec 10, 18 Mar, 29 Jul 11, 10 Aug 12, 17 Jan, 7, 28 Feb, 7 May, 21 Nov 13, 16 Jan, 27 Feb 15.
Four other Negro publications were appearing regularly in the District in 1911 and 1915—the short-lived Washington Sun published by a gifted but erratic protege of Booker T. Washington, the Washington American, and two magazines, the Odd Fellows Journal and the National Union, organ of a Negro insurance company. In 1915 the Journal of Negro History began its long and useful career. The American, an uninspired, rather shabby-looking sheet, and the ably edited Sun pursued the same line as the Bee, albeit in less bellicose language: buy colored, support colored charities and colored civic enterprizes, take pride in Negro achievements and don't be "Jim Crowed" by patronizing places where Negroes are segregated. The four-fold program was already familiar, but the emphasis on Negro successes won by Negro cooperation was novel. Gradually business firms and non-profit groups alike adopted the techniques of advertising that Negro solidarity had accomplished. The Howard Theatre, which after two or three years of white management reverted to colored in 1913, provided good entertainment—some plays, more minstrel shows and musicals such as those given by the "Black Patti Troubadours"—and by renting the premises for carefully staged amateur performances now and again served as a kind of community cultural center. At the Majestic vaudeville theatre and two new Negro movie houses colored audiences never had to face the humiliations of Jim-Crowism. In Le Droit Park 5000 colored residents could enjoy a similar freedom by giving their custom to the Negro-owned grocery store. The Sun, remarking that the local Negro Business League had gone "to sleep" in 1913, begun in 1915 to carry a directory of reliable Negro business firms in the city. A colored department store in a building on 11th street employed only colored help and met a long-felt want. U street in northwest Washington was becoming the
colored Connecticut Avenue. In southwest Washington the new Douglass Hotel offered colored tourists and conventions comfortable accommodations. The Negro newspapers began to insist on use of the capital N, after 1914 frequently capitalized "colored" also and, doubtless in the interest of racial harmony, practically dropped the term "black" from their pages. But the new propaganda despite its militance was refreshingly free of the belligerence that had formerly accompanied attempts to encourage Negro enterprise in the city.  

True, there was more to take pride in, as the social disorganization that had long characterized colored Washington began to yield to community effort. Nowhere were the results more noticeable than in the charities and civic undertakings. Progress had begun even before the disasters of the Wilson era added impetus. By the spring of 1913 the recently opened colored YWCA built brick by brick by Negro workmen was free of debt, and the Executive Secretary reported operating costs of $8200 met during the first year with a 56-cent balance. The Y quickly became a social center that fostered community feeling. "The fraternal spirit existing between the Y and the local ministry is happily shown in the use by a number of the churches of the great swimming pool for baptismal purposes." The local branch of the NAACP, the Public School Athletic League, the Christian Endeavor Union, the Welfare Club, the Federation of Civic Associations, the local Medical Society and other organizations used the building for their meetings. The colored YWCA expanded its program and paid off all but a small indebtedness during 1913. While public-spirited Negroes admitted that too few well-to-do families

53 Bee, 26 Nov 10, 20 Feb, 19 Jun, 10 Jul, 2 Oct 15, 25 Mar 16; Fun, 8 Jan, 5, 25 Feb, 12 Mar, 23 Apr 15; Crisis, XI, Dec 15, op. 90-94.
54 Bee, 17 May 13.
contributed to charity, a new-born determination to carry on without
depending on white philanthropy apparently helped to elicit funds from
Negroes who once would have taken the attitude: let the white shoulder the
burden, since they are responsible for the colored men’s plight. At the
annual meeting of the Colored Social Settlement in December 1913, the
principal speaker, Roscoe Conkling Bruce, Assistant Superintendent for the
colored schools, stressed to the audience that it was Dr. John R. Francis,
Washington’s leading colored physician, who had launched the center "about
which many and various efforts for social uplift are organized." Bruce’s
stirring appeal for generous support of this primarily Negro-sponsored
charity included a plea for teaching colored children about the great men
of their own race, for only so would the younger generation escape being
overwhelmed by the prestige of the white race and avoid the impairment of
colored initiative. In much the same vein the founders of the newly
organized Oldest Inhabitants Association (Colored) of Washington announced
their purpose to be the fostering of Negro civic pride. 55

It would be untruthful to picture colored Washington in 1915 and
1916 as a unified community free of the old divisive jealousies and destruc-
tive backbiting, its individual members now single-mindedly working all for
one and one for all. Indeed to imagine possible a spiritual revolution of
the proportions necessary to completely reshape the social structure of the
Negro world in the capital would be naive in the extreme. Leaders faltered,

55 Ibid., 28 Jan 11, 21 May, 21 Jun, 5 Jul, 18 Oct, 6 Dec 13; Sun.
8 Jan 15; John H. Peyster, A Souvenir of the Anniversary and Banquet of the
Oldest Inhabitants Association (Colored) of the District of Columbia, April
16, 1914.
quarrels persisted, particularly over teaching appointments and promotions in the school system, and self-contempt shown in the sheer meanness of Negro to Negro continued to interfere with the important task of raising the economic level of all classes of Negroes. Few were willing as yet to discard class distinctions based largely upon degree of color, although the cost of racial disunity was as high for the light-colored Caucasian-featured person as for the black-skinned Negroid-looking. Moreover, the tightening of the net drawn by strengthened white hostility, while binding courageous colored people together in a common purpose, strangled the will of the weak and timid; circumstances that awakened a fighting spirit in some of the race stripped others of the capacity to hold up their heads at all. Nevertheless the energy with which Negro leaders set themselves to end lynching in the South and racial discrimination everywhere was truly impressive.

W. E. B. DuBois later wrote of the early years of the Wilson administration, "Quite suddenly the program for the NACP, which up to this time had been more or less indefinite, was made clear and intensive." The Washington branch enjoyed several successes, forestalling adverse legislation, getting a few Negroes reinstated in their government jobs and keeping the annual congressional appropriation for Howard University and its 300 college students. Besides a vigorous separate University chapter, by 1916

56 Sun, 5, 26 Feb 15; ltr, M. C. Terrell to Robert Terrell, n.d., M.C. Terrell mss. Practically every issue of the Bee carried some complaint about Negro school administrators' injustices to some Negro teachers.
57 Sun, 15 Jan, 12 Feb, 26 Mar, 9 Apr 15.
Washington had the largest branch in the United States. Its 116 members at the national headquarters considered "really a national vigilance committee to watch legislation in Congress and lead the fight for Negro manhood rights at the capital of the nation." Washington Negroes thus had greater influence in national councils than any group outside New York.59

Yet differences of opinion inescapably arose over how best to meet particular situations as well as over long-term strategy. For example, in which direction should Washington Negroes lean when the discussion of District Home Rule revived in 1916? At one time the local colored press had argued that voting in municipal elections was essential to the progress of the city's Negro community. But as Henry West and Frederick Siddons had always treated Negroes with exemplary fairness and Oliver Newman and Louis Brownlow showed no racial prejudice, might not colored people be better off under the rule of commissioners like those than under officials chosen by a two-thirds white electorate? Most colored men side-stepped the question; if white citizens persuaded Congress to restore the franchise to the community, then would be time enough for their colored neighbors to seek their share of local political power. Again, what was the wise course to pursue when "The Birth of a Nation" began its long run in Washington movie houses? Some men, seeing it as an incitement to race hatred, wanted to demand that the commissioners ban the picture, just as they had barred the prize fight film of Jack Johnson beating Jim Jeffries; other colored

59 Crisis, XI, Mar 16, p. 256, XII, Aug 16, p. 197; see also list of Washington members at the 1916 conference at Amenia, New York, Programme in Mary Church Terrell mss.
people believed that a petition for censorship would merely advertise the offensive DeMille film more widely.\footnote{Crisis, XI, Nov 15, p. 35; Bee, 23 Apr, 21 Sep 01, 2 Nov 07, 11 Nov 08, 25 Oct 13, 20 Feb 15, 19 Feb, 1 Apr 16; Sun, 12 Mar 15.}

In the national arena Negro leaders had to examine alternatives as the presidential campaign of 1916 opened. The Democratic party record made the decision to support the Republican candidate relatively easy to reach; in any case it was not a matter upon which Washington's voteless residents could act. But whether to join with whites in working for "national preparedness" was a question that directly faced colored men in the capital. In June 1916 they marched in a big preparedness parade, but, in the Bee's phrase, were "Jim Crowned with a Vengeance" and two days later were greeted with a formal segregation order from the War Department. At the request of a New Jersey congressman whose reelection hung in the balance the order was later rescinded but before the end of October the first separate battalion of the District National Guard, an all-Negro unit, was on the Mexican border. Six months later the United States' declaration of war upon the Central Powers would force upon all American Negroes a decision of whether to be Americans first and Negroes second or to let white Americans carry on without voluntary help from the people they treated as second-class citizens.\footnote{Fun, 9 Apr 15; Bee, 17, 19 Jun, 9 Sep, 21 Oct 16; Rose, The Negro's Forest, pp. 38-39; Seventh Annual Report NAACP, 1917; Crisis, XII, Aug 16, p. 176; Ltr, W.E.B. DuBois to Woodrow Wilson, 10 Oct 18, file 152; and Memorial, Boston Branch Negro Equal Political Rights League, 20 Apr 17, file 152A, Wilson mss.}

Still every Washingtonian daily rubbed elbows with or at least was...
aware of the presence of people not of his own race. Scores of Negroes
were as acutely concerned with municipal taxation, civic betterment and
artistic growth as were their white-skinned neighbors. Whether they would
or no, some give-and-take resulted. An experiment of 1913 in publishing
a Negro city directory was not repeated. Colored Washington, largely
separate and wholly unequal in status, nevertheless was part of the over-
all community.

Chapter XIV

Every-day Life and the Amenities in the White Community, 1878-1901

Proud as 'Washington was of her civic improvements and her charities, it was the orderliness of daily routines and the charm of her social life that endeared her to her white residents and to visitors. The larger the city grew and the wider the sweep of government activities, the more complex became social relationships, but the tensions that marred life in other American cities were relaxed in 'Washington. Personal anxieties endured at every social level from that of the underpaid school teacher and the government clerk without a civil service rating who was harried by "the uncertainty of office tenure which makes the young woman of twenty-five have the wrinkles of forty," to that of a Henry Adams obliged to watch his gifted wife sink into a melancholia that ended in suicide. Yet English travelers critical of most things American were delighted and astonished at Washington's agreeable serenity.

Compared with New York or Chicago, wrote the Dean of Rochester, Washington, although it is full of commotion and energy, is a city of rest and peace. The inhabitants do not rush onward as though they were late for the train or the post, or as though the dinner hour being past they were anxious to soothe an irritable wife. . . . The ear is not deafened by the clanging of bells, the roll of the cars, and the tramping of feet which never seem to pause. It was a busy day. . . . on which we arrived, the first day of the meeting of Congress. . . . but though there was a great gathering of Representatives, there was no commotion or din. 2

Another Englishman spoke of the impression Washington gave "of comfort, of leisure, of space to spare, of stateliness you hardly expected in America. It

1 Cleveland Leader, 3 Apr 81.

2 The Very Reverend S. Reynolds Hole, Dean of Rochester, A Little Tour of America, pp. 309-10.
looks a sort of place where nobody has to work for his living, or, at any rate, not hard."

By mid-20th-century standards, people did not work hard, or at least not under high pressure. In reassuring her brother that her new job in the Dead Letter branch of the Post Office Department was not excessively onerous, Virginia Grigsby wrote in 1883:

We are fixed with every convenience, long desks, easy revolving chairs, footstools, plenty of servants and no specific amount of work to be done. ... There are all ladies in this room, and therefore they do as they choose, most of them bring dressing sacques and put them on to work in. Some even take off their corsets. You know Mama never wears any at home, perhaps she may be able to do all this in the Land Office.

The "servants," that is government messengers, seldom hurried. Government offices closed at four in the afternoon and only common laborers, artisans, clerks in stores, and domestic servants worked longer hours. Office workers breakfasted at eight or nine, had a cup of coffee, a "dairy lunch" or a sandwich at noon, and at four o'clock went home to a hearty dinner or dined in one of Washington's numerous restaurants. "The lunch rooms of Washington are a characteristic of the city," wrote "Carp" in the early 1880's. "I know of no place in the world that has their like. They are found in every block and usually keep excellent coffee and delicious rolls. ... There are places where you get a common cup ... with three rolls and butter for ten cents." A dairy lunch room opposite the Treasury much frequented by government clerks served coffee in "pint shaving mugs"; customers helped themselves to sugar from two "holy water basins chained to the wall" and then relaxed in the wicker chairs about the room while they ate the sandwiches they had brought with them.

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4 Ltr, Virginia Grigsby to Hart Grigsby, Jul 83, Gibson-Humphreys mss (SHC).
5 Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan 83.
Save in the closing days of a congressional session, the pace of life was equally leisurely at the Capitol, "a little city in itself" peopled by "the busiest, wittiest and brainiest men" in the United States. Senators and congressmen took their time over their business and pleasures. In the House of the 1880's members talked and laughed, feet frequently propped on desks above the ever-present cuspidors, in an atmosphere as easy as that of a hotel barroom. Along the corridor leading from the House to the Senate, the chief street of the miniature city, stood small shops selling photographs, candy and newspapers, a telegraph office ticking out messages, and at one end invariably a crowd of lobbyists, politicians, strangers, deadbeats and bogus pension lawyers. But the most skillful seeker of favors knew that undue haste was self-defeating. He might well find his best opportunity during an evening of billiards at one of the hotels where congressmen played or watched "as though they were Monte Carlo gamblers." Early in the nineties shops and stands were cleared out of the Capitol and greater decorum came to prevail on the floor of the House, but the heightened sense of propriety did not hasten the tempo at which the directly elected representatives of the people conducted their affairs. Senators, as if to stress their greater importance, made a point of behaving with more punctilio but, like their lesser associates, they were not driven to hurry their deliberations or their sociabilities.

In the last decades of the 19th century a few congressmen still lived in boardinghouses, but representatives who found the capital too expensive to warrant

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6 Ibid., 22 Dec 82; A. Maurice Low, "Washington, the City of Leisure," Atlantic Monthly, LXXXVI, 759-71.
7 Cleveland Leader, 29 Jun, 23 Nov 83.
8 The Outlook, CVI, 7 Feb 11, op. 317-18.
moving their families to Washington generally patronized hotels and ate at restaurants, although "thirty-five or fifty cents is the least for which one can get a passable breakfast or dinner." There was a considerable choice of places to dine; some of the most famous are still favorites—the formal dining room opening off Peacock Alley in the Willard Hotel, the Ebbitt House across from the Willard, Harvey's Fish House, and Hall's near the river front where a magnificent bar surmounted by a huge painting of a nude Venus added a special attraction. In the 1880's "Carp" informed his Cleveland readers "it would take the best part of a Congressman's salary [£5,000] to pay his board and whiskey bills, if he did not take a high room [above the second story] and leave his family at home. One New York Congressman paid $600 a week for his rooms at one of the hotels." A decade later the pinch of hard times cut down that kind of extravagance.

As "private board" at a minimum of $5 a week seemed high to most people, boardinghouses remained a Washington institution. At the end of the century, generals' and statesmen's widows ran many of the most select. Though these did not necessarily serve the best food, the seating arrangements followed protocol as carefully as the White House would at a state dinner. Young men and women on their way up in the world occupied lowlier places than the eminent "has-been", and the head of the establishment exercised scrupulous judgment about who outranked whom in between top and bottom. As late as 190h Louis Brownlow, then a little known young newspaperman but destined to become a District commissioner eleven years later, felt himself privileged to be assigned to the bottom table at Mrs. Bocock's boardinghouse on Q street; she accepted him only because he came properly recommended. Boardinghouse table notes, if frequently boring or slightly pompous, at least exposed the newcomer in Washington to a conic-sectioned view of the city's

9 Cleveland Leader, 5 Jan, 30 Nov 83.
inhabitants ranging from salesmen to people "in office," the phrase government clerks used to describe their status. 10

Another Washington institution was the public market, patronized by society matrons as regularly as by boardinghouse keepers and economy-minded housewives. On market day elegant ladies descended from carriages driven by stove-pipe hatted "dandy" coachmen and, trailed by a retainer carrying a basket, made the rounds of the stalls at the Centre Market to select the fresh fruits and vegetables, the eggs and chickens, or the woodcock, wild duck and other special delicacies of the season. There rich people and poor rubbed elbows while chatting with the vendors and remarking on the weather to acquaintances. The true Washingtonian regarded marketing in person as much part of well-ordered living as making calls or serving hot chocolate to morning visitors.

For the government clerk with a family to raise in Washington, life was likely to be less eventful than for the temporary resident. "We rarely go to the theatre or to concerts," regretfully remarked a federal employee with a wife and three children to support on his $1600 annual salary. As his rent was $30, wood and coal bill $8, the gas bill $1.50, milk $2.50, groceries $15, perishables bought at the market $25 and the servant's wages $6 a month, there was little left over for entertaining guests or for expensive amusements. Thousands of families were in a comparable or worse position, since $1600 was a handsome salary even in 1900 and placed a man well up in the ranks of government service. The men who earned $2000 expected and was expected to give occasional formal

10 Ibid., 3 Apr, 30 Nov 83; Louis Brownlow, A Passion for Politics, pp. 336-40.

dinner parties complete with soup, fish, game, roast, savory and appropriate wines with each course. Government pay rates remained at the levels set in the 1870's, but any hardship caused by a rise in the cost of living was mitigated by the fact that everyone knew exactly what his neighbor earned and therefore what the proprieties demanded of him. 12

Regardless of income, a good many people spent some money on outdoor diversion. Athletics and organized sports took on new importance as suburbs ate into the open country and cut off city-dwellers from the fields and streams that had once made hunting, fishing and picnicking universal pastimes. Bicycling on Washington's smooth asphalt pavements had an early and long-lasting vogue, among women as well as men. Bella Lockwood, the first woman lawyer to be admitted to practice before the Supreme Court and the only woman ever to be a party nominee for President, created a mild sensation in the early 1880's when, with an unconcerned showing of her bright red stockings, she pedalled down Pennsylvania avenue at ten miles an hour. More conservative ladies arrayed in elaborate cycling costumes soon took up the sport. In the nineties when smaller circumference wheels replaced the high front-wheeled models, a male daredevil made sporting history by riding down the long flight of stone steps from the Capitol to the Mall. While boating on the "silvery Potomac" lost none of its appeal, the Columbia Boat Club turned itself into the Athletic Club in 1887 and, in addition to its boathouse in Georgetown, opened tennis courts, a running track and a lacrosse field on Analostan island. Young ladies, again in specially designed costume, occasionally played tennis or tried their hands at archery, and

12 Star, 4 Dec 84; U.S. Register, 1886, 1900; Day Book of Carrie Angell Collier, ms in possession of the author. See also Brownlow, A Passion for Politics, p. 340.
old and young of both sexes joined in playing croquet. After the commissioners opened a public bathing beach in 1891, swimming in the river drew thousands of people every summer. Golf, necessarily a sport confined to the well-to-do, became fashionable when links opened at the country club in the late eighties. Amateur football, however, awakened more general enthusiasm. Interest in professional sports divided almost equally between prize fights and baseball until the National League cut its teams to eight, and the Senators, which for years had ended the season at the bottom of the League, dropped out of sight. 13

Fortunately some forms of entertainment cost little or nothing. Custom had not staled Washingtonians' pleasure in Saturday afternoon gatherings in the White House grounds:

Then the lawn is filled with a well-dressed crowd as cosmopolitan as you will find anywhere and the big Marine Band, one of the best in the world, clad in their flowing suits of red and gold, give forth the finest music. Among the crowd you will find the best dressed and finest looking Negroes in the world; you may bump against a treasury clerk or a cabinet officer, and you may discuss the toilet of Frau Van Nirgends, the chief lady of a foreign legation, or of pretty little peachesy Miss Smith whose father is a messenger in the Treasury, and then the nature, the flowers, the trees and the long stretch of beautiful scenery away on the Potomac beyond the big white monument, make a combination of which any country may be proud. 14

National celebrations, moreover, periodically swept citizens into "the great stream of current political and governmental events which makes Washington the news center of this continent." One of the most memorable was the dedication of the Washington Monument on February 21, 1885, a day for which old inhabitants had waited thirty-six years. While children skirted on Babcock pond to the north of the Monument, shivering adults cheered Senator John Sherman's opening announcement.

13 Star, 30 May 79, 18 May 80, 1, 26 Jan 89, 1 Jan 98, 2 Jan 99, 1 Jan 01, "Rambler," 27 Mar 21; Cleveland Leader, 11 Apr, 5 Sep 84; Comrs Rpt, 1899, p. 10, Ser 930, 1901, p. 191, Ser 1118. See also Mrs. John Logan, Thirty Years in Washington, p.
14 Cleveland Leader, 30 Sep 83,
that men might keep their hats on during the formal exercises. The bitter cold weather shortened the ceremony and reduced the prayer of the rector of Christ Church to a mere ten minutes, but that night the fireworks reflected by the snow covering the city made a magnificent spectacle. Every fourth year increasingly elaborate presidential inaugurations created a holiday mood in the city. For President Garfield's inaugural parade grandstands for the first time lined the Avenue, and the newly finished National Museum, scene of the inaugural ball, resembled "a crystal palace," its rotunda and dome sparkling with "the whiteness of electric lights" while the rest of the building glowed with "the yellowness of the thousands of gas burners." In brilliant sunshine on March 4, 1885 nearly 100,000 people watched Grover Cleveland take the oath of office as the first Democratic President since James Buchanan. Men climbed to the roof of the Capitol and into the lap of Horatio Greenough's statue of Washington, and afterward, as a 25,000-man parade marched up the Avenue, "even the flags and streamers seemed to be affected by the general contagion which filled the air." Still larger crowds welcomed the next two Republican Presidents. A downpour of cold rain obliged President Harrison to stand under a dripping umbrella while he gave his address, but President McKinley in 1897 had the "Cleveland weather" which a snow storm had denied the Democrat at his second inaugural.

Washingtonians on their own staged several impressive celebrations. In October 1887 the city arranged an elaborate welcome for Alexander Shepherd when he returned on a visit. The demonstration had curious over-tones, for of the

15 Ibid., 5 Dec 82; Post, 22 Feb 85.
16 Star, 28 Feb, 5 Mar 91, 4 Mar 85; Cleveland Leader, 1 Mar 85.
17 Post, 9 Oct 89, 1 Mar 97.
hundreds of people who contributed to it, many had been sharply critical of the Boss only fifteen years before. But it was good advertising for "the city which he plucked from the mire and set as a jewel in the sight of men," and most of his former enemies, their anger quenched by the prosperity of the immediate past, now accepted Shepherd as a symbol of "the new Washington." Three stations of fire works on Pennsylvania avenue provided brilliant illumination for an hour-long evening parade. The entire District militia turned out to march. In the wake of "mounted marshals with white sashes charging about" came some five hundred muddy-booted, overalled workingmen representing the street department. Two hundred men on bicycles rigged with wire frames on which hung lighted Chinese lanterns formed another section of the procession. Every section carried "transparencies" with inscriptions such as "Population 1871, 80,000; 1887, 250,000," or "Washington suggested; Congress sanctioned; Shepherd made it." The city held another home-coming celebration at the end of the Spanish-American war when the regiment of the District militia returned from Cuba. Flags and bunting draped from "windows, doors, sashes and even chimney tops" set the scene for a "reception that surpassed anything of a similar character ever before known in the history of the District of Columbia."

Two years later the city outdid herself in honor of her centennial. Carefully planned in advance to be solemn rather than boisterous, the celebration combined customary features with innovations. In the parade from the White House

18 Star, 7 Oct 87.
19 Sentinel, 8 Oct 87, 25 Feb 88; Star, 10, 22 Sep 87.
20 Star, 7 Oct 87.
21 Bee, 15 Oct 98; Star, 2 Jan 99.
to the Capitol the governor of Rhode Island and his staff rode in automobiles instead of driving in open carriages behind stove-pipe-hatted coachmen. Following the formal procession came "a number of real centennial-looking vehicles, manned by the inevitable darky, with 'Express for Hire' scrawled in white chalk over the sides of the forlorn wagons, and in them the weary found repose for 'only 10 cents, lady. Come view de great cent'ry parade fo' 10 cents.'"

At the Capitol, the "avenue entrance to the [House] gallery was lighted by a suspended device, bearing the words, 'Capital Celebration, 1900,' in blazing incandescent lamps. Beneath this was a mammoth American flag in colored lights, which was made by a mechanical device to pale and brighten, to give the flag the appearance of waving." The celebration played up the theme of miraculous change: a city, for years a grubby village unworthy of the United States, now the embodiment of national greatness, a place of absorbing interest to every American.

Official society over the years largely kept to its long-established regime except insofar as the lengthening roster of government officialdom gradually forced a paring of invitation lists by a stricter observance of the canons of rank. In the early 1880's a good-naturedly derisive definition of high society divided it into three, first the official class, the President and executive officers, the Army, Navy and Congress, "second the quasi-official class" and the diplomatic corps, and "third, the official class including residents of Washington, strangers and visitors." Any well-mannered white person, in short, who meticulously followed the "cast iron" rules about making calls could be a part or hover on the fringes of Society. How far he and his wife got beyond the

22 Post, 11, 12, 13 Dec 00.

23 Star, 13 Jan, 15 Dec 79, 12, 18 Nov 81, 16, 25 Feb, 15 Mar, 14 Nov 82, 26 Jan 89; Cleveland Leader, 5 Sep 82.
circumference was only partly a matter of rank. Some leisure and money for clothes and servants were necessary adjuncts, but wealth was not essential.

When Senator H. A. W. Tabor, the Vermont stonecutter who late in life struck it rich in Colorado silver mining, cast off a first wife and in a sumptuous wedding at the Villard Hotel married a glamorous-looking little blonde, neither his senatorial rank, his ostentatious spending nor President Arthur's presence at the ceremony enabled the new groom and his bride to cut a swathe in Washington; had his term in the Senate lasted longer he perhaps might have made progress.

Distinguished family connections helped open doors, but distinction tended to rest less upon ancient lineage than upon post Civil-War achievement. And whereas a cabinet officer took precedence over his chief clerk, a politician's social status, particularly after the Civil Service act and repeal of the last sections of the Tenure of Office act had cut in upon his patronage, might depend almost as much on his wife's social skills as upon his own place in the governmental hierarchy. "Society women" remarked the acidulous Emily Briggs, "have politicians for husbands, but not all politicians have society wives." 24

If the character of politicians did not change, at least observant wives learned that a display of wealth was a poor substitute for rank, and rank without suave manners might be a bruised reed upon which to lean. Non-alcoholic state dinners did not endure after Mrs. Hayes left the White House, but the days when eighteen to twenty toasts were the normal accompaniment of formal dinners did not return, and the quiet tastes of succeeding first ladies, without laying down fixed rules of behavior, helped to place emphasis upon elegance rather than

24 Star, 31 Dec 84, 11 Mar 85, 11 Dec 84; Sentinel, 6 Mar 86, 29 Dec 88; Olivia Letters, p. 413.
lavishness in official entertaining. The rich outsider intent on becoming an insider in Washington discovered the uses not only of the Elite List and the U.S. Register but also of Mrs. Dahlgren's *Etiquette of Social Life in Washington*. Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren, daughter of a noted congressman, widow of a distinguished admiral and from the early 1880s till her death in 1898 a self-appointed doyenne of Washington society, doubtless saved many a parvenu from unforgivable blunders.

"No dinner," she warned, "however superb in prandial show, can be agreeable if the convives are dullards. . . . No sordid computation of dollars can buy or measure the Promethean light of conversational effect. The 'glad circle' then, must have this highest requisite." If such advice was needless for proper Bostonians or Philadelphians, they too might welcome reminders of how to address a Russian count or her Britannic Majesty's minister to the United States.

For inevitably the diplomatic corps shed a brilliance that lured to Washington not only the socially ambitious nouveaux riches but also the most securely established families of America's upper class. By the standards of St. Petersburg or Vienna or London or Berlin or even the Paris of the Third Republic, official fanfare was slight in Washington. In the 1870s the newly appointed young Danish minister had felt disconcerted at his reception when, arrayed in his scarlet dress uniform and covered with decorations, he had presented his credentials at the White House. Instead of the battery of gold-encrusted

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chamberlains he had expected to have usher him in, a Negro by the door hastily donned a coat and, with an encouraging wave of the hand, said: "Come right along in, sir. I'll let them know you're here, sir." After a considerable interval the President and the Secretary of State appeared. "Mr. Grant was dressed in a gray walking suit and wore a colored tie; and Mr. Hamilton Fish had evidently just come in from a walk, as his turned-up trousers signified."

The formalities exchanged, "Mr. Fish at parting casually observed that the weather was fine." Yet once the young baron had recovered from the shock, he enjoyed his Washington sojourn. Scarcely greater formality reigned twenty years later, and foreign dignitaries, so far from taking offense at the thinness of ceremonial, usually found it refreshing. 26

Yet subtle changes occurred before 1901.

The opening nineties wrote the wife of Senator Foraker of Ohio saw the old regime, Anglo-Saxon, conservative, making its last stand at the White House. The Harrisons gathered around them a five-beste families group; women who could give all their time to social perfections undistracted by suffrage, divorce, interior decoration or other extraneities. We still exchanged recipes, had not yet begun to discuss diet, except as a delight, changed our dresses exhaustingly—often during the day, and were altogether, as conventional as a sideboard. It was a nice period. 27

The first signs of change came in 1894 when Great Britain and France acknowledged the growing importance of the United States in world affairs by elevating their legations in Washington to the rank of embassies. In 1897 Italy followed that example, and at the end of the Spanish-American war the emergence of the United States as a prospective colonial power hastened the process which gradually


27 Foraker, I Would Live It Again, p. 185.
turned Washington into one of the most sophisticated as well as one of the most agreeable capitals in the world. Senators, conscious of the new prestige attaching to the men who ratified or rejected international treaties, abandoned the broad-brimmed felts and string ties of yester-year and adopted high silk hats and frock coats as standard day-time attire. Foreign diplomats came to look upon a tour of duty in Washington as only less desirable than assignment to one of the five or six great courts of Europe, while wealthy Americans wanted as never before a taste of Washington's delights. Not every debutante could marry a Lord Curzon as had Levi Leiter's daughter, and the growing dearth of bachelors in Washington all but put an end to holding balls; but riding, drinking tea and dining with titled foreigners was part of the social round and added to its dazzle. New York's Four Hundred could rarely produce more eligible lords in a season than could Washington hostesses. Moreover, as improved printing techniques enabled magazines to publish photographs of silk-hatted big-wigs and every-day scenes in Washington, popular interest in the life of the capital heightened. It took on simultaneously a visible reality and a new romantic aura that encompassed not only political personages but everyone privileged to live in the city.

Americans unfamiliar with Washington were prone to be curious about the relationship between "resident" and official society; those whose memory reached back into Civil War days were likely to have heard that self-styled local aristocrats disdained the society of officialdom. The Mr. Bonnycastle of Henry James' story Pandora, though in actuality a character based on Henry Adams, doubtless seemed to readers in 1884 a portrayal of the Washington blue blood when he suggests

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Ibid., pp. 187-200; Mrs. William Howard Taft, Recollections of Full Years, p. 27; Louis A. Coolidge, "On the Streets of the National Capital," Cosmopolitan, XXVIII, Feb 00, pp. 365-76.
to his wife that for once they ignore the social niceties in preparing their
guest list; "Hang it ... let us have some fun--let us invite the President." 29

Certainly, old Washington families had had little social intercourse with the
politicians who took over in the capital during the war and the post-war era of
bitter partisanship and vulgarity. But even then the line separating families
firmly rooted in the community from the temporary office holders had not been
drawn sharply and in the course of the next fifteen to twenty years it faded out
almost entirely. 30 In 1881 Mrs. Dahlgren told her readers that "in real solidity
of social importance, the resident society must ... be classed as of the very
elite." She added, "the old families of Washington have an interest for us which
none other in the land may claim, for their social life has gone hand in hand
with that of the nation." 31 But how old was old? By the end of the century
uncertainty blurred the distinction. Third-generation families who from the
first had had money enough and the cultivation to move in upper class circles
were extremely few and, in striking contrast to cities like Philadelphia and
Boston, Washington and Georgetown together could muster scarcely eighty well­
established second-generation families. The prominent Washingtonian of the
1890's was as likely to be a native of a northern state as of the District of

29 Henry James, "Pandora," in Stories Revived, I, 105; F.E. Mathiessen, ed.,
Henry James' Notebook.

30 Maurice Low, "Washington the City of Leisure," Atlantic Monthly,
LXXVI, 777.

31 Dahlgren, Etiquette ... In W., pp. 33, 49. The figures of "old families"
are based on a 20 percent sampling of the Washington Social Register of 1900
checked against the City Directory of 1846.
When the first Washington Social Register appeared in 1900 it contained the names of about 2100 families. Some 820 were those of Army and Navy officers, high-ranking departmental officials, members of Congress, foreign diplomats and Americans listed in one of the five other Social Registers who chose to transfer to Washington for the season. Among the twelve-hundred-odd others named a number were "temporary-permanent" residents—Henry Adams, for example, and the diplomat John W. Foster, Secretary of State under Benjamin Harrison and grandfather of a later Secretary of State—who had lived in the city at intervals for twenty to thirty years without identifying themselves as Washingtonians. Over four hundred of the fixed residents listed were widows or single women. Of all the permanent residents included perhaps two-thirds had been relatively new to the capital when Mrs. Dahlgren wrote of "the very elite." Yet the omissions from the Register of 1900 illustrate as well as the inclusions the uncertainty and flexibility of social status in Washington. The cultivated Ohio-born John Joy Edson, a Washingtonian from his Civil-War school days onward, head of a dozen civic enterprises and president of the Board of Trade in 1900, was left out, whereas Brainard Warner, whose career in the capital was no longer or more notable and whose bank account was probably little larger than Edson's, was admitted. Since the publication of the New York Social Register in 1884 and of later counterparts for Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Chicago, socially ambitious Americans had come to look upon a Social Register listing as a key to the pearly gates on earth; family position, fortified by money but untouched by scandalous notoriety, was at least theoretically a prerequisite. But inasmuch as expediency necessitated naming all high-ranking officials in the capital, including every senator irrespective of his forebears, the rules of selection in Washington lost some of their normal rigidity. The hope, however illusory, of
exploiting that flexibility to squeak through the sacred portals drew to Washington people who knew they could not successfully storm the doors elsewhere. 32

Newcomers tended to think Washington and Georgetown one and the same, as officially the two indeed were after 1895. But old Georgetowners, while sharing many of Washington's pleasures, felt themselves differentiated from their neighbors by a longer history and closer family ties. The sense of dignified antiquity which prevailed in Georgetown beyond the debris-strewn banks of Rock Creek was fortunately not a divisive factor in the larger community; residents of the city on one side of the creek admired the 18th-century houses of those on the far side without resenting their air of detached superiority. 33 If Georgetowners preferred Sunday afternoon visiting with each other to mingling with the elegant throng which promenaded along Connecticut avenue to the accompaniment of a dozen different languages, Washingtonians took no less satisfaction in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the capital.

If few people considered Washington a center of creative art, fewer still found her barren of opportunity. Certainly nowhere else in the United States could sculpture be seen in such profusion—at the Capitol in the Hall of Statuary, in the Senate chamber adorned after 1866 with a growing array of busts of former Vice Presidents, in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and in l'Enfant's spacious circles and squares where, emplaced on imposing pedestals, equestrian bronze or stone generals and marble statesmen looked out over the city. Vickie Ream Hoxie, who when an inexperienced school girl had modelled from life a head of President

32 Social Register, 1900. See also Marietta Minnigerode Andrews, My Studio Window, pp. 101-02.

Lincoln, was the only Washington artist whose work received recognition; her statue of Admiral Farragut stands in Farragut square. Most of the sculpture unveiled in the last decades of the century fell short of great art, but very little of it was patently inept and none of it was so ludicrously bad as Horatio Greenough’s togo-clad twenty-ton Washington which by the eighties public ridicule had consigned to limbo in the basement of the Smithsonian. When Henry Adams’ memorial to his wife was unveiled in Rock Creek cemetery in 1891, the beauty of St. Gaudens’ simple tranquil figure, which Adams called “The Peace of God,” led connoisseurs to declare it the finest sculpture in America. At the Corcoran Gallery of Art both the paintings and the sculpture attracted visitors if only because exhibits open free to the general public were still a rarity in America. Some 90,000 people frequented the gallery in 1880 alone, and their enthusiasm probably heightened the reputation of the Corcoran Art School. William Wetmore Story, the American expatriate who supposedly was Hawthorne’s original for the sculptor in The Marble Faun, when lecturing in Washington in the mid-eighties remarked upon the rapid improvement in Americans’ aesthetic taste. Had he lived till the end of the century, he might have shared the astonishment of the Corcoran trustees at the results of an experiment in opening the gallery on Sunday: a long queue of “wage-earners” formed at the entrance long before the doors opened, and few left before the closing bell sounded. Among the paintings “Charlotte Corday” commanded most attention; of the sculpture, Hiram Powers’ “Greek Slave.” When the new white marble gallery was completed in 1898, architects and laymen joined in admiring its classical lines, although a segment of the local public preferred the ornate Renaissance style of the newly finished Library.

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34 Charles Fairman, Art and Artists of the National Capital, pp. 251 ff; Star, 8 Jan 79; Cleveland Leader, 23 Jan 79; Post, 1 Mar 79.
of Congress and in domestic architecture the heavy solidity of the Romanesque exemplified in the houses H. H. Richardson built on Lafayette square for Henry Adams and John Hay.

In music, on the other hand, Washington lagged behind other big American cities. A week or at most a fortnight of operas presented by companies on tour was her quota for the season, and occasionally a well-known instrumental soloist gave a concert, but professional performances were few, and brass bands, church choirs and choral societies still provided most of the community's music. Composers, like performing artists, found little encouragement in a city that lacked a public concert hall. That handicap was surmounted only by the organist and later the pastor of the Congregational church who composed a number of hymns and by John Philip Sousa, leader of the Marine Band. Sousa won local fame as a popular composer in 1890 when he conducted the first performance of his Washington Post March for a gathering of the Washington Amateur Authors' Association on the Smithsonian grounds. Later played at the Chicago World's Fair and at European courts, the gay March came to be known the world over, but unhappily for Sousa, before then he had sold the score for $35 to a Philadelphia publisher and, unhappily for Washington, he left the Marines in 1892 to start his own band in New York. Gifted amateurs could only partly fill the gap created by the absence of professional talent. The Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, starting in 1882 with thirty-one instruments, worked up to a hundred before 1901, and several churches, notably the Asbury and St. Luke's Negro churches and the Congregational church, had exceptionally well-trained choirs. For a number of years the German Saengerbund gave an annual Lieder concert, and, until the death of the gifted

35 John Philip Sousa, Marching Along, pp. 115-17; Washington Post History, op. 339-40; Post and Times Herald, 3 Jul 38.
"Harry" Sherman in 1896, the Washington Choral Society under his direction sang oratorios, including on one occasion the Elijah without an orchestra. Beginning in 1886 a group of women with some leisure and a serious interest in music formed the Friday Morning Music Club, meeting at each others' houses to study and give private concerts. By the end of the century, the Club had begun to achieve professional stature, but only members and guests could hear the concerts. In 1897 some twenty Negro women organized the Treble Clef Club along similar lines and attained equal competence. In an era when recordings and Edison phonographs were still an expensive innovation most people had little chance to discover that listening engendered a taste for music. The city as a whole remained lukewarm to the art. 36

Literature and writing, however, occupied an important place in Washington's life. The newspapers made much of the city's literary lights, perhaps partly because some of them were journalists who turned out an occasional novel or play in addition to their regular columns. Since the Associated Press and United Press services had not yet replaced correspondents for dozens of independent newspapers, numbers as well as talent kept reporters much in the public view. In 1889, having offended the Administration and thus somewhat weakened their own position, the leaders of the fraternity organized the Gridiron Club dedicated to giving an annual dinner which only members, all newspaper men, and three or four specially invited politically powerful guests might attend; yearly thereafter an anonymous skit, its authorship carefully concealed, neatly and good-naturedly

36 Frank Metcalf, "History of Sacred Music in the District of Columbia," CHS, Rec, LXVII, 175-202; Star, 15 Dec 79, 12 Apr 82; Cleveland Leader, 2 May 64; Post, 3 Nov 69, 1 Mar 97; Hegermann-Lindencrone, Sunny Side of Diplomatic Life, p. 18; A Brief History of the Friday Morning Music Club of Washington, D.C., (Music Div., L.C.); programs and notices filed under heading "Washington in Music Div, L.C."
roasted the guest of honor, and the pledge of secrecy about what went on was sufficiently well-kept to enable the victim to laugh with his tormentors.

Public uncertainty about who wrote the lines and what punches they had delivered served to endow all correspondents with a reputation for Rabelesian wit. 37

While congressmen and retired generals penned memoirs and treatises on politics and the Civil War, a flood of verses, essays, short stories and sketches of life in the capital poured out of Washington into the pages of popular magazines. Most of it left little permanent mark. Even Joaquin Miller, whose Songs of the Sierras and tales of the wild West seemed to ensure him lasting fame, might have dropped out of memory had his log cabin on Meridian Hill not survived as a physical landmark long after he had departed. With a host of writers ready to participate “literary evenings” became part of the social routine. The Shakespeare Club, the Circle des Precieuses Ridicules, the Unity Club and a dozen others held readings and listened to endless lectures. 38

The Boston-born wife of the Danish minister to the United States in the late seventies had described a meeting of the Washington Literary Society where “les élus des élus” discussed the evening’s topic: “The Metamorphosis of Negative Matter.” While Mrs. Dahlgren “who as president, sat in a comfortable chair with arms to it” called for comments, Mme. Lillie Hegermann-Lindencrone, impaled upon a hard cane-bottomed chair, thought agonizedly of the consequences for her blue velvet gown and “wondered if negative matter would comprise that.” She felt the evening only


38 Star, 8 Jan, 30 Jun 81, 6 Feb, 12 Apr, 1 Nov 82, 9 Jan, 27 Feb 83; 20 Jan, 25 Nov 81; Post, 4 Nov 89. See especially the list of “literary works in progress,” Cleveland Leader, 3 Mar 84.
partly redeemed by the introduction of positive matter in the form of scalloped oysters and chicken salad. But in 1880 when General James A. Garfield supplanted Mrs. DeHlgren as president of the society, the "enchanted circle of the Brain Club" encompassed less pretentiousness and the literary exercises became livelier.39

By no means all of Washington's literary figures were dilettantes or their writings of ephemeral interest. Government scientists turned out enormously valuable studies, some of which, like Clarence King's Geologicel Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel and John Wesley Powell's descriptions of the Colorado river valley are still classics in their field. In 1883 Lester Frank Ward published his epoch-making Dynamic Sociology, much of it written at his desk at the Geological Survey; the work of a distinguished, albeit still relatively obscure, paleobotanist and paleobiologist, Ward's presentation of the case for a planned society and his insistence that "ideas rule the world of men" struck with telling force.40 In the 1890's his Psychic Factors in Civilization and the Outline of Sociology further developed his social philosophy. Simon Newcomb, head of the Naval Observatory, produced not only lucid expositions of complex scientific problems but two books on political economy and, for good measure, a romance.

Historians, following in the wake of George Bancroft, made wide use of the archival materials in the Library of Congress, over which the bibliophile, author and scholar, Ainsworth Spofford presided. During the 1880's, Bancroft himself, then an octogenarian, wrote the History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States and, for relaxation, tended the "American Beauty"

39 Lillie Hagermann-Lindencrone, The Sunny Side of Diplomatic Life, pp. 16-18; Helen Macoby, Sixty Years of the Washington Literary Society, passim.
rosebushes he had bred in his garden on H street. From Henry Adams’ study at 1693 H street came in 1881 the anonymously published novel *Democracy*, a satirical commentary on Washington society, and in 1890 his history of Jefferson’s and Madison’s administrations. Next door his intimate friend John Hay took time out from his collaboration with John Nicolay to write the *Breadwinners*, a novel attacking organized labor as he had seen it in Cleveland during the railroad strike of 1877. After the appearance in 1890 of Nicolay’s and Hay’s monumental ten-volume *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, Hay confined his writing to letters and a few pieces of verse, and, while Adams wandered over the South Seas and Europe, the houses on H street ceased to be a source of distinguished literature.

The number of literary women in Washington frequently astonished visitors.

"One of the lions of the capital" was the petite auburn-haired Frances Hodgson Burnett who in creating *Little Lord Fauntleroy* imposed black velvet knee breeches and lace collars upon a whole generation of rebellious small boys. James G. Elaine’s sister-in-law, the short, stout, rather homely Abigail Dodge, still using the pen name Gail Hamilton, in the 1880’s was still turning out widely read columns on politics and politicians. The sketches and stories of Mary Clemmer Ames, best known today for her book, *Ten Years in Washington*, Emily Briggs’ *Olivia Letters*, Kate Field’s witty pieces appearing under the title "Kate Field’s Washington" and the writings of half a dozen other newspaperwomen in turn commanded respect. Forty years of turning out saccharine tales had shrunk Mrs. Eme D. E. N. Southworth’s literary standing but in the nineties the works of newer women novelists in Washington had not yet obliterated the little Georgetown widow’s work from memory. Her little frame cottage on the
bluff looking out over the Potomac remained a point of interest to aspiring younger writers. Several of the younger authors drew on their own intimate knowledge of Washington society for background. If Grace Danio Litchfield’s poems and the plays and stories of Jennie Gould Lincoln, wife of an eminent Washington physician, sold the better for being the products of society matrons, they merely shared the benefits Mrs. Dahlgren enjoyed in writing novels which spoke of high society with authority if not much originality. For the community at large the quality of what Washington women wrote was perhaps less important than the recognition the rest of the country accorded them as authors.  

Feminists, pointing back to the successful professional careers of women in the capital indeed proclaimed Washington, “a special center for women.” Where else in America were the works of women artists so prominently displayed as were Vickie Kness and those of the Ohio sculptress Caroline Ranson who modelled two of the busts for the Senate chamber? In 1890 a group dedicated to “the elevation of women” organized the “Wimodaughters.” The society, its name chosen to represent wives, mothers, daughters and sisters who believed the “Dawn of Women’s Era” at hand, planned to open a building in which the National Woman Suffrage Association could convene, or the WCTU, the Red Cross under Mrs. Clara Barton, the Women’s National Press Association, the Federation of Women’s Clubs and others. Women employed in government offices perhaps welcomed the proposal, although the young and attractive undoubtedly preferred the company of the bachelors with whom their jobs or the “dairy lunches” brought them in contact, and many older women, like Virginia Griswold’s mother with or without her corsets at the Land Office, were too tired at the end of the day’s work to care.

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11 Cleveland Leader, 4 Aug 93; Etta Ramsdell Goodwin, “The Literary Women of Washington,” Chautauquan, XVII, No. 6 (Sep 98), pp. 579-86.
about elevation. Ladies with an established place in the social world of the
capital showed little interest in the idea. The "career woman" was still a
novelty, Bella Lockwood and the lady newspaper correspondents notwithstanding.
Yet women of all conditions and kinds could lead a fuller life in Washington
than in almost any other American city of the time.\footnote{12}

Among men it was perhaps the scientists and scholars above all who
found Washington congenial and who added most to the variety of the city's
intellectual interests. While generals and bankers gravitated toward the
Metropolitan Club, notables in a dozen fields of learning gathered at the Cosmos
Club, in the house in which Polly Madison spent her last years. Founded in 1878
by men who had had a part in launching the \textit{Philosophical Society} seven years
before, the Cosmos Club quickly became the rendezvous of some of the most
men interesting in America. After the remodeling of the house in the mid-eighties
the learned societies of Washington usually held their fortnightly meetings there.

A few members of the faculties of the \textit{Columbia} and National Universities made
up part of this group, but scientists in government service in Washington were
its backbone. For in spite of the government's official policies of limiting
federal sponsorship of scientific research to projects directly concerned with
national-economic development, programs of government \textit{bureaus} expanded steadily
and under the imaginative leadership of the men in charge basic research not
infrequently became the accepted accompaniment of the search for solutions to
practical problems. (The challenge of the work possible in the \textit{bureaus} in

\footnotetext{12}{Wimodaughnes, \textit{Leaflet in Bowen ms}; ltr. Susan Grigsby to Sarah
Humphreys, 1 Aug, 5 Oct 89; \textit{Gibson-Humphreys ms}, \textit{SHC}.}
Powell; marine biologists pursuing oceanographic studies under the guidance of
Spencer Baird of the Fish Commission; geneticists, plant and animal pathologists,
and chemists of the calibre of Harvey Wiley in the Department of Agriculture;
mathematicians and physicists assembled by Simon Newcomb at the Naval Observatory;
and in the 1890's bacteriologists, Walter Reed among them, brought together by
Surgeon-General George Sternberg in his reorganization of the Army medical
service.

The intellectual vigor of these men permeated the entire community. Their versatility was in itself stimulating. John Wesley Powell, for example, a daring, one-armed, red-headed giant, was not only the first white man to traverse the length of the dangerous Colorado canyon, an able geologist and the author of the famous report on the arid lands of the West, but also was so well versed in Indian languages that as head of the Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology in the 1890's he laid the groundwork for the science of cultural anthropology in America. Simon Newcomb, the most eminent American mathematician and astronomer of his day, combined personal charm with scientific erudition; the initiator of a new system of computing the position of the stars and the mass and motion of the planets, he was also an inspiring lecturer, a lucid teacher and a prolific writer. Spencer Baird, who followed Joseph Henry as secretary of the Smithsonian, was at the same time the initiating force behind the Fish Commission's extraordinarily valuable program of marine research. At his death, the secretaryship of the Smithsonian passed to Samuel Langley, whose aeronautical experiments stirred the public imagination even while doubting Thomases ridiculed the idea of human flight.

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43 Dupree, Science in the Federal Government, pp. 149-270; Star, 11 Feb 79, 30 Jun 81, 27 Feb 93; "Scientific Research and the National Government," The Dial, XXIII, Feb 97, pp. 73-75.
From these men and their only less famous associates came the spark that brought six learned societies into being in Washington between 1879 and 1893. Unlike the Philosophical Society which aimed at investigation of "the positive facts and laws of the physical and moral universe," several of the newer societies were concerned primarily with the popularization of science.

The Anthropological Society admitted "antiquaries" as well as serious students to membership and the Biological Society took in "amateur naturalists" but Lester Ward and several other eminent members of the Philosophical Society were active in all three societies and learned mathematicians and physicists were not above joining the National Geographic Society which made no pretense of nurturing erudition. Indeed the enthusiastic participation of laymen in the affairs of most of these societies, so far from weakening them, was a source of strength, binding much of upper-class Washington into an informal fellowship of intellectual interests. Through their published transactions, moreover, their influence reached far beyond the local community into cities where similar organizations did not exist. In order to pool resources for publication and public lectures, in 1888 a tentative federation evolved, and ten years later when the Philosophical Society concluded its utility greater than its threat to pure science, the Washington Academy of Sciences was born. Significantly its first president was Gardiner Hubbard; for Hubbard, though a man of great cultivation and an exceptionally well-informed student of the physics of acoustics and aeronautics, was not a trained scientist but an amateur in the best sense.


The financial genius behind the Bell Telephone Company, he and his son-in-law, the inventor Alexander Graham Bell, founded the National Geographic Society in 1888 to promote scientific exploration and through the pages of a non-technical, profusely illustrated magazine to educate the American public about remote parts of the earth. Other private citizens, if possessed of fewer attainments than Hubbard and Bell, swelled the ranks of the gifted and fascinating men who gave life in Washington much of its peculiarly satisfying quality.

At the turn of the century Washington was a city of many anomalies: the voteless capital of a republic, a center of scientific research which lacked a great university, a book reading community, with only a tiny ill-equipped public library, a spacious city in which newcomers crowded into boardinghouses and in which business opportunities were so limited that ambitious men sons of well-to-do families had to seek careers elsewhere leaving behind them an urbane society with a taste for the arts but with little creative genius, and perhaps most startling, though least mentioned contradiction of all, the first locality below the Mason-Dixon line to see slavery abolished and black men enfranchised, yet where thirty years later most white people successfully ignored the colored third of the population except as a source of menial labor. White residents were more delighted with Washington's charms than disturbed by her lacks. Non-elective officials kept the broad avenues clean and the city orderly; her intellectual vigor was undeniable and her universities were growing; Congress at long last had set aside Mt. Vernon square, Andrew Carnegie had given $350,000 for a building and within a year or two an adequate free public library would be a reality.

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